



Power Mapping: A Tool for Utilizing Networks and Relationships

Overview: People interested and involved in promoting positive social change—through service, advocacy and other vehicles—need to think about context and relationships within the spheres they work. Social change agents need tools to access resources and to put her/his ideas into action. This workshop gives participants a theoretical framework and a set of tools to tap the power needed to make things happen. It puts these ideas and tools into action using a specific group-determined problem.

Category: Problem solving and leadership development; relationship building; civic engagement

Level: Intermediate to advanced level; a good follow up to *Building a Personal Network*

Type: Structured workshop process

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- This workshop presents participants with a specific process for mapping out relationships between people, organizations, and institutions in a given context that is called powermapping.
- This process helps to teach participants the value of personal relationships as an important dynamic in social organizing.
- Participants will have the opportunity to tackle a key problem identified by the group using the powermapping process.

Materials:

- Identity Circle blank sheets or blank sheets of paper

- Index cards or post-its
- Everyone should have something to write with

How to Prepare:

Prepare yourself to facilitate by reviewing the guide and becoming comfortable with the facilitation process, especially through part two when you must present the steps of power mapping. You should create a visual example as a large flip chart or hand out, using relationships and organizations in your immediate context.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

There are three parts to this structured workshop. You can modify them if necessary (e.g., eliminate or change the warm up, break the workshop into two parts to fit a brief weekly meeting structure, etc.).

The general outline contains the following components:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) Warm Up: Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 2) Presentation of the Power Mapping Strategy | suggested time 40 minutes |
| 3) Wrap up and applications for tool | suggested time 10 minutes |

1 Introductory Warm Up: Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon

Suggested time 20 minutes

This exercise is intended to get people thinking about connections. The point of the game is to figure out how Kevin Bacon is connected to these actors by six connections or less. Give the group four names and have them try to map out the connection. They must think of the name and the movie to make the connection. There may be more than one way.

* Example: How is Samuel L. Jackson connected to Kevin Bacon?

Samuel L. Jackson was in *Pulp Fiction* with John Travolta.
 John Travolta was in *Face Off* with Nicolas Cage.
 Nicolas Cage was in *Honeymoon in Vegas* with Sarah Jessica Parker.
 Sarah Jessica Parker was in *Footloose* with Kevin Bacon.

Make sure the group understands the game and clarify if needed. Give them 10 minutes to map the following four actors:

Clint Eastwood
 Drew Barrymore
 Will Smith
 Winona Rider

Answers:

Winona Rider: Beetlejuice with Geena Davis, Thelma and Louise with Brad Pitt, Sleepers with Kevin Bacon

Drew Barrymore: Mad Love with Chris O'Donnell, Three Musketeers with Oliver Platt, Flatliners with Kevin Bacon

Will Smith: Men in Black with Tommy Lee Jones, Batman Forever with Nicole Kidman, Far and Away with Tom Cruise, A Few Good Men with Kevin Bacon

Clint Eastwood: Bridges of Madison County with Meryl Streep, The River Wild with Kevin Bacon

After the ten minutes ask the group which ones people have solved. There may be more than one pathway. Have the group share their maps with the group.

Summarize by drawing a connection between this game and the concept of powermapping. The idea of powermapping is to figure out the connections and relationships that you (or people in your group and organization) can access to solve problems, enhance your programs, develop your resources, or engage in other tasks. This game also illustrates that there may be more than one path to your need or answer. Think of as many ways as possible!

2 Presentation of the Power Mapping Strategy

Suggested time: 40 minutes

In this section, demonstrate the framework and concept of powermapping. Review the definition of powermapping on handout.

Powermapping is a framework for problem solving through relationship building. This framework is based on the assumption that networks of relationships (between individuals, organizations, institutions, etc.) are critical resources, and that stronger networks yield stronger solutions.

Follow these steps and identify the names of each step. You may want to have them written on newsprint and posted around the room.

Step 1: Problem location

You can map around a problem or a person or institution you think can solve a problem. Refer to handout. You may end up with several overlapping powermaps that get you closer and closer to solving your problem. For the purpose of this exercise we will start with the most general powermap ~ mapping a problem.

Ask the group to come up with a particular problem or issue for their group (every group should be able to think of at least one problem, encourage them to think about issues they are currently facing). Provide a few examples like, "We need to secure a site for the spring

conference,” “We need to get funding for our Alternative Spring Break program,” “We need to enhance the training component of our America Reads initiative, or “We need to find a faculty advisor for our learning in the community course.” Write the problem in the middle of the newsprint.

Step 2: Map major institutions

Identify key decision-making institutions or associations that are related to that problem. Write these names on the newsprint in a ring around the problem.

Using the example of *finding the faculty advisor for learning in the community course*, participants may shout out things like:

- public service center
- religious life department
- innovative courses program
- dean of students
- college president
- public policy department
- business school

As they suggest things, write these names up in a circular (free-form) fashion around the center circle in which the “problem” is written.

Step 3: Map individuals associated with the institutions

Put the names of 2-3 individuals who are associated with each of those institutions in the second ring (moving out concentrically) around the problem. These can be both people you do and do not know.

