

Use the “Spectrum of Allies” Model to Strategize How to Expand and Strengthen the Climate Movement

Illustrate this model on newsprint:

In most struggles for bold social or political change, some people want the bold reform and other people do not.

Let’s draw a line whose left-hand point shows people who **strongly** want to keep the **status quo**, and a right-hand point for those who **strongly** want the **bold reform**.

In practice, **individuals** in the population are on the spectrum **somewhere between these two end-points**.

Likewise various constituencies and groups of people – and various power-wielding organizations – also are placed at **various places along the spectrum**.

This “SPECTRUM OF ALLIES” model can help us build the climate movement too:

Various parts of the population hold various positions about **solving the climate crisis**, ranging from “STRONG DENIAL OR OPPOSITION” to “UNDECIDED” to “STRONGLY WANT BOLD ACTIONS TO PROTECT THE CLIMATE,” with various gradations in between.

Today’s workshop will help us generate strategies that we can use for moving the kinds of people from **each** point on the spectrum one step farther along toward our position.

- Which kinds of people (social groups or political groups or other constituencies) most STRONGLY OPPOSE taking realistic actions to solve the climate crisis? *We can write them at or near the left end of the spectrum.*
- Which kinds of people are more UNDECIDED? *We can write them at or near the middle parts of the spectrum.*
- Which kinds of people most STRONGLY WANT STRONG ACTIONS TO SOLVE the climate crisis? Which social groups or political groups or other constituencies? *We can write them at or near the spectrum’s right end.*

To develop workable strategies to strengthen the climate movement, we do **not** need to convert people from the opposite end of the spectrum to jump all the way to our end. Rather, we can simply **move enough people from EACH point on the spectrum ONE STEP TOWARD** our end of the spectrum. **Therefore we should figure out:**

- How to **weaken** the **strong opponents’ strong opposition**, so they will do less to oppose our efforts for the climate.
- How to turn **mild opponents** of the climate into becoming undecided, so they will stop opposing our efforts.
- How to move **undecided** people toward openness to learning about – and possibly supporting – our climate efforts.
- How to move people who **care somewhat about the climate** into actually working with us to protect the climate.
- How to sustain and strengthen **climate supporters** to become more committed and active for the struggles ahead.

Are we clear about our task? We do not need to convert our strongest adversaries all the way to our side. Just devise strategies to move the people in each segment one segment toward our direction. Altogether, these many small shifts will shift the overall nation’s weight toward a stronger movement to protect the climate.

Likewise, we should not be fixated on the people who hold official political power (legislators, governors, judges, etc.). If we strategize how to move the various segments toward our direction, the people with official power will move our way too. (Sometimes I wear a button saying, “If the people lead, eventually the leaders will follow.”)

→ Now let’s generate strategies to move people in EACH segment JUST ONE STEP toward our goal:

- (1) Persons and entities that **STRONGLY OPPOSE** realistic actions to solve the climate crisis
- (2) Persons and entities that **SOMEWHAT OPPOSE** realistic actions to solve the climate crisis
- (3) Persons and entities that **are NEUTRAL or UNDECIDED or have MIXED FEELINGS** about the climate crisis
- (4) Persons and entities that **SOMEWHAT SUPPORT** realistic actions to solve the climate crisis
- (5) Persons and entities that **STRONGLY SUPPORT** realistic actions to solve the climate crisis, **BUT ARE NOT DOING MUCH** to help our movement: How can we motivate, organize, and activate them – and sustain their efforts until we win?

This model’s basic idea is in Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey’s book, *A Manual for Direct Action*, Quadrangle Books, 1965

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