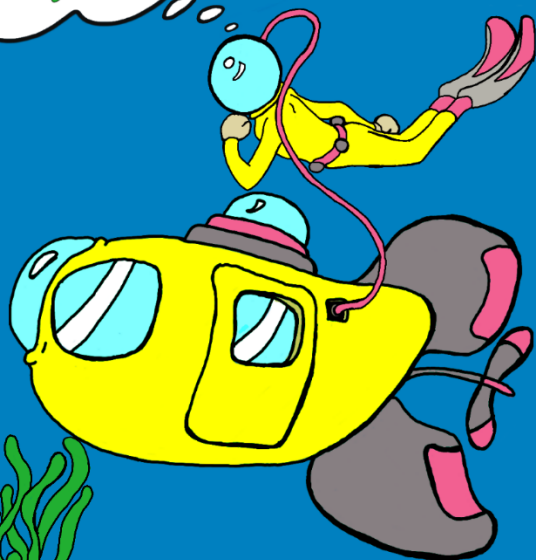


Thinking  
Outside  
the Submarine



Leadership Lessons  
Learned in  
Class

By STEPHEN CHENEY



*Thinking Outside  
the Submarine:*

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Learned in Class*

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# *Introduction*

Much of what I'm going to say in here is—to me, anyway—common sense, so by throwing down some ideas, don't think I'm claiming to be all that original. However, certain entire academic disciplines, such as logic and economics, are essentially common sense, too, albeit refined. Take these ideas in that way: *refined* common sense. My background is in philosophy, so think of this as a mini-treatise on the philosophy of student leadership. As such, I will possibly raise some questions that I leave for you to answer in your own planning, so brace yourself if you have a problem with cliffhanger endings.

(Note: if you're curious why the title is what it is, you won't have long to wait—it's in chapter 1.)

## Structure

Part of being an effective and efficient student leader is being an effective and efficient student. You have to lay a solid foundation here since you are in college primarily for your studies (although I realize many student leaders need to be periodically reminded of this). Thus, part 1 focuses on that and has two chapters. Part 2 focuses on the leadership more directly, looking at different aspects of organization planning over five chapters. Chapter 1 is probably my personal favorite. Chapter 2 will be a bit less exhortational

than chapter 1 but more strategic. The other chapters are not a step-by-step how-to of starting a group since most people won't be in that position. They merely go over various aspects of student leadership in a somewhat logical order. The principles I present should more or less stand (or fall) on their own.

Many things about the book are isolated points that needn't be strung together. However, the sequence presented here is still deliberate, so I wouldn't deviate from it without good reason.

#### Some Disclaimers on Content

The purpose of this manual is not to give you ideas for fundraisers or teambuilders. There are many resources for things like that. This book is intended to provide questions more than answers because the first step to having the right answers—or in knowing what to do with them—is having the right questions. Contrary to what outsiders think, philosophy does provide answers. But ask those on the inside (of philosophy), and they will tell you that the questions get them more excited than the answers.

The pattern of much of this text is to introduce some business, economics, or philosophy concept and show how employing it can be beneficial to a certain aspect of organization planning. Hopefully, I have done a decent job of explaining these concepts in the small paragraphs I devote to each one. The primary lesson here is to employ the concepts I mention, of course, but the secondary lesson is to get you to think of your own ways of importing concepts to the

benefit of your causes. Maybe you'll come up with just as many and write your own book and I will use it in any community organizing that I do.

This is not a treatise of social science. If you think I have made some sweeping generalizations or unsupported assertions, I agree. If you think I have made them erroneously, I disagree (naturally), but I invite you to take this manual for what it is and see if where I end up after those assertions helps you nonetheless.

The book is not meant to be political, but will at times use political examples. It's a book on student organizing, and activist causes are one major subset of such organizing. These examples are just intended to illustrate a point; please don't read them as more than that. As with most books, it purports to have important and challenging ideas. In that sense, it is intended to be controversial, just not politically controversial.

### Why Listen to Me?

Here comes the awkward part of writing any book where the author is forced to puff himself up, to an extent. I don't expect this book to circulate too far beyond people who have met me in person, but in case it does, here's a bit into my background to show where the ideas in this book are coming from and why I may (or may not) have some authority on the subjects discussed.

I attended the University of Texas at San Antonio in the 2000's and tried to leave no stone unturned. I wasn't big man on campus in high school or anything, nor did I come to

UTSA with any particular ambitions. But the friendliness of the campus and ease with which one could make an impact drew me in, and I ended up becoming a Resident Assistant at the dorm, a summer Orientation Leader, a parliamentarian in the Student Government Association, a secretary in the Student Alumni Association, a member of the UTSA Ambassadors, a flag football mascot, and a member of various ideological groups. (I will keep them here nameless so as not to bias the text.) I also helped get a residence hall council re-launched, almost became a Supplemental Instructor, and spent a year as the only non-Indian attending meetings of the Indian Cultural Association. For this zealous approach to campus life, I was named to Who's Who and was crowned Mr. UTSA at Homecoming. All the while, I went through the academic struggles of anyone else, having changed my major three times and twice changed colleges within UTSA.

I almost started my own group, but, after laying quite a bit of groundwork, something important came up that year to derail my progress. It was going to be a council connecting certain other organizations to help them coordinate their missions, with the members being representatives from the constituent organizations. Of all the things I had done at UTSA, I didn't have any single thing I could point to as my legacy, so I wanted this council to happen. Perhaps the failure of this to materialize partially motivates this book.

After getting my Master's, I sought re-entry into the UTSA atmosphere as an employee. I now work at UTSA helping students and naturally took the opportunity to be an

organization's faculty/staff advisor. While I've only officially been an advisor to two student groups, I've been an unofficial consultant to several others. After seeing so much student involvement get lost to history every year, I created Rowdypedia, a wiki of UTSA history and traditions. I say all this to show that I know quite a bit about different models and examples of student organizations.

After seeing multiple generations of student leaders make the same mistakes and learn the same lessons as those from yesteryear, I naturally became interested in helping student leaders learn from the past. In various interactions where I have imparted grandfatherly lessons, what seemed to me to be rather intuitive points or principles were received as quite novel. After repeating myself enough times with certain points, and finding certain other points to fall upon very receptive ears, I started tossing around the idea of writing a book—to both save me time and maximize the impact of these lessons.

What follows bespeaks the combination of both my student leadership and my academic backgrounds. My academic wanderings started in computer science, then information systems, then management, and then finally philosophy. I found the computer majors and the business majors to both focus on efficiency, which translated nicely into philosophy as means and ends. This helped me reflect upon what I was doing as a student leader tremendously. The outcome is a perhaps fresh approach to leadership and organizing.

I call this approach “perhaps fresh” because I don’t know for sure. I deliberately did not consult other leadership and organizational materials so as not to make this a research project, for one, but also so as not to have their ideas have undue influence over this work and thereby make it superfluous. However, I have a feeling this approach will at least be fresh to much of my audience because in my job I frequently talk students into those “Eureka!” moments that help shape how we look at the world around us. Hopefully you’ll have some of those as you turn the pages.

# *Part 1*

## *Being an Effective and Efficient Student*



# *Chapter 1*

## *Being an Effective Student*

While Niccolo Macchiavelli is not typically a person I would recommend anyone to model themselves after, I believe it's important for someone who is looking to achieve his or her utmost effectiveness to humbly pick up wisdom wherever he or she can find it. In chapter 1 of *The Prince*, his famous handbook for taking over the world, he distinguishes all events as arising through either "virtù" or "fortuna." Since 'fortuna' is used pretty much as our English 'fortune' or 'luck', it is usually translated; 'virtù' presents more complications so it is often left untranslated. What he means by 'virtù' is anything other than luck, happenstance, providence, etc. Virtù is thus a way of summarizing everything that is within your power to affect or effect.

Machiavelli's very graphic conclusion at the end of chapter 25 is often summarized by commentators as his recommending that we "maximize virtù and minimize fortune." While his dictum has been used to justify much usurpation and tyranny over the centuries, I believe it can also serve as a necessary corrective to those who too easily

give excuses for ineffectiveness in their personal and professional lives.

### Creating Your Circumstances

The modern student is all too ready to blame circumstances for any deficiencies in academic or financial results. Regardless of what has caused this dependency culture, I think it can be well typified by the ethical dilemmas frequently given in a modern philosophy class. You're standing next to a switch that will determine whether an unstoppable train will run over three "important" people or five "unimportant" people. (The numbers don't matter; the point is that you're called upon to weight the value of human life.) Even philosophy majors don't often think to ask, "What did I do to get into this situation in the first place?" Somehow such a retort is more likely to come from a class clown than from those majoring in critical thinking.

The scenario itself is just a way of illustrating situations we have in life, but I think the aforementioned clever retort also illustrates this. Just like the way the scenario implies you just magically appeared in dire straits, many people when complaining of the lot they're given in life similarly imply that they just inherited a bad situation. This is neither entirely true nor entirely false; certain situations are more or less preventable or foreseeable than others. The point is that, rather than using your current situation as an excuse, you should recognize that what you do within that situation helps to create the *next* situation you will face.

Machiavelli's point is related: if you increase the percentage of your circumstances that are under your control, then with more skill you can more proactively create your future (for better or worse) rather than passively allowing it to unfold (and causing your own future to be a spectator sport).

### Don't Be Afraid to Fail

Another modern attitude that might help account for why we seem to blame circumstances a lot is that many people are afraid to fail. Because we are afraid to fail, we're afraid to view ourselves as being masters of our own destinies. As long as we can think of ourselves as relatively powerless, we can better accept life's curveballs.

There's no integrity, however, in accepting our own victories but not our defeats. This is dishonest and cowardly. Thus, we must be willing to admit some (past and future) failures so that we become people who take ownership over our outcomes. I get that no one wants to be thought of as a failure, but I think we don't think clearly enough about what this means. Note that the scientific method involves failing 999 times so that the 1,000<sup>th</sup> time results in an amazing breakthrough.

