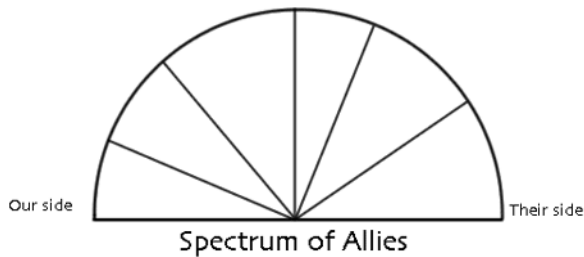


Training for Change (<http://www.trainingforchange.org>)

Spectrum of Allies



Use newsprint to describe the idea that in most social change situations there is a struggle between those who want the change and those who don't. Those who do are represented by a point at one side of the newsprint (say, on the left) and the opponents by a point at the other side. Explain that societies (or towns, or states) usually include a range of groups that can be put on kind of spectrum from closest to the point of view of the advocates to farthest away, and draw a horizontal line to represent that. Then draw a half-moon or half of a pie with wedges (as on the picture, which can be used as a handout). Ask for an example of an issue people in the group might be working on. Suggest a demand the advocates might have (say, free public transport) and ask who in society might be inclined to be most supportive, least supportive, and in the middle. Give examples: "unions?" "poor people's groups?" "Chamber of Commerce?" etc. As the participants identify groups and location on the spectrum, write them into the "pie." Do this only enough to make the idea clear. Give the good news: in most social change campaigns it's not necessary to win the opponent to your point of view, even if the opponent is the powerholders. It's only necessary to move each of the pie wedges one step in your direction. Pause to make sure that's clear. Then complicate the picture slightly: sometimes polarization happens, and the wedges closest to the opponent move away from you and toward the opponent. You can still win, if enough of society takes a step in your direction. Let the group digest the good news for a bit; let it sink in that activists often have the mistaken idea that they need to win everyone (inviting despair), or that their whole attention needs to be on the powerholders (again inviting despair). Pass out the handout and invite everyone to fill in the wedges for their particular campaign/issue/movement. Move among them to answer questions as they work. Create small groups for discussion. If a variety of issues are present in the group, ask them to form issue groups to compare notes. Let them work for awhile (keeping track of their work), then ask them to brainstorm tactics that might effectively communicate with the wedges that they want most to win as allies. Harvest the learnings in the whole group, using newsprint. Emphasize points like this: it's a huge win if you can get a group that was slightly hostile to move into neutrality. It's a huge win if you can get the group/wedge next to your end of the spectrum to move into activism with you. It's usually not necessary to move the opponents a step toward you in order to win, although it can hasten the win.

Where this tool comes from

Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action*, Quadrangle Books, 1965

[Training for Change](#) ? 3241 Columbus Avenue, South ? Minneapolis, MN 55407 ? peacelearn@igc.org ?
(612) 827-7323

Source URL (retrieved on *01/25/2013 - 05:43*): http://www.trainingforchange.org/spectrum_of_allies