



YOUNG PEOPLE FOR

Event Planning Little Black Book



Little Black Book: **Event Planning**

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This manual is an installment in the **YP4 Black Book** series.
Please see the other issues for valuable information
on similar topics, including:

Coalition Building
Media & Message
E-Organizing



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Introduction

This LBB will be helpful if you are a:

- **progressive student looking to publicize or gain support for your work**
- **progressive student thinking an event would be the best way to bring people together around your cause or issue**

Even the most experienced campus organizers and student leaders can benefit from this manual. Likewise, students just beginning to get involved with activism will find this Little Black Book useful! Unless your event is a celebration, people attending should always have something active to plug into after the event, to sustain the energy you created.

**Remember: This is a Little Black Book.
Keep it in a safe place.**

Chapter One: The Right Reasons

Style or Substance—do you have to pick?

Events should never be an end in an of themselves, but with some planning an event can be an easy way to bring people together to learn about issues they might not otherwise engage in. Events around progressive issues should serve one of these purposes:

- a kick off to a longer, more sustainable campaign
- a celebration at the end of a longer, more sustainable campaign
- to gain publicity for a particular cause or issue
- to fund raise for a particular cause or issue



Unless your event is a celebration, people attending should always have something active to plug into after the event, to sustain the energy you created.

What type of an event should you hold?

Be creative! Look to the purposes of the event to determine how flexible you can be. Events usually have at least one of the following three purposes, and sometimes all three:

1. To energize and mobilize
2. To inform people about issues
3. To raise funds for a particular cause



Even if your goal is to inform people about a particular issue, you do not necessarily need to have a panel discussion—instead, you can host a movie screening event, host a reading, an art exhibition, a concert, a poetry slam and contest, a potluck dinner and discussion, a tailgate party with a particular theme, the list is endless.

THE RIGHT REASONS

Unless your event is a celebration, people attending should always have something active to plug into after the event, to sustain the energy you created.

Chapter Two: Setting Goals

Steps to planning a successful event:

1. Being organized is **THE** key to successful event planning. Use the tools in this LBB to help you keep track of all the pieces you will need to coordinate.
2. Set an attendance goal and be realistic
3. Find a suitable place, time and date. If you are hosting the event on campus, make sure you check with any restrictions or regulations your university may have. The student activities office is a good resource to help you find venues if you are having a difficult time.
4. Identify your coalition partners. It is good to have help when planning and holding event so coalition partners are often very helpful. Be careful however, to make sure that you do not have too many people to organize and manage.
5. Set your overall Goal. For example: “Host a party and film screening, and ask for donations instead of admission to bring awareness to our campaign around environmental justice, and to raise funds for our campaign against the power plant opening”.
6. You need to set smaller, more achievable goals along with a timeline of when you can meet them.



IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

File any necessary paperwork early, but at least on-time. This can include:

Room reservations • Requests for student activities fees

Physical Plant requests for maintenance, staffing, table set up, electricity etc.

AV/Media services • Dining Services • Campus Security

IN ADDITION: Always have a Plan B!

SETTING GOALS

Being organized is THE key to successful event planning

Chapter Three: Marketing Your Event

It's Worth It

No matter how good an event may be, it will completely flop if no one knows about it. Advertising and marketing are a crucial component it helping to make any event a success-but it is likely to be labor intensive.

Naming Your Event

Although it may sound simple, naming your event is an important step in advertising. When naming your event, you want to be sure that anyone can hear the name and instantly understand the purpose and objective of the event. Be informative but not Boring. Depending on the nature of the event, you may also want to try to have a catchy or even controversial phrase just to spark public interest.



Example: "Strike Down the Patriot Act" for an event at a bowling alley



Chapter Three: Marketing Your Event

Necessary Information



Before you begin to do any marketing, be sure that you are providing people with all the information they need. Any marketing you do should include:

- ▶ Date
- ▶ Time
- ▶ Location
- ▶ Title
- ▶ Directions (If the place is not well known)
- ▶ Brief 1 or 2 line description if not implicit from the title

Following Guidelines and Regulations

Before you start spray painting every building on campus to market your event, be sure to check the schools regulations on student promotions. Most schools have guidelines that may affect how you market. For example, many schools require that all banners hanging from buildings be approved by the appropriate officials. Contact your schools administration office or Student government office to learn more about marketing and display guidelines and regulations.



MARKETING YOUR EVENT

No matter how good an event may be, it will completely flop if no one knows about it.