Many people do not keep the same career for all of life, or even the same major for all of college. Often, such people are enriched for having had multiple backgrounds. One might view each of these false starts as a failure, but given that such wanderers are that much more experienced, they are often viewed by peers as successes. It's a

philosophical distinction to make sure not to confuse what something does with what it is. In this case, people view failing at something as synonymous with being a failure; my contention is that the opposite is true. It is a fear of adventure that doesn't seize opportunities—opportunities to succeed *or* fail—that makes one a failure. Since failing is a sign that one has gone out on a limb, it's the sign of a person who is fully alive and, therefore, a success. Thus, upon further reflection, this conventional myth gets turned on its head: failing at something suggests that a person is a success. This is the power of critical thinking applied to every nook and cranny of life, as I hope to illustrate many times in this book.

More specifically, though, what exactly is it that we are afraid of in failing? If it's a business venture, there might be a big loan to pay back, or if it's a thinly-supported academic conclusion, there might be some credibility lost. So I can see some concrete reasons to be concerned, but I see those issues as prudential caution rather than fear. I think often it's the derision of the multitudes and what people think that motivates our inaction.

I think people like to see risky projects fail because it justifies their own conventionality. People deep down recognize the cowardice of staying in the boxes they are assigned and thus fear the success story. The easier success seems, the more pressure there is for them to become inventive and explore the uncomfortable and uncharted. Hence, people can be quick to point out failure. When we allow small-minded people to limit our big dreams, we give

them a power over us that we might encapsulate in the term “mediocracy”—rule by the mediocre. We only liberate ourselves from this terrible oppressor when our fear of our lives’ mediocrity becomes greater than our fear of the opinions of the mediocracy.

The way this can play itself out can be very subtle. Back when the Occupy Wall Street movement was occupying the airwaves, someone chalked a UTSA sidewalk, “You are the 99%.” I understand and appreciate the sense of solidarity that the author intended, but I still think people should have felt slighted by it. A properly contentious response could have been, “I’m working on that.” I think the statement was highly presumptuous on a college campus where we are invited to dream big.

Leaving the politics and economics of the Occupy movement aside, one thing the movement reveals to me about our society is very puzzling. While it is okay to idolize professional athletes and pop icons for making millions, we demonize the business executives and financiers who sometimes make just as much. There might be good reasons for this, but most actions have multiple motivations, some hidden. I think one of the motives for this double standard is the fear of failure. I can treat pop stars and professional athletes as almost another species. We can look up to them because they are safely in another realm of humanity—living in a land to which we will never have access, especially given that many of them are younger than many of us. I can’t be Justin Bieber because I’m no longer a teenager and don’t have Usher as a mentor. However, what’s stopping me from

becoming the big shot politician, CEO, or broker? Nothing except my own choices, really. While I can admire the wealth and success of the celebrity and the business man alike, the business man presents a more dangerous admiration since along with that admiration comes the challenge: that could be you. We demonize partially for political reasons but partially because of our own insecurities; our insecurities thus function as the senators of the mediocracy voting down opportunities for excellence.

C. S. Lewis illustrates this well in his essay, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast." His protagonist presents the story of an ancient Greek tyrant asking political advice from another Greek tyrant. He doesn't say a word but instead answers by going to a field of grain where he chops off the tops of any tall stalks down to the level of the rest. This tells him that staying in power means disposing of any greatness that might threaten you or inspire the rabble. The criticism in Lewis' essay is that an egalitarian ethos (not the same as an egalitarian political philosophy) has gone so far as to enforce this mediocrity on its own, without a dictator. Having this circumstance, his protagonist concludes, is worse than having the tyrant because your own society turns on itself, using peer pressure (or worse) to shame the successful for their supposed betrayal of the common folk.

What's even worse than this, however, is the conformist society, where, rather than average stalks tearing down tall stalks, you have tall stalks tearing down themselves in order to fit in. This is what we live in today and it's what you need to break free of in order to achieve greatness. Too

many people look around them to figure out how to be. They don't invest in retirement as 25-year-olds because they don't hear other 25-year-olds talking about such things. To an extent, conformity is called "socialization" and is appropriate; but when others' actions are treated not as suggestions but as boundaries within which one must think and operate, they become the Greek tyrant.

### Not Your Fault, But Your Problem

Getting back to the topic of circumstances, something I hear a lot as an excuse for why someone won't fix their situation is that they didn't cause the situation. However, it's important, for the sake of your own empowerment, to recognize the difference between something being your fault and something being your problem. I've heard an organization officer defend inaction in something that was clearly in their job description by saying, "It's not my fault."

True or not, we often have obstacles that we did not put there but that are still there. The dent caused by that hit and run in the parking lot while you were in class is not your fault. But you still have a choice: pay a deductible or have a dented car. You were dealt a bad hand, but the hand is still *yours*. How will you play your cards? Focus on what is under your control. In this sense, perhaps a corollary to Machiavelli's principle is that we should maximize the amount of our attention spent on *virtù* and minimize the amount of attention we devote to fortune. If we can't maximize *virtù* in and of itself, at least maximizing our focus

on it will yield improved circumstances and also an improved attitude in meeting those circumstances head-on. The sooner you emotionally prepare for these occurrences, the sooner you can logistically prepare your way out of them.

Likewise, if something *is* your fault but *is not* your problem, such as a favor you promised that is now less convenient to fulfill, the moral thing to do is to make it your problem. In this example, not fulfilling the promise doesn't hurt you, so what's your fault is not your problem. But if you follow through anyway—or at least substitute the favor for one of comparable benefit to the beneficiary—you are showing that you're willing to make it your problem, too.

### Contempt for Convention

One of the biggest assets of being a philosopher is not being able to turn off the questions. This can make being philosophical very tiring, but new ways of looking at the world are worth the exhaustion. Philosophy has cultivated in me a distaste for convention that, when exercised with moderation, can yield great results. When I see something done enough times, my annoyance kicks in and I start to ask why we do it. The result is either that I learn something valuable or I learn that the rationale behind it is weak or outdated. I deconstruct it to either reconstruct it if it has merit or discard it if it doesn't. Thus, either I appreciate the practice better or I free myself to find a better one (or improved version of it) to engage in. I see it as a win-win.

For example, why does everyone seem to want to park in the two or three aisles right in front of the grocery

store? Consequently, the closest available spot in those rows might be 20 spaces from the store whereas if I go over a couple aisles I can be up front. 20 parking spaces is more walking than 2 aisles, so I'm actually closer to the door if I park on the side. Or, should it even be about proximity to the door at all? What's the point of parking in the first spot if I have to backtrack to the cart return in the fifth spot? Expediency would suggest that I should park closer to the cart return (unless I'm worried about carts denting my vehicle).

To bring this to a student leadership example, for my Mr. UTSA campaign, someone from the Student Government Association suggested I make buttons since SGA members often do that for their own campaigns. I made a few and found their production to be ridiculously painstaking. Upon grumbling that there had to be a better way, I had an epiphany and decided that it would be a lot easier to make stickers. I bought mailing labels from Office Depot and used Microsoft Word's mail merge feature to print out 750 stickers in 20 minutes at a cost of \$6 (with no bruised hands) as opposed to the ridiculous effort and cost of the button-making machine I had borrowed. The only downside is that you can't re-wear stickers like you can with buttons, but with only two days of voting, that just meant I had to compare the cost of two stickers to one button, and stickers still came out ahead. However, this innovation would not have happened if my frustration had not expressed itself constructively by abhorring convention.

After being told enough times that I think outside the box, that phrase itself became distasteful to me. Then I started thinking about the fact that it's a metaphor and that it appeals to those who wouldn't like the idea of being stuck in a box (which is everyone). But what if I was to change the metaphor and say, "think outside the submarine"? Now all of a sudden it's not quite so appealing. Nobody in a submerged submarine wants to open the door and get out. I just include this to show that if you want to really expand your thinking, note that you can also think outside the box about thinking outside the box.

#### Who's in Charge Here?

One final point: If you treat life like you're in charge, you're right. If you treat it like you're not in charge, you're right. I've noticed people say all the time that, "If only the government would..." Or people assume that if the government doesn't whatever whatever then whatever whatever is destined to not happen. My reading of American history is that this country was built by people who had the opposite approach. Whether they settled a frontier with minimal infrastructure or they left everything they knew from their homeland in order to migrate here, early Americans were almost self-selected for initiative and determination.

Today's handout society (whether in the form of left-wing welfare for the poor or right-wing bailouts for the rich) would probably baffle many from those generations. During the recent elections, I heard people on both sides talk about

how doomed we would be if so-and-so got elected. What I see is a country already doomed if its people have an attitude like that. I heard one person say of the election that “we are in good hands.” I pointed out that we are only in good hands if we are in our own hands. If we don’t take responsibility ourselves for the shape of the world around us, we fail to realize how change actually gets accomplished.

I’ve had enough exposure to the inner workings of politics to see how little power politicians really have. In talking with a politician, you might hear something about a certain measure not being politically feasible yet, or their constituents or donors not being in favor of something. Thus, while we quickly pass the buck to the politician, they often pass it right back. What gives? Who is actually in charge here?

Everyone seems to think someone else is in charge. In so far as they think that, they can make that true by being bowled over. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. It’s not that there’s a power vacuum: there are lots of people in lots of positions. But perhaps there is something analogous: an assertiveness vacuum, or—dare I say it?—a courage vacuum.

I can’t know all that Mohandas Gandhi meant by his famous maxim, “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” but I imagine that something like this is at least included in that. Note that he didn’t say, “Vote for someone to be the change you wish to see.” What’s easier, getting someone else to do something or doing it yourself? I don’t ask this rhetorically: in any given situation, the answer isn’t obvious, but this question should be asked. It might be easier for me

to gather together a neighborhood watch myself than to fight city council for more patrols of my neighborhood. But it might be harder for me to personally stamp out illiteracy in my city than to get my government to do it. I think too often though, our domesticated, regulated, sedated American minds assume it's easier to have someone else do our dirty work.

# *Chapter 2*

## *Being an Efficient Student*

One year as a student I had a perfectly planned out personal schedule that included everything. I was so proud of myself. Then by the second week, I realized my fallacy: I was proud of my schedule for being airtight, but that was its very problem. It left no room for error—for me to get tired or for a loved one to get sick or any other such issue to arise. I managed decently throughout the semester, but I found myself getting tired and sacrificing quality on some things. And this was all enabled by the good fortune of no major emergencies derailing my schedule, something its inflexibility was vulnerable to.

