

Identifying the issues that motivate people into taking action



Introduction

In this guide, you will learn how to choose a topic for a campaign. We explain how to do this together with your supporters or local community. We work with the concept of BOND themes, in Dutch BOND stands for broadly supported, solvable, timely, and deeply felt (Breedgedragen, Oplosbaar, Nu en Diepgevoeld).

BOND issues

People become active **to improve their lives**. The **anger** over existing problems combined with the **hope** for change gives them the energy to take action. It is the glue that can hold your diverse community together, despite their different experiences and beliefs. To effectively mobilize people, you need to translate issues that are felt as urgent problems into strategic, actionable goals and vice versa.

Curious questions

Activation starts with systematically engaging your (potential) community and asking open, curious questions about which issues are deeply felt, while actively listening. This is not just about the content, but also about the emotions, the way, and the specific words people use to express themselves. You might ask questions such as:

 If you were in charge for a day, what would you most like to change in your neighborhood?

 If you could wave a magic wand, what would you most like to change at your workplace?

 Think of your ideal living environment: what is currently missing, and what would you want to make happen?



Next, it must be investigated whether an issue enjoys sufficient broad support, rather than it being an issue that only a vocal minority feels emotional about. One way we can do this is by recording the outcome of one-on-one conversations, a survey, or a petition.

Whether something is current and urgent depends partly on objective facts that we can list. Is something happening now, or is it pain from the past accompanied by resentment? It is difficult to mobilize people around an issue that cannot be reversed, even if an unjust situation has occurred. However, whether something is urgent is sometimes also a matter of feeling and not always based on clear facts. If the community has accepted a bad situation for a long time, as an organizer you can sometimes help investigate whether there are ways to change it anyway.

Finally, this brings us to the strategic consideration:

- Is this issue solvable?
- Can we solve this with the people in our community if we unite and become active?
- Or can we formulate a smaller, achievable interim goal for the major issue?
- Or can we formulate intermediate steps to build up our strength in such a way that we can tackle this major problem?

BOND issues per target group

To identify a BOND issue, it helps to establish a well-defined target group. You then adapt the scale and method accordingly. Flexible contracts might not seem like a BOND issue until you specifically ask people with temporary contracts.

Important questions for your organisation are:



Which issues can activate your constituency at the local level?



Which issues regarding a specific theme or target group can activate your community?



Which issues can activate members nationally or broadly?



Issues that are not BOND

Just because issues are not BOND does not mean they are unimportant. They are simply unsuitable for organizing and activating a base. The reason may be that the issues are not collective, making them more suitable for an individual support approach. In such cases, you can use the collective agreements that exist regarding people's rights and obligations, and apply them to individual situations. Conversely, some matters that initially appear as individual cases may turn out to be BOND issues.

For example, if you see more and more people approaching you for help with problems involving a government agency, and all these people have a migration background, then there may be a broader collective issue at play. This is why a healthy interplay between collective and individual advocacy is necessary.

Some examples:

- Three separate cases are reported about poor guidance and handling during long-term illness at the same company. In this case, it may be worth investigating whether there is an unhealthy workload and/or social insecurity.
- Increasing numbers of people turn to your food bank. Then it becomes relevant to examine why people need this help and what collective problem could be solved so that fewer people require assistance.

It is also possible that an issue is not BOND because it will only emerge in the future, is not solvable, or does not evoke strong emotion. This does not mean your organisation cannot lobby for it, research it, or simply monitor it.



Hot issues and cold issues

Within the issues that qualify as BOND, a distinction can be made between “hot” and “cold” issues. Simply put, hot issues are urgent, high-intensity problems that people come to you about immediately, while cold issues are those that simmer in the background but, due to a lack of initiative or perspective, have not yet led to tangible change.

An example of a “hot” issue is sudden budget cuts that threaten layoffs. Everyone is in a state of alarm and discussing it. Irreversible steps may happen quickly, so there isn't time to calmly build your campaign structure, it must be addressed immediately. To clarify the difference, we provide a list of examples below.



Examples of 'hot' and 'cold' issues

	Hot	Cold
How can you find out?	Members are active and come to you	You are searching for (not yet) members
When	Members now expect your support, time, and/or energy due to the urgency of the issue	You choose when to invest your time and/or energy in the issue, because it has been going on (or simmering) for some time.
Strategically	In strategic and less strategic locations	You can prioritise strategic workplaces and workplaces where the same issues apply.
Organizing opportunities	Members have a lot of energy, which makes them eager to take initiative.	You can take the time to build active groups
Organizing risks	Because solutions are urgent, there is a risk that your work organisation will do a lot itself. This is useful in the short term, but does not build an organizing structure.	Because you bring in an outside perspective and initiative, it is important to gradually transfer that initiative to the active members.



We are Stroomversnellers

Stroomversnellers is a trainers' collective of experienced campaigners, organizers, facilitators, and trainers. We have all been active in environmental organisations, grassroots initiatives, labor unions, or anti-racism movements. Through trial and error, we have learned how to run effective campaigns, build organisations, and create social change.

We are constantly learning and love sharing our knowledge and experiences with others. The world does not move in the right direction on its own, far from it. Only with many well-prepared people can a different, more just society come closer. That is why we support a wide range of groups fighting for social and ecological justice, offering advice, strategy and brainstorming sessions, (action) trainings, and workshops. Together, we grow, strengthen our impact, and work toward a better world!

Toolbox for Movements

This guide is part of the "Toolbox for Movements". The toolbox includes a collection of short digital guides covering the basics of strategy, movement building, activism, and organizing. It provides a solid foundation for beginning activists, while also offering fresh insights for experienced changemakers. [Here](#) you will find links to all other guides published so far.

We love learning too

If you have ideas for improving this guide or want to add your own experiences, we would love to hear from you!

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