

Planning Actions

A direct action is a technique for directly intervening to change reality. It is about stopping/changing/starting an activity in the real world. Stopping a ship from dumping hazardous waste in the sea is direct action. Protesting outside a parliament against the same dumping is not as “direct” though may still be an effective action.

Effective and successful direct actions depend on many factors. The following is intended as a general guide to assist with planning.

1. Does the proposed action fit into your campaign strategy?
2. What is the target?
3. What do you want to achieve by taking action against the target?
4. Have you spent time considering how the action will end? Be prepared for the situation to change...know how you will end your activity and plan some contingencies in case it doesn't work out the way you thought it would. What back up plans are there if the action is 'foiled'?
5. Are all participants aware of the legal and/or health consequences?
6. What dangers are there and what safety precautions have been taken for personnel (i.e. equipment and training)?
7. What are the lines of communication?
8. What considerations/allowances have been made of the local response, e.g. workers at factory, etc?
9. Has legal support been arranged?
10. Is video/photo coverage necessary for safety reasons? If so, what arrangements have been made?
11. Who is going to be responsible for internal communication (i.e. informing the group and supporters about the progress of the action)?
12. Do all activists involved share the ethic of nonviolence?
13. Have you/your group budgeted for the action?
14. Is there a co-ordinator or a quick decision making group?
15. Who is the legal liaison?

Briefing Before The Action

It is a good idea to come together before the event to discuss the campaign strategy, the target (what/why), the objective of action, the campaign messages, logistics (what happens on the day), safety issues, legal issues, media release and arrangements for media on the day.

Safety

Always prepare a list of everyone involved and their next of kin/contact phone numbers in case of mishap. Encourage activists to work in teams of two or more (do not go into a potentially difficult situation alone). Have people in your group with first-aid skills. The action co-ordinator should always know where everyone is at any stage during the action and be able to communicate with them should the need arise.

Ending The Action

This is without doubt the most difficult component of action planning. You can go into an action situation with clearly defined objectives and demands, yet as soon as the action starts various other factors come into play which force you into situations where your objectives and demands may no longer be realistic. In deciding on a particular action you must be flexible enough to accommodate any outside influences beyond your control, and change your tactics accordingly. You should build into the action plan contingencies for situations that may arise.

Do's And Don'ts

- Have a plan and a contingency plan as back up.
- Make sure the co-ordinator does not get arrested.
- Make sure you have a media plan.
- Make sure you can communicate (via phone or radio) with your team.
- Debrief with the whole group as soon as the action finishes.
- Know in advance and be prepared if you may be risking arrest.