This is when I came to the realization that while you will hear of people talk about time management and money management, those are not the only finite human resources. We are also limited on energy and on focus and must learn how to manage those things, as well. Even if people begin to talk more than they currently do about managing energy and focus, I still think time and money management will always

be easier to talk about because they are quantifiable. (To the physics majors out there, I know technically you can quantify energy. But until people have energy meters a la *The Sims*, this is unhelpful.) Despite this sermonizing about how we should not simply talk about managing time and money, most of what I'll talk about in this chapter relates to time management because it's easier to master.

### Spending Yourself

The first step in time management is to realize how important it is to do—and to understand its importance deep down into your soul. Think of it this way: your very existence is a limited resource. A schedule measures how you spend your time, but how you spend your time determines how you spend yourself. Philosophically, your essence is not synonymous with your time on the earth, but in a significant sense, it seems that way. When you see your property or savings go down the drain, you flash back to the hard work you put into acquiring those things. That was time and energy spent—that was *yourself* spent—in that baseball card collection that now has water damage. In a wedding vow, you promise yourselves to each other. The weird thing is, you're already together, so what does it mean to promise yourself? It means committing your futures, thus, your future *time*. We intuitively identify giving time with giving ourselves.

The other main philosophical point I want to make to show why managing time is important is that time is the great equalizer. Aside from the fact that we never know

when death will come, we all plan on having the same 80-some years, so there's never someone who has so much time that each hour or day has less value. To some, a hundred dollars is a lot and to others it's nothing, but this never happens with time. There's no upper or lower class when it comes to chronological resources. Therefore, you must learn to maximize it because it's all you're going to get. Also unlike money, you can't spend time you don't have. There is no debt with time. It's metaphysically impossible to "spend" more time than you receive.

### Efficiency as an End

The philosophical concept of ends and means is helpful in thinking through almost anything. An end is a goal, whatever your overt aim is, and a means is how you get there. Some people colloquially refer to money as "means"; you can see then how this makes sense given that money is only good for what it gets you. It is never in and of itself the goal, even if we talk about it that way. We talk about it that way because it symbolizes what it can get you.

Philosophy also makes a similar (but slightly different) distinction between inherent value and instrumental value. A pencil has only instrumental value in so far as it can be used to record ideas. If it breaks and can no longer write, it has lost its value since its value does not "inhere"—it is not inherent. However, the ideas that were written down before the pencil broke could very well have inherent value, as they might directly bring some sort of satisfaction. For the purposes of this book, the slight

difference between these two pairs won't matter; I just include both to give you two ways of looking at this distinction since it's so useful.

Some people, in talking about efficiency, will describe it as something valued next to other things. Let's say an organization is going around at a planning meeting saying what they want more of for the group in the coming year as opposed to the previous year. Members might say things like "more tabling," "more web content," and "more socials." If a member were to say "more efficiency," it would seem out of place, and rightly so. The point of efficiency is to make more of yourself available so that anything that you value can be more obtainable. Efficiency helps you get to whatever other goals you have. More efficiency is not at odds with more tabling and more socials; it helps free you up to do those things.

Since efficiency is a way of saying "speed," and since speed simply means how quickly you get somewhere, that *somewhere* is the point, not speed or efficiency. In this sense, efficiency can never be an end just as money can never be an end. But since it helps you attain almost every other end, just as money does, it will still be appropriate to focus significant attention on it.

With that being said, there are things that do not deserve to be scrutinized in terms of efficiency. If you've ever been in a hurry and had to walk behind a couple holding hands, you know that love is one such thing: people don't brag about how quickly they completed their honeymoon. Or, if a funeral runs over on time, it would be ghastly to

complain. Further, anything hand-made is more valuable *precisely because* of how long it took to create. These scenarios better capture what life is about than business scenarios do, but please don't see efficiency as a cold antithesis to these things. Efficiency helps you dispatch the less important aspects of your life more quickly so that you can spend more time in transcendent moments such as the ones I just described. (Note: I'm not thereby wishes more funerals upon you!)

### Your Life as a Business

Since business classes give students tools for analyzing the efficiency of a company, these same principles can be very useful in organizing one's own life. Indeed, when I made my airtight schedule, I was majoring in business management. If you start to view your life like a business, some interesting things can happen. One of my favorite lines from Jay-Z is, "I'm not a businessman; I'm a business, man!" I imagine the subtle comma being the immense difference between working for a company and running your own life as if it is one.

Some business terms are pretty obvious: cost-benefit analysis just means looking at the pros and cons of something before deciding whether to begin. I think many of us do this subconsciously, but we're not as thorough about it as a business needs to be. For example, I've seen so many students take a \$1,000 class they don't need because they hear they have to be full-time to get their full financial aid grant. They fail to notice that the difference in grant money

for that one class is only \$250 and thus barely covers the books.

A business term that's a bit less obvious is the concept of a "bottleneck," named after the way the neck of a bottle slows the speed of the liquid pouring out of it. The easiest way to illustrate efficiency is usually with traffic since in a car is the one place where everyone is impatient. (It's amazing how this impatience makes people such good economists while driving—picking efficient routes that maximize right turns and have minimal traffic—but most drivers fail to transfer these lessons to the other parts of their lives.) If traffic is slowed when a three-lane highway narrows to two lanes, you can't help the situation by expanding the three-lane part to four lanes. The bottleneck is the two lane part. Perhaps a more common metaphor nowadays would be a "weakest link," due to the recent game show, but whatever your metaphor is, make sure you pump your resources into the right area so that you're not wasting them—so that you're solving the *actual* problem. When you "grease the wheels," make sure you're greasing the right ones.

Also, keep in mind that what's efficient for all might not be efficient for one. The postal service might be the quickest way to handle everyone's messages to everyone else. However, if I'm sending a check across town, I can get it there by mail in two days or just drive it there in twenty minutes. Likewise, freeways are the most efficient way to get everyone where they need to go, but if I want to go from the fourth restaurant on the access road to the second

restaurant on the access road, I have to drive in a two-mile long circle. In one sense, it's more efficient but in another, it's not. (Perhaps these can be called "micro-" and "macro-efficiency.") Think through which kind of efficiency you need in each situation.

### Economics and Student Life

I love that my alma mater has required economics for every student for so long (although many students don't like this) since economics is about more than just money. After taking it, I found myself thinking in economic terms when it came to time management. For example, overhead cost is what it costs a business to run each day, regardless of the number of sales: rent, utilities, the labor involved in opening and closing, etc. Thus, if it costs \$100 worth of labor to open a store whether you sell anything or not, you would rather sell 500 items in 4 days than in 5 days, even if it means being open the same number of hours. This would favor fewer days of longer hours, provided you would still sell the same amount.

This concept can apply easily to time, as well. Who is going to get dishwasher ready for just one cup? The time it took to get started, the "overhead time" we'll call it, is more worth it the more things you wash. Likewise, I'm told by fitness trainers that you burn much more fat after the first twenty minutes of cardiovascular activity. Thus, to maximize fat burning, it's better to do three workouts of forty minutes than six workouts of twenty. This makes sense when you

realize you have to write off twenty minutes of each work out as overhead time.

The law of diminishing marginal utility also revolutionized my thinking. As you gain more of something, the benefit you derive from each additional unit decreases. The amount of value you gain from not owning a house to owning one house is immense. The amount you gain from then purchasing a second house is substantial, but not quite as important. By the time we imagine going from 39 to 40 houses, we probably can't even remember where all of them are located. Cars are another good example. Having a car versus not having one at all makes a huge difference. But if you have one for every day of the week and one gets totaled, that's not as big of a deal as losing the only one you have.

This is why I don't understand people staying up all night to cram for an exam. The amount of benefit you will derive from sixth through ninth hours of study will not be as much as what you will gain from the first through fourth hours of sleep. (Actually, from what I've heard, the first few hours of sleep have a tendency to erase short term memory. The next ones help concretize that info in long term memory. Thus, if an abbreviated slumber is inevitable due to a necessary cram session, it's probably best to do the sleeping first. But of course this is not a book on sleep and brain chemistry and you should find out from someone more qualified.)

### Time is *Like* Money

As with money, sometimes investing a little time now can pay dividends later; an hour of “extra” work now can sometimes save you two hours later. Think about how long it takes to get and stay organized versus how much time is wasted floundering in disorganization. Always look for ways to “invest” time upfront. For example, in grad school I found myself citing the same books over and over. The next time I had an extra hour, I decided to make a master bibliography of all the books I frequently use, taking time to make sure and put everything in the correct format. From then on, bibliographies became just a copy and paste job, rather than being something stressfully slapped together before the deadline (and swinging by the library again to catch the publication date because I forgot to write it down). On a side note, as an undergraduate student leader, I even fantasized about inventing an intravenous backpack so that I wouldn’t have to take time out of my day to eat!

I disagree with the common statement that “time is money.” However, I do think there is an exchange rate. Just like an ounce of silver in American dollars will be different than what it’s worth in Australian dollars, \$100 worth of my time will go a lot farther than \$100 worth of Warren Buffett’s time. Time *isn’t* money, despite the saying, but it can be turned into money. It’s similar to how knowledge *isn’t* power, despite the saying, but it can be turned into power.

Another relevant way that time is not exactly like money is that every dollar is interchangeable. In economic terms, this means it’s “fungible.” But this is not so with

time. If you're not a morning person, gaining an extra hour in the morning when you're not very functional is not likely to increase your productivity as much as gaining an hour at peak efficiency. Remember this when you're leaving gaps in your schedule for writing papers. Writing might take longer depending on your time of day. Likewise, it would be nice if, on a day when I have nothing going on, I could make my bed twenty times and deposit that somehow into a time bank. Then the next twenty times when I need my bed made but don't have the time, I could just withdraw. But time isn't like that.