For the example above (of course, during the facilitation, it won’t line up so neatly):

- Mary Jo Peat, Director
- Chaplain Thomas
- That graduate student who t.a.’s my education course
- Dean Bosch
- President Torres and that Vice President who really loves service
- Professor Brown, who’s really into social justice issues
- That guy Harold Maud who founded the businesses for social responsibility chapter

Of course, there may be more than one person associated with each of the institutions, or there may be some institutions where people don’t know the names. Here you can note a question like, “Who is the Dean?”

Step 4: Map all other associations with these individuals

Ask participants to think about people they know connected to these key individuals. The purpose of this is to help identify easier ways to access the individuals or institutions that could help solve the problem, by tapping into existing relationships between people. Note here any relationships and information that you or other members in the group have with the people listed. Encourage people to be creative in thinking about how they may be connected to the people brainstormed.

Again, drawing on the example above:

- Mary Jo's my mentor - Bob
- I have a course with Chaplain Thomas - Geraldine
- I can talk to my t.a. - Sanjeev
- I don't know Dean Bosch, but my mom and his wife are in a book club together - Maria
- Dean Bosch did a training in my dorm, and our group still works with him - Bob
- My roommate Brandy is the newspaper editor and has met with President Torres
- Professor Brown's daughter is in my sorority - Johnette
- Professor Brown is going to be my thesis advisor - Sanjeev
- Harold is going to be speaking at the Black Student Union event this month - Rick

Also, look over the list of areas to consider while powermapping. This information should go in the third ring around the problem.

Step 5: Determine relational power lines

Next, step back and conceptually review the networks that the group has mapped out. Drawing lines connecting people and institutions that relate to each other. Some people will have many connections while others may not have any.

In the example above, there would be many lines. In practice, depending on the scale or history of the "problem," it may be more or less hard to identify institutions, people, and relationships that connect them. This step helps the group to identify what may be called the "nodes of power within a given network."

Step 6: Target priority relationships

The next step is to analyze some of the relationships and connections and make some decisions.

One way to do this is to circle the few people that have the most relational power lines drawn to them. Consider attempting to involve these people through your group's current relationships. In the example above, the group might say, "Dean Bosch seems to be critical in this picture, and both Maria and Bob have a way to connect with him." If no one in the group seems to be somewhat directly connected to a key target, then you may need to go another step deeper and directly create another powermap around each of these people.

Another thing to consider may be a person or institution in the map that doesn't necessarily have many different relational lines running to him/her/it, but nonetheless has a few critical ones and seems very influential. If you can identify a priority person/institution for which there isn't a clear relationship, then you might want to encourage the group to may be to go and find out more about this person/institution.

Step 7: Make a plan

Create some action steps for what to do next. These can be fairly straightforward. Taking the example above, the group could decide:

Maria is going to talk to her mom about Dean Bosch and his wife and what may be good ways to obtain their support.

Bob is going to ask Mary Jo to help him request a meeting with Dean Bosch to seek his support for the course, perhaps through the public service center.

Sanjeev is going to talk to Professor Brown about good faculty members to talk to. Rick is going to meet Harold Maud to scout out people at the business school.

Determine the best approaches to accessing these individuals and institutions through relationships and decide who will be responsible for what by when.

3 **Wrap and Next Steps**

Suggested time 10-30 minutes

You may want to try any of the following as a way to move forward or close this workshop:

- **Review the process again, using another example (perhaps more complicated):** It often helps to repeat a process, perhaps with a different facilitator or issue. Or you could break the larger group into smaller groups to do so (for example in an extended workshop at a retreat or leadership training event).
- **Brainstorm potential applications:** This process is useful for many things and is about being resourceful. To illustrate this point, have the group brainstorm ways that this process could work for other things. Record on newsprint.
- **Have each person (if it's a group that doesn't work as a team) name one thing he/she can use the powermapping process for and follow up in an upcoming meeting:** If you are a student or administrator doing this training, perhaps in the context of your ongoing work with the group, you may want to have individuals/groups actually try the process on their own and share reports at an upcoming meeting.

You can also do a brief evaluation of the workshop itself, using a simple tool like:

- **Brainstorm of pluses/deltas:** things that worked well and suggestions for things to change next time
- **Written workshop evaluation:** perhaps using a simple scale
- **Open comments by the group**

Steps to Power Mapping

Step 1: Problem location

Map around a problem, person, or institution you think can solve a problem. Identify a particular problem or issue.

Step 2: Map major institutions

Identify key decision-making institutions or associations that are related to that problem. Write these names on the newsprint in a ring around the problem.

Step 3: Map individuals associated with the institutions

Put the names of 2-3 individuals who are associated with each of those institutions in the second ring (moving out concentrically) around the problem. These can be people you do or do not know.

Step 4: Map all other associations with these individuals

Think about people they know who are connected to these key individuals. This will help identify easier ways to access the individuals or institutions that could help solve the problem, by tapping into existing relationships between people. At this step, you can note any members of the groups' relationships with, and information about, the people listed.

Step 5: Determine relational power lines

Step back and conceptually review the networks that the group has mapped out. Drawing lines connecting people and institutions that have relations to each other. Some people will have many connections, while others may not have any.

Step 6: Target priority relationships

Analyze the relationships and connections and make decisions. One way to do this is to circle the few people that have the most relational power lines drawn to them.

Also take into account a person or institution in the map that doesn't necessarily have many different relational lines running to him/her/it but nonetheless has a few critical ones and is influential.

Step 7: Make a plan

Create some action steps for people to do after the session ends.