



Starting a Group

## **Building a Coalition (Revision date 1-12-2013)**

My husband and I had a cattle ranch. Occasionally, we would need to gather them all for shots or other kinds of treatment. In order to treat them we needed to gather them into the barn, then into stalls and eventually into the chute so that we could give them their medicine.

Needless to say, they didn't like it, even though we were only trying to help them and our motives were in their best interest. They didn't know our motives and they didn't trust us.

Together, we would saddle up our horses and go out to the herd and try to move them towards the barn. We'd start off slowly and try to move them along the fence so that we only had three open ends to close off. Then, as more and more joined the herd, we found that some were able to "escape". They would dodge us and race off in the opposite direction. One of us would go after the wayward cow and try to herd them back to the group while the other would try to keep the rest from running off.

You'd think they'd be appreciative that we were trying to help them. Nope! Not an ounce of gratitude. Even after they got their eyes soothed, or got treated for ringworm or got shots of antibiotics to help with an infection, they just wanted to get back to eating grass and being left alone.

Sometimes, trying to build a coalition can be as frustrating as herding cattle who don't want to be herded. Group leaders don't know what the motive is and don't trust "outsiders", so they resist any attempt to work together.

What brought the necessity of creating a coalition? Our group, over a period of three years, launched 31 groups and some of those groups have followed suit and helped to launch other groups as well. With the launching of all these groups came hundreds of e-mails for help.

New group leaders needed help and they came to us. We wanted to provide assistance for them but needed others to help as well. We thought that creating a network would provide a sort of "resource center" where we all would contribute to helping these struggling groups.

While we now have a great regional network with over 30 groups, it took three attempts to get here.

Some of the things that happened when we tried to get us all together:

- Some leaders thought that our group was trying to take them over.
- Others had no clue who we were so why would they want to get involved with another group. After all, they had enough trouble of their own, they didn't need someone else's problems too.
- A handful of leaders were threatened by a seemingly stronger group and were intimidated.
  - They also became very negative and toxic to some of the other groups.
- We chose to work with only the "friendlies". They don't want us and we certainly don't need them.
- A lot of work needs to be done. When you have to deal with negativity, it saps the energy you need to accomplish the goal and mission of your group.
- There actually were some leaders who became very territorial and felt that there was too much of a difference from area to area.
  - In reality it boiled down to the prior reason, they were threatened.



**Why did we want to build a coalition?** For a number of reasons. Not the least was to help struggling groups. We had been fortunate to be blessed with great leaders in one area and we wanted to help others that weren't as fortunate.

We also knew that all of us as leaders have different personalities and leadership style. This is a good thing because each group will move to where it is the most effective and prosper there while others will move to a different path and prosper where their talent lies.

Allowing everyone to come together and share what they are doing in their communities has been a gift for us all. At each of our regional meetings, each group leader (or someone they select) has the opportunity to share something that they are doing that is successful. The number of amazing ideas that we all get from these sessions is priceless.

We learn, grow, understand and are challenged when we network with other conservative groups and organizations. Not all groups are "Tea Party" groups. There are conservative groups that hold to our core values and we enjoy working with them, learning from them and growing with them.

Having these regional meeting has also allowed us to gather leaders from a wide area to help with Get Out The Vote efforts, understanding issues and candidates so that we can be influential in our own districts without violating our tax exempt status.

When there is a statewide rally (such as our Tax Day Rally), we have 30 groups helping instead of just one. We share the load and share in the rewards as well.

Instead of taking the time to go into the first two attempts I will give you what we did after each effort. We asked these questions:

- What did we set out to do?
- What actually happened?
- Why did this happen?
- What will we do next time?
- What should we continue to do?
- What should we do differently?

Some of what it took to break down the barriers was just time. Time is the best truth teller and it always rises to the top. Time revealed that we know that this isn't at about US; it's about our state and our country. There is no room for ego or power struggles. Time is short and we need to learn to "hang together or we will surely hang alone".

**The advantages of working with other groups** are :

- Creativity for success. Sharing ideas, concerns and successes.
- A feeling of being part of something bigger than ourselves.
- A team is something that you play on once in a while. A network is a place where you belong.
- It shows greater force when you need it for a large event or an election.
- You remain independent yet it raises your level of accountability when you know others are counting on you.



- It helps to keep us focused and encouraged.

In the book by Jim Ballard, *“Whale Done! The Power of Positive Relationships”*, he tells about two men who have been training killer whales at SeaWorld in San Diego, California. They wanted to tell their story of an amazing example to illustrate the power of building positive relationships.

It doesn't take much to convince people that it probably wouldn't be a good idea to punish a killer whale and then tell the trainers to get in the water with it. They don't call them killer whales for no reason. When the trainers work with the whales, there is no negative interaction between the trainers and the whales. When a new whale – whether from another facility or a newborn - they don't do any training with that whale for weeks. All they do is feed and play with it.

When asked why SeaWorld had this extended no-training period they said, “We want to convince the whale that we mean it no harm.” What a wonderful concept!

The problem with most group leaders is that there is little trust between them and other leaders in their area. It is important to build trust with each other by reaching out for no reason than to better the person you reach out to.

Without trust, it is difficult if not impossible to inspire involvement and interaction from other leaders. Proving yourself to be a person who is trustworthy, honest, real and with integrity of character will take time and a sacrificial willingness to help others.

If you have to tell others how good you are, then there may be a problem. Those who I know to be true, honorable, trustworthy, faithful, patient and just good people don't need to tell others. They just are.

Build your coalition with those who are of true character. Those who are dependable and faithful to the mission. Without ego. Those who have a strong enough self-image that their only concern is that the job gets done, not that it is them that does the job. If it matters that they be the one to do a job or get the credit then they are there for the wrong reason. It should only matter that the job gets done.

In building a Coalition, you are going beyond building a team. You are building a Network. You will have a network of individuals who have something to contribute; people who love their country and want to make a difference. They are your gift. Work with them.