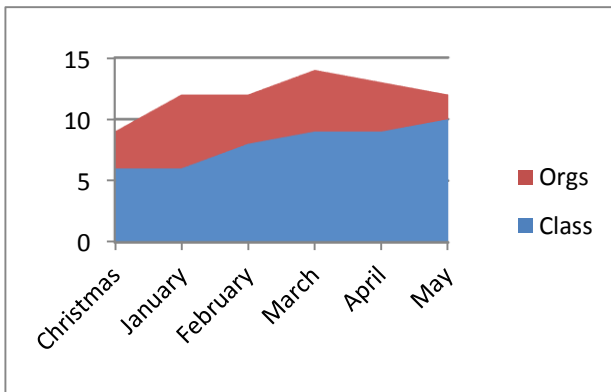
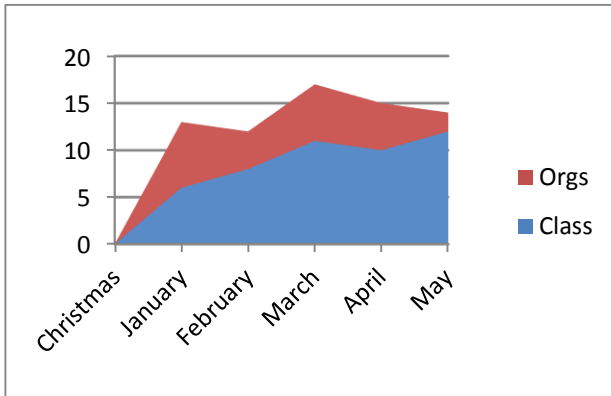
### Graphing Your Busyness

I always found it helpful to think of my involvement in my activities over the course of the semester as an area graph (akin to a line graph) depicting how many hours per day will be spent on each task. If the area that represents classes will swell around the eighth week because of mid-terms, recognize from the outset that the area that represents organizations or any other secondary items will have to shrink to accommodate (see graph 1 below).

The ideal situation is to try to do things in advance to flatten the lines on your graph so that you can pace out your semester better and not suffer as much from any turbulence. Think of it as ironing out the wrinkles in your graph. Perhaps you read ahead on a "trough" week so that you don't have to skimp on other activities when you hit the next "peak." There are many things that you can't plan for (best friend comes in from out of town for a weekend) but many things

you can (an annual weekend retreat). Perform a “Robin Hood” on your schedule: steal tasks from weeks with too much and give to weeks with too little.

People think I’m crazy when I recommend that they start their semesters in advance. But I remember hearing of students all the time complaining that they’re bored when school is not in session. Both winter and summer breaks are longer than they are in high school, so starting early is more like starting on time if you start practicing this before



getting used to the longer collegiate breaks. It just doesn't make sense to me to be bored one week and too busy the next if there's a way to even things out. You can get your books in advance and your syllabi, too, so I can't see a good reason *not* to start over the break if you're facing a really busy semester (see graph 2 above).

### Some Final Points

*Prioritization.* If you have 24 hours of things you want to do every day (including sleeping), you have no need to prioritize. Priorities are specifically for those who have more than 24 hours worth of things they want to do each day. Options at this point are to (1) become more efficient, (2) do everything but do it poorly, or (3) prioritize. The third option is the most common, but the first option is ideal. This chapter has hopefully given you some tools for becoming more efficient, and, of course, you might still decide to prioritize.

*Manage your focus.* If I spend my time walking in to work thinking about what it is I need to do, then my focus is maximized and it makes me more efficient when I get there. Spending this five minutes thinking ahead about my tasks will save me more than five minutes throughout the day. Also, if I group similar tasks on the same days, I get into a certain mode and can stay in it and remain more productive.

*Positive distractions.* I didn't deliberately procrastinate, but for some reason, as a grad student my mind couldn't focus on writing a paper until I had just enough time left to complete it—really convenient, I know. In the

meantime, though, I wouldn't allow myself to just goof off. By the time the paper was due, it was completed on time—and the dishes were washed and the floor was vacuumed and the trash was taken out, etc. These are all things I was going to have to do anyway, so it meant that after the paper was done, I could sooner focus on the next assignment.

*Deny yourself.* If you have lots of curricular and extracurricular goals and your ambition demands that you do them well, you might need to avoid going to parties and sporting events. (Then again, you can network at parties and games. But if you opt for this route, remember to choose which games and parties you attend based on which ones are likely to have the best networking yield, not based on which ones are the coolest or most hyped.)

*Work smart, not just hard.* I was the student in high school who could have put extra effort into taking one more AP class to boost my class rank. Instead, I put that effort into figuring out how to manipulate the class ranking system, getting a higher rank than many of the students in that extra AP class. The point is to work smart. I'll leave to you the decision as to whether working smart is a supplement to or replacement of working hard.

*Sleep does not equal rest.* Sleep and rest are not the same thing and you need both. Perhaps rest can be divided, such as mental rest while doing something physical and physical rest while doing something mental, but you'll still need to have some room in your schedule for some mindless leisure. This can overlap with Facebook or video games or light reading. Most people need some sort of wind-down

time towards the end of the day. The opportunist will try to equate this with something that needs to be done anyway, but this doesn't always work.

## *Part 2*

# *Effective and Efficient Student Leadership*



# *Chapter 3*

## *Conceptualizing Your Group*

In a typical philosophy class, the question might be asked, “what makes a chair a chair?” Literally speaking, only a furniture manufacturer or retailer cares. The point of the question is to illustrate the concept of an essence (in philosophy, the “problem of universals”) in an uncontroversial way so that when we change that to a more controversial question like “what makes a human being a human being?”, we have some kind of parallel to follow. I muse upon this somewhat frequently, even once, while moving, ruminating upon what defines one’s place of residence—when can I declare to myself that I have officially moved? Is it where one’s beddings are, where one’s desktop computer is set up, where one’s toothbrush is, or wherever Facebook says? (I settled upon where one’s underwear drawer is.)

In philosophy, we use this approach to discuss an object’s essence, but in the rest of life, it’s most useful for establishing identity. What makes a UTSA Roadrunner a UTSA Roadrunner? What makes a Phi Mu a Phi Mu? What makes an organization president a president? Aristotle, being perhaps our first taxonomist of sorts, would define the

essence of something by pointing out its uniqueness in a certain category. For example, “humankind” would be defined as “rational animal”: that subset of the category ‘animal’ which has certain reasoning capabilities we do not observe in the other members of the category.

While you might in passing explain your organization in this way—“the campus ministry [category] that does the free lunch on Wednesdays [uniqueness within the category]” or “the fraternity [category] that wins the football tournament each year [uniqueness]”—probably your official organization identity will be articulated more supplely in a mission statement. Your mission statement shouldn’t sound like Aristotle (unless maybe your target audience is philosophy majors), but it’s still important to think about how you are like other groups and how you are different. This kind of thinking—with any concept, really—begins to show you your connectedness to the world around you but also your distinction. Seeing this connectedness helps you understand how you belong and seeing this distinction helps you understand how you stand out. It is often this contrast that helps us see, either as individuals or as organizations, what our mission or calling is. Thus, Moses could only be Moses because of the solidarity he felt with his oppressed people in combination with the education he got by being selected away from his people (and similar for Gandhi).

### Finding Purpose

With a heading like that, you would think this would be yet another philosophical section, but I actually want to

highlight two points related to economics. First, it's important to recognize that moral value and economic value are not one and the same. Miley Cyrus probably makes more in one year than many people in our most respected professions would make in a lifetime (especially San Antonio city councilmen). A recent Veterans' Day meme circulating says that men who wear helmets to chase a football should not make more money than men who wear helmets to defend our freedom. Economically speaking this is false, for football players do derive a worthwhile return on their investment in ticket sales and media contracts, but perhaps morally speaking this is true since without freedom we probably wouldn't have that entertainment.

If your group's message or purpose, objectively speaking, is far nobler or loftier than that of a group that attracts new members far more easily, this can cause some dissonance in one's mind. It can feel like you're not doing something that you should be doing to help bridge that disconnect. Whether or not this is true, it can definitely help to have a sense of perspective knowing that this parallels a situation that many find frustrating about our society in general.

The second point is called comparative advantage: what do you do that others can't do well? In economics, this happens when country A can produce textiles or corn equally well but neighboring country B can only make corn efficiently. When considered in a vacuum, it seems like country A would be equally well off making either or both. With its neighbor in the equation, however, country

A is actually better off producing textiles because of trade. Country B is going to make corn, period. If country A also makes corn, it will have an abundance of corn and no one to export it to. If it instead makes textiles, it can have both textiles and corn through trade with country B. Country B also happens to be better off in this arrangement, but that's not the point. Thus, oftentimes helping yourself helps others and vice versa. My point here is that when you're deciding how to shift the focus of your group (if necessary), consider what it is that other similar groups don't do well and fill that niche. This will help you draw members and basically write your "sales pitch" for you, so to speak.

### History

To study and know anything well is to know at least these two things about it: its history and its philosophy. We've already touched upon how philosophy relates to thinking through your organization's identity, but it's also vital to get to know your organization's history. Or, if you are starting a new group, try to get to know the history of similar groups at your school. Showing knowledge of the past can help people see that you're serious about the group and its future, helping people buy into your vision. It can also increase your ability to think about the future of the group; knowing that things weren't always a certain way helps you be less tied to failing organizational structures or antiquated avenues of outreach.

But history is not just about the past: you should think about the legacy that you will leave. Familiarizing

yourself with what has been left to you and analyzing its level of helpfulness, you are better able to leave things to future leaders that will help them. When passing knowledge down through the annals of your chapter, I think it's important not just to summarize changes but also the reasons that those changes were made. If something has always been done a certain way and you're not sure why, then you won't know whether or not it's still fulfilling that purpose.

Aristotle's concept of the golden mean argues that virtues have vices when they are too absent or too present (either a deficiency or an excess). Thus, too much courage is foolhardiness but too little is cowardice. We can characterize too little historical concern as perhaps naiveté, but it's equally important to recognize that too much historical concern is sentimentality. Long-standing traditions are impressive because each new generation has deemed that the traditions still fulfill a function. If everyone took the approach, "It should happen because it has always happened," then all traditions would be long-standing. Eventually, there wouldn't be enough people in existence to keep all of them going. If it has outlasted its original purpose, it's time to look for a new purpose for it. If the new purpose that is devised is inadequate to the work the tradition demands, or if one cannot be found at all, perhaps the tradition should live on only in scrapbooks and slideshows.

Philosophy Plus History: Creative New Combinations

Philosophy relies upon the strength of an oft-maligned skill: abstraction. Most people think of

abstractions as “distant” and therefore irrelevant compared to things that are more “down to earth.” However, something else which is distant and not very down to earth is a bird. Birds can go places us earthbound ones cannot. Also, if you think about it, birds seem to represent the liberal arts well since their migration patterns take them into contact with far more diverse geography than the migrations of land animals. And there is no art more “liberal” than philosophy, in the sense of liberal meaning “broad-minded.”