Chapter Four: Outreach Strategies

Meet People Where they Are

Student interests are diverse. Your approach to reaching them should be diverse, too. Set your marketing plan to reflect three different approaches: creative marketing, targeted marketing, and traditional marketing.

- 1) **Creative Marketing:** All of your marketing should be creative, but this approach simply means you should use new and unconventional methods to reach your audience. To employ this technique, brainstorm all the ways that you interact with people and media throughout the day and use them to your advantage.



Some examples of creative marketing include:

- ▶ Messaging your facebook.com friends list
- ▶ Posting messages on facebook.com groups
- ▶ Using classroom space to market
- ▶ Using student cars and bikes to market
- ▶ Messaging your myspace.com friends
- ▶ Setting your instant message profiles and away messages to advertise the event
- ▶ Bringing your message to any popular student friendly social tool

TIP

Don't waste money posting flyers around graduate student libraries advertising for a forum that focuses on undergraduate housing issues.

- 2) **Targeted Marketing:** When marketing an event, it is important to know who your target audience is. Identifying your target audience will allow you to expend your resources where they will be most useful.

Chapter Four: Outreach Strategies

Some examples of target marketing include:

- ▶ Presenting and speaking to student groups who have a particular interest or are affected by the issue you are working on
- ▶ Sending an e-mail to different listservs that may be sympathetic to your cause
- ▶ Posting flyers and announcements in areas where the majority of the traffic through the area may be interested in your event.
- ▶ Asking professors who teach pertinent classes to make in class announcements or consider awarding extra credit to student attendees

3) Traditional Marketing: Although it may seem like a chore, traditional marketing methods have been around so long for only one reason, they work. When referring to traditional marketing methods, we are talking about the methods that should immediately come to mind when you are starting a marketing campaign. Posting flyers around your campus, handing out handbills, and setting up an information table may not sound glamorous, but they are effective. Traditionally marketing will be the most labor intensive part of your strategy, but also an important part. This type of marketing will allow you to reach a wide audience, reminding your base of the event, and hopefully bring in people who you may not have been targeting.



Traditional marketing methods include:

- ▶ Posting flyers around campus and in the community
- ▶ Starting a letter to the editor campaign
- ▶ Sidewalk chalking
- ▶ Hanging banners on buildings
- ▶ Word of Mouth



OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Set your marketing plan to reflect three different approaches: creative marketing, targeted marketing, and traditional marketing.

Chapter Four: Outreach Strategies



Timing is Everything

No one wants to hear about your fire safety seminar two months before it happens. Timing your marketing is important. Although your strategy may reach a lot of people, if your audience hears about the event too soon or too late to plan for it, no one will show up. When announcing and marketing for an event, give people time to think about an event, but not enough time to forget it.

Recommended Marketing Timeline:

- ▶ Letters to the editor, 1-3 weeks before an event
- ▶ Banners on buildings, 7-10 days before an event
- ▶ Posting flyers on campus, 4-5 days before an event
- ▶ Handbills and tabling, the day of to 2 days before an event



OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Set your marketing plan to reflect three different approaches: creative marketing, targeted marketing, and traditional marketing.

Chapter Five: Getting Down to the Wire

The Lead-up

What do the Superbowl, the Oscars and a Broadway show have in common? All are rehearsed! The behind-the-scenes operations are vital for the success of any event. Your event is no different.

Check List for the Week and Day Before

- _ Meet with your volunteers
- _ Advance the event space
(Do you know where everything is?
Is everything set?
Do this with enough time to fix any
problems that arise)
- _ Confirm food arrival time
- _ Set up event space, including AV needs
- _ Confirm materials and set up
- _ Do dry run of introductions/welcomes/speeches
- _ Review speakers and event schedule
- _ Send reminders/phone calls to speakers and
volunteers
- _ Create a sign-in sheet for ALL attendees (name,
e-mail, phone number, organization, etc)



Chapter Five: Getting Down to the Wire

The Day

You created the event, you scheduled the event, you advertised the event, you organized your crew, and now it is time to run your event. Once started, your event is a moving train. You can't stop it, but you can help it run as smoothly as possible.

Check List for Event Day Management

- _ Assign someone to set up and staff registration or organizational table (name badges, materials, pens, sign-in forms)
- _ Set up food stations
- _ Assign a speaker liaison (greet speakers, thank them)
- _ Assign a photographer
- _ Recruit volunteers
- _ Assigned one person to be logistics manager



On the day of the event, your crew is vital for smooth operations. The size of your event crew will vary with the size of the event. For small events you may only need one or two people, and larger events will need a greater number of volunteers.

