

10 WAYS TO KILL A CITIZEN MOVEMENT

(This tongue-in-cheek view is taken from an article by the same title by Byron Kennard in Not Man Apart, June 1982.)

1. Forget your origins.

Citizen movements for social change nearly always originate in humble and obscure circumstances. Later on when the movement is off the ground and running, these origins become embarrassing to the careerists who have latched onto it in search for gold and glory.

2. Put experts in the driver's seat.

Volunteers and generalists may have been good enough to organize the movement, but they aren't good enough to run it. So when money starts to come in, it is time to kick the volunteers and generalists out and to hire "qualified" persons, preferably someone with a Ph.D. in physics or economics. Forget a movement needs heart and vision as well as expertise.

3. Get serious about your work.

Work too hard. Put in extremely long hours. Practice looking grim and depressed. If possible, grow morbid. When you have mastered all this, persist in calling your colleagues' attention to the fact of your martyrdom.

4. Adopt impossibly high and rigid standards of personal conduct, not only for yourself but for others too.

Human frailty has no place in a citizen movement. Whenever it rears its ugly head, you must be prepared to smash it to smithereens. Even slight deviations from your standards must not escape punishment. If, for example, you catch a nutrition activist eating hot-dog in a fast-food restaurant, condemn him on the spot for the Judas that he is.

5. Motivate others by applying guilt.

If a group is working to save endangered species, attack it for its insensitivity to the poor. If they are working to help the poor, attack them for this insensitivity to the endangered species. Whatever you do, stick them in a no-win situation. Once they perceive that their work is futile, they will, of course redouble their efforts.

6. Talk a lot about the need to cooperate and to share, but for heaven's sake, don't actually do it.

What you actually should do is to attempt to dominate all proceedings through the force of your intellect and personality. However, should you encounter other persons who are foolish enough to cooperate and share, by all means take them for everything they're worth.

7. Get yourself into a dither and stay there.

Become over excited. Remember, the end of the world is coming and we haven't got much time. Thus, to demonstrate dedication, everybody should run about like a chicken with its head cut off. If some people in the movement are striving to work calmly and deliberately, making them agitated and anxious should become your priority task.

8. Whatever you do, never share any credit.

Look, it's perfectly clear that the whole thing was your idea in the first place. And nobody, living or dead, contributed anything really important to you. So why should you share the credit? If, through some terrible miscarriage of justice, other people in the movement begin receiving credit, try to grab it from them. Or try spreading the word that they really don't deserve it.

9. Remember that intensity of commitment is best measured by the amount of incivility you display.

Here again, little things mean a lot. For example, you should never be on time for meetings. But when you do arrive, be sure to get interrupted by telephone calls at least once every five minutes. The rest of the time you should be consumed by your talking as loudly as possible in accusatory tones. The trust of your comments should never vary. Again and again, you must make clear that both the truth and the democratic process will be gravely damaged unless you get your way.

10. Lastly, you must avoid doing any real work for the movement while creating the widespread impression that you are giving your all.

Scrupulous fulfillment of these ten rules will demand all your time and energy, so none will be left to fulfill any duties to the movement. But don't let this stop you from assuming as much responsibilities as you can get. Insist on being part of everything. If possible, try to be put in charge. Then take great care not to deliver on any of your obligations and commitments.

