



Map the Terrain

Exercise – An Experiential Understanding of a Spectrum of Allies¹

Methodology:

This exercise provides an experiential understanding of a “spectrum of allies”. This understanding of how people position themselves across a spectrum of responses to a given issue will give the group a deeper understanding of how the targets in their issues are placed across a variety of viewpoints. Experiencing the spectrum and the rationale behind how we place ourselves within that spectrum will help the group understand how tactically shifting targets from one place to another along a spectrum can produce real change.

Objectives:

- To provide a physical and experiential experience of what a spectrum is to developing the group’s understanding.

Getting Ready:

This exercise will take 15-30 minutes (depending on how many steps and which examples you choose to use). To do this exercise, you will work with the full group. To get ready, place pieces of tape on the floor arranged in the following way:

+ 100 75 50 25 0 25 50 75 100 –

Facilitation Note:

In the instructions for the group exercise process below, you will have two examples to choose from (a simple spectrum example and a complex spectrum example that illustrates Allies to Opponents). You can do either one or both; choose what will work best for your group and for your workshop’s goals for this exercise.

¹ The original “Spectrum of Allies” tool comes from Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey, *A Manual for Direct Action*, Quadrangle Books, 1965 and can be found on Training for Change (www.trainingforchange.org).



The Group Exercise Process:

Simple Spectrum Example:

1. Ask everyone to gather around the “0”
2. Introduce the concept of a “spectrum” by asking people to line up in one direction from 0 to 100 in relation to their “age”; then “years of education”; or “by height”; or any characteristic you might choose. Use at least two different questions so the group can see that people change positions depending on the question asked.

Complex Spectrum Example that illustrates Allies to Opponents:

3. Ask everyone to gather around the “0” position.
4. Share with the group that you will be asking a series of **statements** related to a specific human rights issue and that you want them to stand along the line depending on their level of support or opposition to the statement – choose statements that will provide a good range of opinion. For example:
 - A. Where people stand on corporal punishment of children by teachers in schools (you can vary the question by level of corporal punishment, for example: slapping, beating, death)
 - B. Sexual harassment of women in public places (you can vary the question level by: age of the woman, type of clothing she is wearing, place/time of day where the harassment is taking place).
 - C. Death penalty (you can vary the circumstances of the issue by: closeness of relation the victim or the accused has to participants – brother, extended family relative, community member, unknown person).
 - D. Choose your own example.
5. Inform the group that the purpose is NOT to debate the statement but to show the range of opinions that exist within the group.
6. Inform the group that one of the facilitators will act as a “media reporter” to ask a few different people along the spectrum to share why they have chosen to stand in that place.

Reflection and Sharing:

After at least two different “statements” and a number of “interviews” regarding positions are shared, take time to process the experience with the group. Ask the group to share:

- ✓ What did it feel like to just LISTEN to the reasons why people had chosen their position?
- ✓ Does anyone want to CHANGE their position on the spectrum? Or Do you want to change your position due to the explanations that other people provided?

NOTE: Facilitator may note that often people raise perspectives we hadn’t thought of when explaining their positions. This can also influence other’s positions. This can be an interesting question to add to this exercise for reflection.

- ✓ What did you learn about the “spectrum” that you can apply to strategy and tactics?
- ✓ What other reflections do you want to share about the experience?

Source: Adapted from exercises originating from Training for Change (www.trainingforchange.org).

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