Do's and Don'ts for Event Volunteers

DO

- Delegate responsibility before the start of the event
- Create a time sheet with assignments for volunteers
- Gather contact information for all event volunteers

DON'T

- Show up to an event looking or acting unprofessional
- Assume a task has been completed, if in doubt, double check!
- Leave the event without notifying event coordinator

Chapter Five: Getting Down to the Wire

Managing Volunteers

Volunteer timesheets are very useful for the smooth operation of an event. Break event into one or two hour shifts and ask volunteers to sign up as needed. Always assign a free-floater. The floater is the event trouble shooter, go-getter and alternate in case a volunteer doesn't show.

Sample Volunteer Matrix

Time	Eddie	Maya	David	Jonah
8:00 AM	Set-up tables	Set-up tables	Pick up breakfast	Hang signs
9:00 AM	Registration table	Registration table	Speaker liaison	Floater
10:00 AM	Check AV equipment	Take pictures	Floater	Registration table
11:00 AM	Pick up lunch	Floater	Pick up lunch	Speaker liaison
12:00 PM	Floater	Take pictures	Registration table	Registration table
1:00 PM	Floater	Take pictures	Floater	Take Pictures



GETTING DOWN TO THE WIRE

The behind-the-scenes operations are vital for the success of any event.

Chapter Six: Wrapping Up

It's Not Over Until it's Over

At the end of the event, you may want to ask participants to fill out and submit an evaluation. The evaluation will help determine how the students enjoyed the event; whether they want to stay involved in your campaign work; and what needs to be improved for future events.

Sample Evaluating Questions

1. Using a scale of 1-10, with 1 being “terrible” and 10 being “excellent,” how would you rate the following aspects of the event?
 - Overall organization of event?
 - Material covered in event sessions?
 - Speakers and trainers?
2. What was your favorite part of the event and why?
3. What was your least favorite part of the event and why?
4. Which speaker/trainer did you find most engaging?
5. What could be done to improve future events? (Different topics, other types of event structures)
6. How did you hear about this event?

End of the Day

Remember, when the event ends, leave the space clean! It's good for your group's image and it's the right thing to do.

Thank You Notes and Coalition Building

Events are also a means to strengthen your networks and build stronger coalitions with student groups and outside coalitions. Keep your networks strong. Thank your speakers and your supporters.



Chapter Six: Wrapping Up

Thank You Notes and Coalition Building

Events are also a means to strengthen your networks and build stronger coalitions with student groups and outside coalitions. Keep your networks strong. Thank your speakers and your supporters.

Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow Up

Why are you having this event? Never forget your campaign's goals or your target audience. Are you trying to educate the student body about an issue? Are you trying to recruit students to support your campaign? What is the action component of your campaign? What comes next?



WRAPPING UP

**Events are a means to strengthen your networks.
Write thank you notes to keep your networks strong**

Case Study: Michigan State University

How to throw a protest march with nothing but a cell phone

by Jon Hoadley

YP4 Senior Fellow/Campaign Manager, South Dakotans Against Discrimination

Objective: In April 2005, our Stonewall Democrats group decided to participate in the annual Pride Week, a week long celebration of the lives of lesbian, bisexual, gay, trans gender, and other queer-identified people. Since the theme for the week was “Yes I am. Yes I do,” a tribute to marriage equality, we wanted to hold a political march.

Challenge: LGBT marches have not always been successful in the past. MSU students often find it pointless to march around a campus for attention when they routinely walk across the campus without so much as noticing the world beyond their iPods. As a result, the turnout is low, the impact is low, and people don't really know why we're marching.

Determined not to repeat the past, we identified the weakness of the previous event:

1. Low turnout
2. Lack of coherent message
3. Lack of visibility

We then brainstormed ideas to correct those problems.

What Worked:

1. How to increase turnout:

a. **Coalition Building** (For tips on this, see the YP4 Little Black Book on Coalition Building): We had to think beyond the usual suspects. Instead of advertising to a largely LGBT audience, we spent a lot of time focusing on allies. We worked with the women's groups, the Democrats, the racial/ethnic groups, and the economic justice groups. Each wanted to help. Also, by including a broad range of people we actually increased participation from the LGBT groups because they thought it was a big event and they needed to be there.

b. **Multiple forms of advertising:** We listed the march on everything from week long calendars of events to save the date emails to live announcements at the other events of the week. People need to see things multiple times to have it stick. Switching the medium also ensured we'd reach different audiences.

c. **CALL PEOPLE:** The best way to increase turnout is to call people and ask them to come in person. I know this seems like common sense, but people get scared and don't call for a number of reasons. Get over it. You're an organizer!

