



How to cut an Issue

An issue is different from a problem. There may be many urgent problems in a neighborhood, but...

An issue is something that you can do something about.

In building an organization, we must remember the people tired of losing. The goal of this organization is to build power we need to win.

This implies that there first must be a strong interest, anger or the potential to mobilize large numbers of people around this concern. (Would 50 to 100 people from your church come if we took action on it?) Second, we must target something we can win to resolve the problem.

So we ask these questions: Is it controversial? Is it immediate, specific and winnable?

Immediate

- What's controversial right now? (very tough to work on flooding issues during the dry season, or a school crossing guard during summer vacation).
- People feel it strongly- **if it is affecting them now.**
- Something that we can win quickly (People lose interest after 2-4 weeks).

Specific

- Not crime, but... burglaries between 8:00 pm & 10:00 pm
- Not vagrants, but... the three transients that are using the vacant house on 3rd street
- Streets are well maintained *except* for two huge potholes on Magnolia and Francis)

Winnable

- Something important enough for 25-40 people to work together to resolve
- Something small enough to allow a reasonably good chance of success
- Since it's always a bit of a gamble, we must have a decent chance of putting the odds overwhelmingly in our favor
- We can increase the odds in our favor by increasing the number of people involved having all the necessary information. Contact the press and media to enlist public support

Internal Vs. External Issues

- Our job is to unite not divide neighborhood
- The problem with a person that lives outside the neighborhood is different from a grievance between neighbors.
- Issues to Avoid: Owners vs. Renters in the same neighborhood, Adults vs. Youth are generally very divisive and should be avoided. These "hot" issues have the potential to split your organization.