Philosopher David Hume, in talking about the powers of the mind, gives an example of a gold mountain. Though none of us has ever seen one, we have seen gold material and we have seen mountainous shapes, so our mind can put the two concepts together. This is all abstraction is. It pulls an aspect of something you’ve seen and allows you to combine it with something else you’ve seen to create something you haven’t seen. More importantly, it allows you to create something no one else has seen, either.

Creative inspiration can come from all sorts of places. MOVE was an organization started recently at UTSA that united the various political activist and ideological advocacy groups on campus (very similar to the group I almost started as a student, mentioned in the Introduction). It united groups that don’t agree with each other—not asking them to blunt any of their arguments—against a common foe: apathy. The idea was actually hatched in a conversation between two Batman fans while talking about the Justice League. When someone says, “We could make the Justice

League of on-campus activism,” they are engaging in philosophical abstraction, whether they recognize it or not.

Further, understanding this helps wrestle with organizational identity and allows one to violate precedent while staying true to a group’s roots. Just because it hasn’t been done before doesn’t mean it can’t be done, but how do we know if it’s okay if it has no precedent? Or perhaps there *is* a precedent that actually violates the integrity of the group. Abstracting the essence and identity of the group from the history of the group is the best way to adjudicate this difference. With abstraction at your side, you can envision new ways the group can exist beyond what has already happened.

### Constitutions

Not everyone gets the opportunity to write a constitution from scratch, but every officer should consider whether revisions to a constitution are in order. I know a bit about them, having been a parliamentarian and having had my hand in the production and revision of a few, even one for an organization that doesn’t know I helped. (I was the consultant of their consultant.) Here are a few loosely-related points to consider in your constitutional deliberations.

*Separating powers means separating duties.* Should most of the work of an organization fall to its president? Most people would say no. Should more work fall to the president than any other position? Most people would say yes. I don’t see that this is necessary. A CEO should

theoretically work the same 8-5 as the factory worker but should be able to do more with that time due to ideas and collected experience. My view is that a president shouldn't necessarily do more than a really active historian or committee chair, but probably will.

*Consider the possibility of a simple (not easy) presidency.* A president's only inherent task is presiding, etymologically. Consider being creative with the power dynamics in your group. Perhaps the president isn't given any job duty other than making sure everyone else is doing *their own jobs*, filling in when a position is vacant. This would still be quite a task and the presidency would still take great skill: the skill of managing people and knowing how to bring them to their fullest potential.

*Consider practice, not just theory.* You can get creative with constitutional officer structures, but if it varies too much from the conventional, it'll be hard to get people to follow the duties. Old habits die hard and communicating the leadership model to new members constantly can get tiring.

*Contingency plans.* You know that someone will leave a position and that, inevitably, someone will have to take over someone else's duties. Why does hardly anyone build this into their constitution? If you arrange in advance which position will take over which duties of which other positions, people who take on those roles can better prepare for that possibility. Also, tasks would then get redistributed to the officer whose role is the closest to the one vacant

rather than what usually happens: they go to whoever happens to have a little bit extra free time at that moment.

### Ending a Group

This is a morbid topic, but don't let it be taboo in your deliberations. "Ad hoc" is a legal term that means in Latin "for this"; it is created for a specific purpose. For example, a group might have standing committees for things they know they will always need (such as publicity). But for something that's only a temporary need, such as a planning committee for a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary bash, an *ad hoc* committee is usually created, meaning that it will be dissolved when its express purpose is fulfilled.

Usually the term is used in the context of a committee, but some organizations seem to consign themselves to ad hoc status with their expressed purposes. In such cases, ending an organization can be a sign of success rather than failure.

In other cases, even where the purpose of the group doesn't lend itself to such finitude, sometimes ending a group is still appropriate. Starting a group is impressive; but what's even harder is passing it on successfully. Don't allow yourself to worry that you didn't accomplish anything simply because your group looks likely to fall apart on your departure. Your legacy is that you represented your cause well; sometimes there's just not the personnel to continue. If you leave the info about your group public enough, a student leader one or two years later can re-found it. Passing off your group is not an end-all be-all because

frequently in many organizations' histories, they have been re-founded.

### Supply and Demand

It's important to make sure a group serves some purpose in the larger community; it should not be a cult of personality. I think this is illustrated well by the economic concepts of supply and demand. (Perhaps things like this are what is meant by the "marketplace of ideas.") It is not the duty of consumers to buy something just because it's available; the producer didn't have to produce it. Thus, in terms of ethical obligation, supply is supposed to meet demand and not the other way around. It's my duty to make something that benefits you, not your duty to buy my useless product. (This is intended generically; I don't mean this book!)

Likewise, it's the duty of an organization on campus to serve a need that is worth students' time. It's not the duty of students to fill vacant spots that have outlived their usefulness. Open positions are sometimes another example of a wanted need (more on this in chapter 4). If your group as a whole is having a hard time finding traction, it's best to downsize or even question whether its continuance is feasible. I used to think about this when it came to tabling, too. I would feel bad if I ignored a table that was asking for my attention. Then I realized, though, that it was incumbent upon them to show to me why they were worth my attention. I realized that what they have should be meeting my needs, not the other way around.

# Chapter 4

## Planning

Much of this book so far has been up in the clouds in concepts and theory. The point of this is of course to set the stage for more specific strategies, but it's also to make the ideas as broadly applicable as possible. This chapter, however, gets down a lot more to brass tacks.

### Goal Setting

If your agenda is to feel accomplished, set modest goals. On the other hand, if your agenda is to *be* accomplished, set lofty goals. But there's no sense in setting lofty goals just for the symbolism of appearing ambitious to others. You want them to actually be within reach or you lose credibility with potential stakeholders. If you're trying really hard to reach a score of 10 (to come up with an arbitrary way of quantifying and illustrating this point), you're more likely to reach 8 at least than if you were to aim for 6. If you aim for 6, you might just get 6. Would you rather have the goal achieved and not have the two extra points or rather have the two extra points and be considered a "failure?" (At the same time, though, I get annoyed when people say, "Aim for the moon because if you miss you'll land

amongst the stars” because it makes no astronomical sense since the stars are millions of times farther.)

Further, in philosophy there is what is called the black and white fallacy. If something is branded as an either/or but really is not, this is the black and white fallacy. The most public example of this happens every four years in November. Goal setting with just one goal can make sense in some contexts, but for most it’s probably better to set up multi-level goals. Rather than the semester being either a success or failure, depending on whether you came up just short or barely surpassed an arbitrary mark, set up a multi-tiered measurement for success. A semester where you reach a 14 is not much different than reaching a 15, but if you happened to pick 15 as your goal, one is labeled a success and the other a failure. This is silly.

If you’re a cultural organization, maybe your overall goal is to be a place of welcome for people of that culture, to promote awareness of the culture to outsiders, and to have a presence in the overall campus culture. Thus, you do socials, outreaches, and campus traditions, respectively. Depending on your personnel, you might be able to feasibly pull off one moderately-sized event for each category a semester. However, personnel are not static; people can be added through recruitment efforts. Thus, setting this as a base-level goal, you might set up a second-level goal of one large event in each category per semester and then perhaps a top-level goal of one medium-sized event of each type each month.

Also with goal setting, you want to think about whether you’re aiming for quantity or quality. Some people

say, “If something’s worth doing, it’s worth doing well.” But if you’re in the position to save a little kid from oncoming traffic, please leave your perfectionism at home—don’t worry about trampling my tulip garden in the process. Thus, witty English writer G. K. Chesterton once quipped, “If something’s worth doing, it’s worth doing badly.” Either way, here’s something to think through: would you rather do more and do it less well or do less but do it better? Perhaps your goal is to have a solid presence at Greek week, so you make sure to field a respectable squad for each competition, knowing that you won’t realistically be able to win any. Or perhaps your goal, with the same personnel, is to win something, so you soberly analyze which events you have the best shot in and focus there, even skipping certain events entirely.

### Know Yourself

The Delphic Oracle—who was thought to be always correct—considered none in the ancient world to be wiser than Socrates. Socrates purportedly didn’t think much of himself, so in trying to understand this puzzling opinion of the oracle’s, figured out that his wisdom consisted in knowing that he didn’t have any. Others, on the other hand, didn’t know any more than Socrates, but you could tell by their actions and their tuition charges that they thought they did. The famous message inscribed on the oracle’s building was, “know yourself.” Socrates followed this by humbly knowing his limitations.

When you're setting goals, it is likewise important to factor in your limitations when zeroing in on a target. This works for individual members as well: knowing their likelihood of slipping into old habits, tendencies to overpromise and underdeliver, and which personality types will be better at certain roles. Some people and groups need structure; some do better without it. I think the former types are far more common than many are willing to admit because lack of structure appears so liberating and romantic. Just like it's good for someone who's preparing for a CLEP exam to create a syllabus for him or herself with sub-goals and deadlines, if you need something (or someone) to help you keep pace with your group goals, don't be afraid to seek it out. This might mean getting some pressure from external accountability or it might not, but it should at least mean planning out some sub-goals. In the same way, good road trip planning doesn't just choose a destination but also measures out where meals, lodging, and gas fill-ups are likely to be.

#### Needed Needs vs. Wanted Needs

In setting goals, values will inevitably clash. In philosophy, we talk about virtues such as justice and courage, but what happens when they conflict? Maybe justice demands that I receive some handout or benefit, such as a golf handicap, but courage suggests I go without it. Ethics and morality are the tasks we engage in when we try to determine which ethics (rules) and mores (social conventions) we will place as more important than others.

One common way of doing this is to distinguish between wants and needs, but most people simply stop there. If something is a need, then it should be met. But, strictly speaking, not much that we use the word “need” for actually is one. In the most privileged nation on earth, we use the word in reference to braces, computers, and V6 engines. I’m inclined here to do what philosophers always do, and that’s split hairs. As one of my professors used to say, “When you get stuck, just make a distinction.”

One particular thing that we say that we cannot live without as Americans is cell phones. Our American way of life pretty much doesn’t work without them. However, try explaining their importance to someone impoverished in Bangladesh and they won’t seem so vital. The way I explain this discrepancy and find a way of agreeing with both sides is to make a distinction between needed needs and wanted needs. Yes, I need a cell phone, but I don’t need to need a cell phone. What I mean is I need a cell phone to comply with my self-imposed American lifestyle. While the cell phone is needed for the lifestyle, the lifestyle itself is expendable. Because I *choose* this lifestyle, by extension, I am *choosing* to need a cell phone. This then becomes a chosen, or wanted, need, distinguished from needed needs like nutrition and clean air.