2. How to have a coherent message:

a. **Keep it simple.** We called the event, "March for Marriage Equality." We didn't try to think of the most clever name in the world. We didn't go for the most elaborate stunts. We used simple chants and the pre-arranged speakers were given some of the talking points we had been using all week. This created an environment where people heard the same message in different ways.

b. **Create signage.** Sometimes we would show up and throw a slogan or two on a poster board and call it good. This year we met the night before to paint signs in big, bold letters. This forced us to keep the message short and provided a coherent feel for the march. Sure, people brought their own signs, but this ensured that we could influence a large portion of the message.

c. **Free T-shirts.** This is a luxury if you can find the money, but giving away free t-shirts for people to wear at the march made a huge difference. It served as an incentive to march (some people need more than just knowing they were doing a good thing to motivate them to action), and it also made us seem even bigger than we were. The "uniform" provided a coherent message and a sense of solidarity.

3. How to increase visibility:

a. **Go for bigger, shorter.** Instead of marching all over campus and looking like a rainbow on parade, we choose a more direct route through a highly trafficked area and knew that if we had enough people, that would make the news itself.

Case Study: Michigan State University

b. **Contact the media.** Sounds like another commonsense suggestion, but don't assume a journalist will ever do the work for their job. We sent a press advisory about the week of events, one about the march specifically, and then we e-mailed the reporter covering the diversity beat the night before as well. We included information about where the route and potential speakers so make the story as easy as possible for the reporter.

What Didn't Work:

Failure to recognize volunteers' comfort level. We suggested that people wear bow ties and wedding veils to create that 'til-death-do-us-part vibe. Our activists weren't all comfortable with that, and not all of them went along with it. Having a few people doing one thing and others doing another made us look unorganized. We should have discussed things like this more with our team in order to get a sense of everyone's comfort level.

Big Lesson:

Overall, we know that our event wasn't planned significantly different than other marches in the past. What made this event draw 60 people instead of 20 was that we had followed through on our homework and we took the time to CALL PEOPLE. We live in an information world and the internet and e-mail are great tools, but never underestimate the power of your voice. It's harder to say "no" to someone when you have to say it to them in person.

Appendix No. 1: Event Timeline

6 WEEKS BEFORE

Find movie screening equipment, ask for permission to charge money for screening from film Co..

6 WEEKS BEFORE

Check with U. for any rules, regulations around screenings.

6 WEEKS BEFORE

Book campus space for 75 people

3 WEEKS BEFORE

Recruit volunteers to staff the event, confirm space, designate MC

Follow up with thank you's, expense reports, etc.

1 WEEK AFTER

Screening Day!

DAY OF

Create flyers and signage for event, publicize!

3 WEEKS - 3 DAYS BEFORE

Appendix No. 2: Sample Event Calendar

AUGUST 2006

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1 Recruit coalition partners	2	3	4 Meet w/ Volunteers	5
8 Decide on a name for the event	9	10	11 Paperwork for space due	12
15 Post flyers	16	17 Take out advertisement in campus paper	18 Meet with volunteers	19
22 Post flyers	23 Advance Site	24 Follow up phone calls	25 EVENT! Collect evaluations	26
29	30 Send Thank You letters and expense reports	31		

Event Priorities

Goal Setting

Logistics

Volunteer Recruitment

Publicity and Marketing

Follow Up

Notes:



I ♥ MY
RIGHT
TO VOTE



SAVE THE DATE:

Please save the date to join the New York Civil Rights Community as we honor the legacy of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and plan to **protect our right to vote** for years to come!

**THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT
REAUTHORIZATION FORUM**

March 23rd, 2006 4–9 PM

People For the American Way 149 5th Ave , 7th Floor

An important training event and forum to explain the upcoming renewal battle over the Voting Rights Act of 1965, including critical protection for language assistance and other provisions for communities of color, and the act's importance to all New Yorkers.

LIGHT RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:

PFAW Northeast Regional Office, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Institute For Puerto Rican Policy, Community Service Society, Center for Law and Justice, The Bronx Defenders, NYPIRG, New Jersey Appleseed, League of Women Voters

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