

Starting Questions for Planning a Direct Action:

When and Why

Does it fit within campaign strategy?

What do you want to accomplish?

How will it forward the campaign?

Is there immediate harm that needs to stop?

Is there a political opportunity?

Have dialogue methods brought inadequate impact, so the social conditions need changed to enable more constructive dialogue?

Will this help form potential leaders for the broader movement, not merely the campaign?

Where and Who

Who are the focus persons?

Where would the action be most strategic to reach them?

How will the action affect your focus persons?

What are risks and possible consequences?

What

What is the opposition's story? What is your story?

What are the visuals you will use to get your story across?

Are your demands clear?

If someone takes a picture of the action, what do you want it to be?

Considerations for selecting a direct action:

From the Ruckus Society – www.ruckus.org

The Functions of Direct Action

As we discuss the uses of direct action, remember one thing: almost all successful actions occur within the context of an ongoing campaign. This means that political – not only logistical – work has been done before the action. This improves the chances that your action will be understood and successful. This also means you intend to follow up on your action. Intervention demands responsibility. Here are some typical functions of direct action within campaigns:

ANNOUNCEMENT OR ALARM

You have learned of a situation that demands immediate attention from the public. Your direct action is meant to shine a light on a hidden (more likely, covered-up) danger that must not be kept secret.

REINFORCEMENT

You have been campaigning on an issue, yet somehow the issue remains murky to the public. You take action to clearly define the evil or injustice, and the parties responsible.

PUNCTUATION

Direct action can be used to sustain interest in a campaign. It is a dramatic reminder that the problem has not gone away. Direct action can serve as a milepost – the early anti- nuclear movement marked time by Seabrook occupations – or it may commemorate an outrage that should not be forgotten, such as the fifth anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill, or ten years

since Chernobyl.

ESCALATION

A frequent use of direct action is to raise the stakes in an ongoing struggle. If a group of activists who have not previously used direct action turns to it, this sends a message that the situation has become critical and direct action is the last remaining avenue of protest.

MORALE

Sometimes when a group has suffered a setback and morale is low – or a group is tired from a long struggle – direct action can serve to raise the spirits and renew the struggle.

There is no doubt that direct action is a powerful builder of morale and community, but a word of caution. Those of us who have engaged in direct action know its transforming effect. It leads to new discoveries about yourself, changes and intensifies your relationship with your fellow activists, and alters profoundly your notions of power. It is intoxicating. But these personal-growth benefits are not the reason for doing direct action. Your actions should strive to make an objective change in the world – to literally change the course of history. The change you seek is the main course of the action; empowerment, self-awareness and community are dessert.

Types of Direct Action:

Protest – putting out a message of dissent (rallies, pickets, vigils, etc)

Non-cooperation – taking something out of the system that the system needs to operate (strikes, boycotts)

Intervention – getting in the way of the functioning of the system (civil disobedience)

Creative Solutions – demonstrating the change you're seeking to make

Points of Intervention:

Point of Production: factory, crop lands

Examples: Strikes, sit-ins, occupations

Point of Destruction: resource extraction sites (forest, mine), points of toxic discharge

Examples: Road blocks, tree-sits

Point of Consumption: stores, restaurants, hotels, etc

Examples: Boycotts, pickets

Point of Decision: corporate headquarters, slumlord's office, government office

Point of Potential: site where something is planned to happen or should happen

Examples: Turning an empty lot into a garden

Point of Assumption: taking an opportunity to challenge underlying beliefs

Examples: Hijacking a spectacle to get your message across