Some student leaders get hung up on what are chosen, and therefore *wanted*, needs. Perhaps a fraternity at the beginning of the year sets a goal of winning every single interfraternity competition. The way of implementing this is to have extensive practices across the board. However, a

mediocre rush results in not having adequate personnel for such ambition. Before students are pressured to wreck their GPAs to fulfill the rigorous preparation agenda of the group, leaders should recognize that the “need” to have copious practices for every event is self-imposed and therefore not a needed need.

### Beginning of the Year

*Planning exercises.* Have members (especially officers) make a list of all the other groups or commitments they are in or plan to be in. This helps you account for their attention being divided, but it also can get you thinking of where awareness of your group is and where it is missing. Perhaps members of your political group are in housing, orientation, and SGA, but there is noticeably no one in a Greek organization. This can launch the idea of someone considering rushing as a way of promoting the group in territory that is currently uncharted for it. (I use this example because it’s usually the other way around.) Include core members who don’t have official titles, especially those who have in-roads elsewhere. They will likely be your next officers anyway, and they can help you know which events you’re scheduling that are competing with others on the university calendar, which brings me to my next point.

*Make a master calendar.* Plan around anything that might distract or detract from your members’ ability to perform tasks for the group or even people’s ability to (or interest in) attending your events. Your organization will look insensitive or unengaged if it schedules a random Taco

Cabana fundraiser on the same night as a presidential election or college basketball championship game. This goes for *anything*: get to know what days to work around with campus events, city events, state events, national events, and world events. Let's say you schedule a movie night on the same day as an ecological electricity strike. If the strike is small, you would simply be not participating and thus remaining somewhat neutral on the issue. But if the strike is big, failure to move your event can be taken as making a statement against it.

Depending on how thorough you are with this, it would be rather ambitious and would take quite a bit of time. If really detailed, it probably wouldn't be worth the time if it only benefitted a single group. But consider making it nonetheless and offering it to other organization leaders with something on it declaring, "Brought to you by your campus chapter of \_\_\_\_\_." Each of these groups will be indebted to you which will foster good relations and possibly result in collaborations that wouldn't have otherwise arisen.

*Theory versus practice.* Some people will make a plan that they find out later only works in theory. However, there really shouldn't be any difference between theory and reality, so if it *only* works in theory, then it actually *doesn't* work in theory. It means that your theory is flawed, that it lacks some additional variables. Scientists don't say that physics only works in theory every time they find an observational surprise. They revise their theory and make it a bit more complex. This is what you should do when planning.

*Making a meeting template.* Planning a meeting from scratch is much more difficult than planning a meeting that already has a certain structure. For example, having sections where officers have reports or announcements related to their responsibilities means that part of the meeting doesn't have to be planned and filled by the person chairing the meeting. Having structure also makes the meeting more predictable for those attending, and that's a good thing. If they somewhat already know what they're going to get out of it, they're more likely to come. As a third benefit, it makes your group appear that much more like an organization and less like a disorganization.

For example, when you watch a late night talk show, you know it's going to feature a comedy monologue, a couple of interviews, and then a musical guest. Far from making the show boring, the structure shows professionalism and helps you know whether the show will be worth watching. It's the content of each segment that makes the show fresh and surprising each night.

### Officers' Meetings

If you don't have an officers' meeting for your group, consider having one, even if only monthly. And let it be for things other than business, as well, or even exclusively. Some of those purposes are member development, bonding, and vision-casting.

While it might not be worth the effort to try to bond people who casually attend a general meeting (and it might turn a person or two away), at least the core nucleus of a

group should do some activities that will build a sense of camaraderie and teamwork. This can be achieved by retreats, teambuilders, and icebreakers, but probably a more useful and time-effective way is through personality tests. Getting to know why others are the way they are, why *you* are the way *you* are, and how that will affect your working relationship is important when deciding who is best suited for which tasks or what kind of approach you should take when collaborating with someone.

Member development doesn't have to be directly organization related. Maybe an officers' meeting in March or April features a guest speaker who is summoned to help officers fill out their tax forms and get them submitted. This indirectly helps the organization because it's one fewer thing in each person's personal life that distracts from the organization's tasks.

Most people wouldn't think to have a guest speaker or members of another organization at an officers' meeting, but consider its appropriateness. Perhaps a Christian group sees its non-officer members as its audience, people it's reaching out to. If they want to have members of the marketing club on campus talk to them about branding and marketing their message, they might want to do this internally only. Or perhaps a political organization, that doesn't want to be affiliated with a certain sect, notices that a religious group on campus is expanding wildly and wants advice on how to spread its own political message. This would be appropriate, then, at an officers' meeting.

Many of the tips in this book are for the individual, but many also are things that a student leader should retain with the idea of relaying them to others. For example, the time management tips in this guide might be good to discuss at an officers' meeting as a form of membership development. Making your members more efficient makes your group more efficient. If planning meetings require a person's energy and focus, it can be refreshing as an officer to have a meeting that actually replenishes those things rather than being yet another drain on those things, where one feels they have to "perform" all over again.

# *Chapter 5*

## *Recruiting*

Every student group is necessarily a group of students, so without finding those students who will help you, there's only so far you can get. What follows are some strategies and new ways of looking at recruitment.

### Keep Track of Excuses and Possible Excuses

Let's say the issue of recycling gets you to start an ecological society focused mostly on recycling. While tabling, you encounter someone who passionately seeks to raise awareness on pollution and challenges you to add that to what your organization is prepared to discuss. It's not your main passion, but you should be willing to stretch yourself beyond your initial passion. Whatever challenges you have in feeling burdened to learn about this new cause of pollution, expect others to have those same challenges regarding your cause.

If you want to figure out why people aren't joining your "feed the feral cats on campus" initiative, think about causes on campus that you're otherwise sympathetic with—except when it comes to spending your own time on them. What scares you away from such causes and what motivates you to deflect solicitation and snub invitations? Thinking

through the answers to these questions can help you narrow down ineffective outreach methods. Remember, the Golden Rule isn't just for moral rightness, but also for effectiveness (more on this in chapter 7).

What I mean by this is if you've ever said, "I like that cause but right now it's mid-terms," or "but the dues are too high," or "but the people in it seem kinda weird," keep track of these excuses that you've given for other groups or that you've heard other people give regarding any group, and see how best you can avoid those in reactions to your own group. Of course, these will never be able to be avoided entirely, but that's not the point. The fewer reasons people have for *not* joining and the more reasons they have *for* joining, the more joining will naturally happen.

### Thinking About After Graduation

For most students, college is such a bubble with very little penetration from the outside world that they don't think about what's next. I was guilty of that, viewing graduation as a cliff one jumps off of and my degree as a parachute. You can't know how good your parachute is until you absolutely need it. This is a flawed metaphor, but it's what I thought. You have to forgive people for apprehension since 22-year-old college seniors have known nothing but school for the last 17 years. I've observed over time two different strains of senioritis: the apprehension caused by this uncertainty, and the impatience of wanting to get one's professional life started. Clearly, I had the former, but the students who have the latter set themselves up for the next

level much better. The latter group is much harder to get involved in clubs because they see their focus on college life as a distraction, but this section tells you how to appeal to even them.

Because of my apprehensive strain of senioritis, I frequently remind students of the importance of taking the time to prepare for the next step rather than pretending it's not there. Postponing the question isn't an answer to it. Even worse, students who do think in these terms and vocalize such thoughts are looked down upon by peers as "résumé padders" who seek positions not out of altruism or inherent value but in order to look impressive to the outside world.

I love when a solution to one problem can solve another problem. One way of getting people interested in your group who may or may not share in your vision is to show that you're very serious about the group's success—that the group will be very professional in the way it goes about its business. Those who are serious about their own professional development will appreciate this and might choose your group over a less-organized group whose overall cause they are more in line with. For those who are not already proactively seeking their own development in this regard, your encouraging them to consider such things improves overall campus culture, creating a climate of students who actually know why they're in college, and it also provides the incentive for them to join your group. Thus, your recruitment strategy also helps combat the

problem of students not thinking about investing in themselves. Thus, one solution for two problems.

### Professional Development

One good usage of “outside the box thinking” has to do with professional development. The last section was on why we should do it; this one is on how. Certain majors have a very obvious career path that they prepare one for, such as accounting or computer science. For some other majors, this is less clear; they bear a connection to several careers, but that connection is indirect rather than direct. (By the way, this is not a particularly “liberal arts” problem. The career path for biology or chemistry is less obvious than the career path for music education or public relations.)

While studying philosophy (for example) makes a lot of things more clear, it makes the job search less clear. However, it does provide students with the skills for seeing connections that others don’t and also the skills for successfully arguing points that are not obvious to others. (And thus tracing those connections for those prospective employers who don’t initially see them.)

If you work on using clever thinking and abstraction in this same way, you will probably notice (as some do rather naturally) the connection between extracurriculars and one’s future professional life. As with majors, the connection between extracurriculars and professional life can be more obvious in one context than in another. For example, pre-professional societies often connect people with professionals in those fields and Student Government

Association members seem to frequently want to go to law school. How exactly you should use your cultural organization to your professional advantage takes a bit more creativity, but it's worth thinking through.

I've long included my background in parliamentary procedure on my résumé; to me, this encapsulates my experience with clear, orderly thinking, with serving on committees (which you do in many job environments), and with analyzing policy (which you also might be called upon to do). Further, all workplaces are impacted by legislation, so including a political background can show a potential employer that if they hire you, they won't have to keep up with new regulations as much since you're interested in that stuff anyway. Something I've recently added is wordplay, since it's a skill I developed making flyers as an RA at a dorm. This might look odd on a résumé, but that's part of the point: to get attention. When a potential employer asks the rhetorical question, "How is that a professional skill?", the answers begin to quickly rush in: catchy headline and event titles are more effective. When the employer recognizes that he has spent more time figuring out why I included that on my résumé than he spent in examining one of the other résumés entirely, he realizes that in claiming I can use this skill to catch attention, I've already caught his.

