

## **Sustain Advocates – Build Strong, Human Movements**

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Advocacy requires many qualities – innovation, hope, stamina, drive, grit, determination, resolve, commitment. When an effort is clearly winning, it is easy to sustain these, as individuals and organizations. But when an issue suffers a setback or fades from public view, an organization's leadership faces its greatest challenges.

Leaders need to create strong organizations that motivate, energize and support people engaged in the effort. Strong organizations must also buffer members against both external and internal tensions.

In any advocacy effort, positive models of behavior deserve to be followed. Here are ten positive, proactive steps that an organization, coalition, or movement and its leadership can take to build a movement.

1. Remember where you come from, that you are part of something larger. Celebrate your origins and roots.
2. Listen to the insights and experience of people who are affected by the issues and participate in the efforts. They are the real experts – amplify their voices. Keep professional experts “on tap, not on top.”
3. Keep balance in your work and personal life. Work hard, yes. Meet responsibilities, yes. Make an extra effort, yes. But also add humor and rest. Avoid pessimism and martyrdom.
4. Recognize human frailty and accept it. Set the example by not holding yourself – or others – to rigid or impossible standards that drain the organization's energy.
5. Motivate others by sharing responsibility, paying attention to others, and encouraging those who make the extra effort. Give praise when it is merited.
6. Model behavior, or set a good example, by fostering cooperation, sharing information with others, and encouraging others' leadership. Don't dominate. Leave space for others to share their knowledge and skills.
7. Insist on a calm approach to solving problems. Set real deadlines. Avoid a crisis mentality.
8. Share credit generously within the organization, sector, and among allies.
9. Be equally civil to those who share your views or tactics, and those who do not. Agree to disagree and do so without personalizing disagreements.
10. Recognize that there are incremental steps in the advocacy journey. Celebrate how far a group has come and what it means to the lives of people. New experiences – like meeting with a bureaucrat, politician, or editor – are as much a success as winning a favorable policy. They build confidence and empowerment that, in many ways, are the most profound and lasting changes. Savor them.