

Tips on Forming Mutually-Beneficial Strategic Alliances with Like-Minded Organizations

Let's face it—most NVC trainers and NVC teams/organizations struggle with finding the finances needed to promote their event, or to pay for event coordination costs. At the same time, passionate volunteers and trainers around the world continue to put on events and trainings that are attended by hundreds of participants. The truth is, it doesn't take thousands of dollars in advertising or full color brochures to bring people in the door.

Surveys conducted with many NVC groups around the United States prove that grassroots promotion is perhaps the most effective method, AND that leveraging the support of strategic alliances, organizations can save a lot of money on event and promotion expenses. Whether a formal sponsorship is created or not, alliances with like-minded organizations typically result in free cross-promotion opportunities that reach a substantial number of potential participants. In addition, they can lead to donated space, equipment, volunteers, and other valuable resources.

TIP #1: DEFINE “LIKE-MINDED”

- Consider the mission of your organization and the values of Nonviolent Communication. Seek out organizations whose mission aligns with yours. Organizations will be more likely to support a like-minded organization than one that pursues a much different mission.
- If you're struggling to identify such organizations in your community, start identifying your Target Audiences (see the Promotion Plan Worksheet in the Promotion Toolkit). Once you've determined your target audiences, do a search on the Internet to find area organizations (i.e., if your target audiences are counselors and mediators, search for “community mediation programs” in your area, “counseling professional organizations,” etc.).
- Once you find a few organizations, research one or two further. Stick with those that have established communities, audiences, and communication or promotion systems that reach large audiences. EXAMPLES: Large alternative churches, community radio stations, universities, counseling or mediation professional organizations, major peace groups, etc.

TIP #2: START WITH DIE-HARD SUPPORTERS

- Begin by asking past sponsors or partners if they'd enjoy supporting your promotion or event support again.
- Before approaching groups who've never heard of your organization or NVC, consider starting with organizations that have already expressed their support (whether in terms of past attendance to an event, or verbal gratitude for your organization/NVC).

TIP #3: REMEMBER THE OBVIOUS

- It isn't always necessary to create new methods of promotion in your partnership. Instead, ask to utilize existing communication and promotion systems that the organization already has in place (such as an e-newsletter they distribute monthly). This helps them know that the sponsorship will run smoothly and easily for them.
- Ask your sponsoring organization: (1) if they have a staff or customer newsletter where you can publish a free article, advertisement and/or event listing with a reference to their sponsorship; (2) If you can post your events on their website (on an event listing or community calendar); (3) If they publish a trade journal or magazine where they could publish an article on NVC; (4) any other methods they have in place to reach their customers and staff.
- When soliciting in-kind donations for event-related expenses or support, consider asking organizations that have this equipment or support readily available. For instance, partner with a university to obtain event space or audio-visual support and student volunteers.

TIP #4: REWARD THE PARTNER WITH INCENTIVES

- Create a discounted group rate for your partner's employees or members to attend your upcoming event.
- Provide all partner employees or members a 50% event-day-only coupon for purchasing one NVC book at your event.
- Provide a limited number (3-5) free event coupons for your partner's key management to attend your event. Send them personalized invitations with the complimentary tickets enclosed.