



CAMPAIGNER NETWORK TOOLKIT

5) How to gain public support

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Stalls

Running a stall is a basic but effective way of getting issues out into your community, and giving people the chance to get involved. Stalls are a good way of talking face-to-face with members of the public, and of introducing new people to Vegan Society issues. You can use stalls for distributing action pack postcards or signing a petition, as well as giving out information. Whatever you are campaigning about, it is important to consider how you will offer people the chance to get more involved. While most people will be content to hear the basic outline of the campaign and perhaps take a simple, one-off action, a few will be more interested, perhaps in getting active locally. A stall is probably the easiest campaigning activity to plan, requiring the minimum of resources (usually just campaigns materials from the Vegan Society campaign action pack plus a table and helpers).

Think about:

- ▶ The venue: a town centre, or a stall at a local event or festival.
- ▶ Consider whether the people who come are likely to support the campaign, particularly if you are going to have to pay for a venue.
- ▶ Find out whether you need to obtain permission to site your stall at your chosen location. Check with The Vegan Society Supporter Services regarding public liability insurance.
- ▶ Whilst you need to attract people, too busy a location can be problematic. Make sure you don't create an obstruction, and if the police move you on, obey their instructions.
- ▶ Think hard about the display you'll use to attract people to the stall. You only have a very few seconds to get the attention of passers-by.
- ▶ Be prepared to answer more general questions about the issues or The Vegan Society's work – not everyone will be interested in hearing details of the campaign, but they might well be interested in related matters. Don't be afraid to refer people to the general Vegan Society website if you don't know the answer.
- ▶ You need at least two people on a stall at any one time. If you have enough support, dividing the day into shifts limits the time commitment people need to give.

- ◀ If you plan to sell things from the stall, the council may have stricter regulations you'll need to comply with.

Exhibitions

These are a good way to present information without needing group members to be there all the time. However, this doesn't mean it needs less preparation than other promotion activities; in fact, getting an exhibition ready can require even more planning, preparation of materials and design skills. The Vegan Society can provide detail on our current campaigns, and sometimes pre-prepared display materials can be lent out, but mostly you would need to prepare your own displays.

Public meetings

Public meetings provide an open-access forum to air your campaign's messages. As well as reaching the people who attend, public meetings offer a great way of generating media attention. They are also an opportunity to gather supporters in a single place to create a sense of momentum and common cause. Some public meetings can be charged with excitement and emotion, spurring your supporters and volunteers to greater efforts, and winning doubters over to your side.

Venue and speakers

Choose a venue which is big enough, has disabled access, and is central and well known. Decide how many speakers you want, what they should talk about, and for how long. Make sure they have been told well in advance what is required of them, your campaign's goals, and what the other speakers are going to say.

Making a presentation or speech

Just present in a way that makes you feel comfortable. Be passionate about your subject – if you're passionate your audience will get fired up. Every speaker develops his or her own style, but here are some tips to help you communicate with your audience more effectively:

- ◀ Introduce yourself and say what you intend to talk about.

- ◀ Take a few moments to look at the audience before you start speaking.
- ◀ In smaller groups, make eye-contact with everybody. In large groups, slowly scan the room. Also smile!
- ◀ Relax – take deep breaths or even yawn before going on stage.
- ◀ Experienced speakers will often use jokes, anecdotes, analogies, or questions.
- ◀ Avoid jargon, clichés, technical language, and confusing figures or statistics.
- ◀ The pause can be very powerful. Pausing helps to highlight a point and gain attention.
- ◀ Emphasise key words or phrases with your voice.
- ◀ Avoid repeating words (e.g., “OK”, “you know”, “isn’t it?”) constantly.
- ◀ If you can, try not to use notes. If you have to use them, keep to a few short prompts, rather than writing down every word.
- ◀ Be prepared for questions and be honest. Don’t try to bluff if you don’t know the answer – don’t worry - you’re not expected to know everything!

Publicity

Mail/email all your members and contacts well in advance with the date, time, venue, and names of speakers. Make sure you advertise the meeting to the public, alliances, and other local organisations well in advance in order to ensure a good turnout. The listings section in your local newspaper is a good option.

Chairing

The Chair of the meeting is in charge of the way it will be run. Choose someone with experience and authority. The Chair’s job is to ensure the meeting starts and finishes on time, to make sure the speakers keep to time, and to invite questions from the floor.

Working with young people

If your event is likely to attract families and people under the age of 18, or if you would like to work with local schools or youth groups, please contact Supporter Services at our Birmingham Vegan Society office. Please do not work with young people without informing us as there are strict child protection guidelines.