If you've already figured out what's next on your horizon but you're recruiting for your group, it's still worth thinking through the possibilities since you can help students who have never thought about the issue see the benefits of getting connected with your group. You never know when

some form of involvement will be that tipping point for someone deciding whether to hire you. Perhaps the office you're interviewing with has a softball rivalry with a company in another industry and they usually lose. Your participation in intramural softball might be that personal touch that makes them think that much more positively of your application. Remember that people who make hiring decisions are people, not robots, and they can be swayed by personal reasons as well as professional.

### Networking

Recruiting is not an activity but a way of life as a student leader. One example of how a recruiting mindset can manifest itself all throughout your week is networking. You never know who you will run into on the shuttle bus, in the library, at a football game, or at a party. It might seem nerdy, but I recommend always having business cards for your group and always having them with you.

*Social capital.* A concept I learned recently that I'm glad I learned is social capital. The concept in a purely academic context is nebulous and has multiple definitions, but they all involve thinking about interactions with others in a somewhat economic way. I think of it this way, rightly or wrongly: articulating in economic terms the various personal investments one has made via social means. Some people might view this as shallow, but just go with it for the sake of illustration and discard it if you wish.

For example, if you need to borrow a cup of sugar from a neighbor (to use a silly, classic example), your choices

might be a neighbor who is always borrowing flour from you and one who isn't. You'll likely feel more comfortable borrowing from the one who normally borrows from you, all other things being equal. Or, if you're invited over for a sporting event and decide to be a nice person and bring snacks, you could think of it as simply a gift, but this is only half the story. It's also an investment in popularity. People there will like you more, and you're more likely to be invited over in the future. Any favors you grant someone are like a "deposit" into an account, and favors you ask of someone are withdrawals. Many a friendship has gone south when someone's social capital was a bit too far in the red; one's social credit rating gets demoted from simply "being less fortunate" to "moocher" to "deadbeat" eventually. You want to do more than just "know people." If you don't do anything to be in these people's good graces, it's like having several empty bank accounts: not useful.

*Organization networking.* So far, this all has to do with personal networking, but you should network as an organization, as well. Indeed, some of your personal networking will be on behalf of your organization(s). I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for different student groups to form relationships with each other. When two organizations get to know each other, each is potentially benefitted in advancing its mission, even if those missions are in conflict with one another. A Christian group that has a reputation for learning about Islam and getting to know the members in a campus Muslim group is going to look attractive for its ability to accept people. A political group of

one party, by getting to know the way of thinking of those in the other party, can better pitch their arguments to those undecided politically by hitting the real issues and not lose credibility by attacking antiquated versions of their ideas. Even two groups whose missions seem unrelated can benefit from each other when the first knows a place where the second can get slick flyers made to enhance its professionalism and the second has an organizational structure that would improve communication in the first.

*Stakeholders.* Another thing to think about in your relations with other groups is how decisions you make for your own group will affect other groups. Businesses use the term “stakeholder” to refer to any entity affected by their decisions, a much broader term than shareholder. If they move offices to increase profitability, their shareholders will clearly be affected, but others would also be affected—positively or negatively or in a neutral way: the owners of both business parks, their neighboring businesses, any postal or parcel delivery people, the employees, the sandwich shop that will no longer be frequented, the sign company that will get more business, and perhaps even those who have never heard of the company whose daily commute would be thereby worsened or improved by the rerouting of their employees’ traffic. Of course, all of these are not factored into every decision, but the point is that it’s a valuable concept that one should use in making large scale decisions.

*Stereotypes.* Someone who isn’t interested in your group for reasons that are really petty is not likely to articulate those reasons to you directly, but they might say

them to a third party. Thus, if you have people who understand your group in places where your group is not, they can help explain or defend your group to people who make such casual comments. This is especially common with Greek organizations. It really helps if members of, say, Student Government can help explain the fraternity or sorority lifestyle to outsiders since they might be fellow outsiders, albeit ones who have a closer vantage point.

This can even be true within an organization. In working with people, sometimes a person's lack of cooperation might be for a reason they are embarrassed to reveal to you. Perhaps they don't want to be in your committee because of your social awkwardness; you won't even know for the sake of your own feedback because they won't admit it. Stereotypes about any demographic you might fit into are unfortunate but might come into play in getting someone to join your group. For moral reasons, of course, you might defiantly opt not to work around this at all, but this is something to at least enter into the equation if you're looking for sheer organizational effectiveness. Thinking this through might even spark ideas on how to proactively combat these obstacles.

*Which is easier?* Is it easier to get people who agree with your cause to become active in your cause or to get people who are already active in other causes to become convinced of yours? This is a question that I've thought a lot about lately because I've seen some quality peripheral members of groups get interested in a cause because of working with that group via their own group. Many who will

agree with your cause just don't have extracurriculars on their radar or don't see the value in them. Others who don't have to be convinced of their importance just have to be convinced of the importance of yours specifically. This is something to keep in mind when looking for sources of potential members.

*Learning from mistakes.* Finally, what's better than failing is failing and learning from it. But what's better than failing and learning from it is *someone else's* failing and *your* learning from it. Pay attention to other groups and learn from them—yet another good reason to network.

### Tabling

We finally get to what many people have as their entire approach to recruitment. Obviously by now it should be clear that recruitment is not just tabling. Tabling is maybe the bread of the sandwich, but mere bread makes for a terrible sandwich.

Even something as conventional as tabling can be done with some creativity with great effectiveness. Let's say your group has a dilemma of dividing its time between tabling and networking with other student groups. Mutual solution: consider tabling adjacently. If they're a group whose mission doesn't conflict with yours, whether it overlaps with yours or is unrelated, it will afford opportunities for members of your group to get to know the other group and vice versa. If they're a group that's in competition with you, this might be even better. You'll create a bigger attention-getter and you'll have a

conversation starter ready that will draw people in. Rather than initiating conversations with passersby, some who aren't into either cause will notice the juxtaposition and ask your two tables about it. An apolitical person might still walk up to a table of Republicans if the Democrats are right next to them, even if only to make a snide comment. This will show that the two groups are mature and charitable enough for informed dialogue and will impress your potential audience.



# *Chapter 6*

## *Membership*

You'll remember from chapter 4 the black and white fallacy which incorrectly views something as an either/or. While there might be contexts in which it makes sense to view membership in such a way, in many cases it does not. Naturally, one's constitution is the first place to look when trying to define membership within a non-hypothetical context, and I don't mean to contradict whatever is in your constitution or to favor one model over another. But I do want to point out different types of members and different ways of thinking about membership.

Obviously, whoever you think of when you think of the organization is going to be a member, probably an officer. Aside from officers, committee chairs, and committee members, some organizational structures are more loosely defined and require a bit of hindsight to decide who is really devoted. A good term I've heard for these types is "core member." But don't just think of membership as those who come to meetings. You want to leave your meetings conceptually open to nonmembers (unless you have rules against that) and you want to never forget about those taking up your cause who can't make it to meetings.

In addition to the 25 officers and core members who regularly come to meetings and the 30 peripheral members

who come to one meeting a semester, don't forget about those 200 (we'll call them admirers) who are in your email list serve, the 100 who regularly read your Facebook page (some of whom go to similar clubs at other universities), the 400 Facebook fans who don't read it but make your numbers look better, the high school sibling of your treasurer who helps with posters, or the person in the group next to yours who watches your stuff at your organization desk when you have to leave to edit your bulletin board. While they probably can't all be considered "members" in any kind of useful sense of the word, their contributions are not negligible to your mission. Perhaps even an award at your end of year banquet for the best "friend" of your organization in another group would be appropriate and would foster good relations between groups.

### Good Soil

It's one thing to be interested in doing something. It's yet another to reprioritize your time such that you have room for it. Make a realistic assessment of yourself and your own follow-through and take the necessary steps to make changes. Also, try to identify this difference in others. I don't want to say or even imply that someone is not "worth the time," but you have to be strategic with your chronological resources since they are limited. If someone says they're interested in your cause but you can tell they're just being polite or that it seems like a hypothetical interest (one that isn't extreme enough to change their priorities to accommodate it), then de-prioritize outreach to this person.

That doesn't mean don't do it; just make sure you recognize the low potential for yield from this investment. Try to find the determined types, not the flashes in the pan with a casual interest.

### Not Sharing Your Vision

Don't wait on others to catch the fire of your vision if you don't need to. If you have the vision, see if you can just make it happen. Along the way, you'll need to employ people's services, but you might need the services of people who don't have your vision. Look for other ways to motivate. Corporations have a cause of making their shareholders wealthier, a goal not really shared by their employees, yet they still work there. I'm not saying to pay people to join your group, but if you can find some other incentive for them, you create a more realistic arrangement that doesn't depend on people's fluctuating resolve towards an idealistic future. One way of doing this is mentioned in the professional development section of chapter 5.

Maybe the Republican group is saturated with leaders, but you're a Democrat rebuilding the Democratic group. For a position that might not require ideological fervor (like secretary or treasurer), you might invite some Republicans who need the experience for their futures. This also gives them exposure to how the other party thinks and can make for some potentially very powerful bipartisan recommendation letters. Having that presence in your group also keeps you more honest in how you describe the other ideology.

### Group Size

Clearly, I'm not going to give you a minimum or maximum of what's appropriate for your group. But do be warned that bigger is not always better. In the stock market, sometimes a stock's value goes up so much that it becomes hard to sell. (It's harder to find someone willing to pay \$100 for it than \$50.) When this happens, often the company will decide to "split" the stock, meaning that each share is now worth half as much, but everyone's shares double in quantity.

Likewise, sometimes a group can become so big that not everyone has something to do. This is a structural problem; you should be able to find something for everyone to do. Maybe the most popular sub-issue your group deals with can split off as its own club, giving you two groups, and thereby giving your overall cause more tabling, flyering, poster, and bulletin board privileges. If this happens a few times, your group could become an unofficial representative council of those groups, perhaps doing nothing more than orchestrating the effort. The person who has to learn Student Activities policies for the overarching group could save the constituent groups from having to learn that all over again. Or maybe something that has not been a priority in your group thus far can become one: the advocacy group can get a social chair or the cultural organization can start an intramural team.

There are other directions you can go, however. If you've got a steady flow of members coming in, you can

afford, if your group chooses, to start aiming for quality over quantity. Maybe membership criteria get stricter, such as by implementing (or increasing) dues, GPA requirements, or service hours. Perhaps one committed but idle person can become the membership or selections chair, perhaps interviews for new members can be conducted, or perhaps the group can become by invitation only.

### Some Things to Remember

*Officers in multiple groups.* It's cool to be able to say that your vice president is also the president of some fraternity, but realize that you might be voting on only the leftovers of that person. Recognize that the real election might be better illustrated as one candidate at 40% of their availability versus the other one at 100%.

*Invest in young leaders.* Some people might not proactively seek leadership, being too meek. Others might not be so shy but simply don't see that particular potential in themselves. Still others might be bold and obviously qualified but have just never thought of becoming a leader. Others might have thought of it but are worried about the opinions of members who have been around longer but are less driven. It's important to think about which members you want to become officers and which officers you want to take the mantle. Begin grooming those people in advance if circumstances and your constitution allow.

*Personality.* It's hard to overemphasize personality in leadership. Someone with the best ideas might not get anyone to cooperate because of haughtiness or a reputation

for philandering. A group with extreme ideas will get farther if it's filled with pretty level-headed, regular people; a drug legalization group will have more credibility if some of its key members do not use. Someone who's organized and self-motivated is going to be good for any group. You might even decide upon New Year's resolutions at an officers' meeting (if group leaders feel comfortable sharing) and encourage leaders to get accountability partners (to borrow a concept from religious groups) to inquire of their progress in these goals. A great organizational model without great people will not get very far, nor will a group of great people without some sort of structure.

*Co-chairs.* Having two people share a position can cause issues for political reasons if the visions are not coordinated. Either way, if two people are exactly equally responsible for a position, care must be taken to prevent grand thinking. One person might be less inclined to think outside the box for fear of alienating the other or stepping on his or her toes. Having "co-chairs" can be risky in this sense unless the roles are pretty clearly defined, either by statute or precedent. Usually, when I've seen this work well, one person rather passively accepts the ideas of the other.

*Other commitments.* A member's inconsistent attendance at meetings does not necessarily mean inconsistent commitment. Perhaps your group is the fourth most important activity for that person, consistently, but their level of efficiency from week to week wavers between being able to handle the top three things only (meaning they don't show) and the top four (meaning they do show).

External circumstances might cause the difference, or perhaps they get busier in one of the first three things. Someone who comes to half the meetings might be more committed than someone who comes to all of them, so it's important not to necessarily equate one's devotion with one's ability to make time for the group.



# *Chapter 7*

## *Promoting Your Group*

This chapter assumes that certain obvious fundamentals are already being covered by your outreach program. While I like to rewrite the rules a bit (if you couldn't tell by now), I won't say anything against pretty standard promotional tactics such as posting flyers, painting posters, or making Facebook events. Beyond that, though, with a little creativity, your group can get lots of attention with just a few people.

A political group that I advise wanted to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the US Constitution in a bold way. They got a really long section of butcher paper and handwrote as much of the Constitution as they could fit, leaving space at the bottom for passersby to sign a la James Madison. It was quite a spectacle, complete with calligraphy on the top row and the whole paper being tea-soaked to give it a yellow, parchment look. Wisely, a press-release was sent out and a local news station showed up to give the event coverage. Despite being organized and executed by perhaps only ten people, the paper got over 300 signatures and caused the university library to contact the group about collaborating for next year's Constitution Day.

### Golden Rule of Effectiveness

When it comes to branding for your group, I'm sure there are plenty of marketing guidelines to go by, but the only one I invoke here is what I call my "Golden Rule of Effectiveness" that I alluded to in chapter 5: do unto others as you have seen effectively done unto you. That flyer that grabbed your attention: why did it do that? That person tabling who annoyed you: what was so annoying about it? I tell people the same thing when it comes to interviews: it's much easier to know how to interview for a position after you've interviewed others for a position because then you start to see which interview habits bother you and which ones impress you. Probably these also affect other people who interview lots of candidates in the same way. If everyone is using the same interview guidelines from a centralized source, certain things they're doing might start to annoy their panel upon overuse. Perhaps deliberately bucking the trend can serve you well.

### Matchmaker View of Ethical Selling

When we see someone selling something, it's tempting to think of them as conniving or disingenuous in some way. This is, I think (again, with no psychology background), a result of the natural opposition that the situation places us in. They are the enemy; we must defend our money. Therefore, they are evil. This is unsound logic, but it's perhaps sound animal instinct.

In high school, I was the only choir student in my year to fundraise enough to cover my share (actually more) of our summer trip, so I know how to sell something. I presented one of my teachers with a brochure of chocolates, then said in a disguised whisper, “You should buy some...” Then I “reacted” to myself, saying, “What was that voice? If your conscience was *that* loud you should probably listen to it!” She laughed and bought something, saying she was more motivated by appreciation of my creativity than her actually wanting anything I was selling.

I don’t think selling a lot of something has to involve switching on your evil and disingenuous side. I have ethically come to terms with salesmanship by viewing it as matchmaking. This is why I can’t sell a product I don’t believe in. But if I believe in it, I think it has some kind of use, and therefore someone out there would benefit from it. My goal as a salesman is to figure out how to locate those who would benefit. The same is true when selling a message or selling something as a fundraiser for your group. Either there’s a natural audience or you should probably question your own devotion to it. Find that natural audience.

### Make Shirts

Shirts provide several advantages to posters and other types of advertising. They are more mobile, able to go to people where they are. People also aren’t usually annoyed by them. What other type of ad can you walk right up to a stranger and display without being vilified? You can even advertise at someone else’s meeting without offending

them—it's hard to find another context where that's acceptable. You can even excuse wearing it in any inappropriate contexts by claiming it's laundry day. If it would otherwise be in bad taste to use a classroom as a soapbox, shirts are usually acceptable since you can't really be made to take them off. They don't have to be approved by a posting office on campus.

They last longer than posters or flyers. They won't get torn down by vandals, smeared in the rain, or shredded in the wind. Even alumni are proud to have their shirts still. People like making them for campaigns for this very reason. An alumnus might be cleaning through his closet and stumble across it, resulting in his getting back in contact with the group. Who knows what could come of it: maybe a scholarship being sponsored for group leaders or a new networking contact being formed.

Shirts can also help people feel included. Those members who can't make your meetings but would love to promote the cause can do exactly that by wearing your shirt. Newer members are incentivized to learn about the group quickly since wearing a shirt for the group on campus might result in questions. At any events your group is hosting that are targeted to the wider community, shirts allow your group to have an official presence and can also distinguish who should be in certain privileged areas (like back stage, or inside the booth at a food-selling festival). Any volunteers can have the reward of feeling official.

Shirts have manifold other advantages, too. They can even magically make dues go away. If people are finding

it hard to justify the \$15 it costs to join your group, but that membership comes with a free shirt, then as far as they're concerned it can be a \$15 shirt that comes with free membership. Shirts also encourage you to be on your best behavior—always a plus. Further, they “have eyes”—yours. What I mean is if someone notices your poster, you won't know. But if someone notices your shirt, they're busted. You know they know about you now. Finally, anyone who reads a flyer or poster has to contact your group or come to a meeting to find out more about the group. That takes initiative or planning or both. Someone who reads a shirt has someone standing right before them who can help them know whether or not it's worth their time. (Of course, have your elevator speech ready! See below.) Asking about the group is almost a reflex for the passerby—definitely requiring a lot less initiative than showing up to the right place at the right time. There's also less risk for the newcomer if they have someone right in front of them they can ask. By having a simple conversation, they can learn more without risk of being pressured to participate in icebreakers or offer their email address for all kinds of spam.

If you come up with some kind of rewards system for wearing an organization shirt then you will promote the promotion of the group. Promoting the group is one thing; promoting the promotion of the group is another and multiplies your effort. A playful policy such as the following could go a long way: “If you would like to go on the bulletin board, I have to catch you on campus wearing our group

shirt. While this organization doesn't have a dress code, our bulletin board does."

### Final Points

*Elevator speech.* In business, many people find it beneficial to have a 15- to 30-second version of a certain message memorized just in case they run into the right person. The typical example is running into the CEO in the elevator, where she's unprotected by her secretarial staff. If you've got a proposal that will land on her desk tomorrow, you can use this opportunity to casually mention it so that she will be sure to look upon it favorably.

Having such a statement ready about your organization or an event you're planning is helpful for whenever someone reacts to your organization t-shirt or asks what a certain group is. Those who are motivated and get lots of questions about their group will naturally develop one without going out of their ways. However, some of your more casual members might not get the opportunity as much and might fumble for words in the few times that they are asked about the group. So consider bringing up the issue in whatever meeting context is appropriate (officers', general, or semester's beginning) to get them thinking about it in advance.

*Conversation partners.* If your group has a cause that's international, either an awareness issue or an ideological one, an oft-overlooked way to spread your ideas to another country is to participate in your local conversation partners program. International students and exchange

students are always looking for ways to work on their English, make friends, and experience more of America before returning home. They should be a more-receptive-than-average audience. Further, when they return home (either for good or for a visit), they will inevitably be asked about their experience and what they've learned. If you develop a true friendship with this person, perhaps your small cause will come up with their summary of American culture and life. Perhaps that person will get involved in your organization and even promote the idea abroad.

*Don't overdo it.* Some people's idea of good advertising is just to do what other people are doing; that's not my idea of good advertising because you won't stand out. Other people's idea of good advertising is flooding the target area with your message; that's not mine because you will only raise negative awareness of your group. It's no use having everyone know who you are if they will only associate your group with negativity. So refrain from throwing flyers all over the laundry room at the dorms and definitely don't stick anything on someone's car window (unless perhaps it's targeted based on bumper stickers). I was a part of a campaign as a student that got a bit carried away with sidewalk chalk. If I remember correctly, a subsequent prohibition of sidewalk chalking was the result.

*The red carpet.* Nominate your group for awards. This is not for vainglory; this is because winning the award (if in a public forum) is advertising for you in front of the campus elite. It also gives you something objective to say when you're later advertising for yourself, whether tabling or

designing shirts. (“Tell me about your group.” “Well, we won most outstanding organization two years ago.”) Also, showing people that their efforts are being recognized increases morale in the group which can make people work harder the next time around. Later when you’re writing your resume or interviewing for jobs, you can list that you were an officer of the group during its award-winning year. Don’t make yourself or your group so busy that you don’t have time to get recognized for being so busy. That’s the irony of such awards; sometimes they go to the second-most active tier of groups since the most active groups are too busy being active to congratulate themselves for it.