

10 Ways People Power Can Change The World

From boycotts, workplace action and memes, to political campaigns, disaster relief and civil disobedience.



People power can take many forms depending on what kind of change you're looking to achieve and who has the power to make that change happen—whether it's a government, company, community or individual.

Below is a list of people-powered tactics that we hope will help you define your strategy and generate ideas. While this was originally put together in October 2015, when MobLab was a part of Greenpeace, we believe the tactics and examples remain as relevant today as when this was first published.

1. Consumer Pressure

The voices of many can now match the marketing budgets of even the biggest brands, making consumer pressure an effective way to influence companies to change their ways.

Companies, and the brands they own, are more and more responsive to people power in the digital age. Studies show that people prefer brands they know and trust. As a result, brands are sensitive to public pressure and will go to great lengths to protect their reputation. A brand includes the entire experience a person has with a product or service — including the name, visuals, feel, communication style, taste and sound.

For example, Coca-Cola's brand is not just the word Coke, but also the design of the bottle, the special recipe, the sound of the bottle opening, the history and the advertising around it. Any of those brand elements are subject to pressure.

2. Corporate Pressure

People can also directly influence companies by asking for the help of shareholders, employees, investors or partners of the company. Anybody who has the potential to pressure a company's investors, leaders or even employees has the ability to influence corporate behaviour.

Because of its directness, corporate pressure can work quickly if you can engage these special groups of people.

3. Political Pressure

There are many ways to influence governments and politicians, all of which can shift laws, policies and regulations. Governmental and political structures are complex and vary widely across the globe and local laws can restrict the ability of organisations to engage in politics.

4. Raising Awareness

Exposing a problem is often the first step to harnessing people power. People will only invest energy and time in a campaign when they understand why it's important, how they can help and what the solution is. Awareness campaigns are often combined with other people-powered change strategies that give people ways to act.

5. Organising

Organising is a form of leadership. Identifying, recruiting and developing skills that help others act and become leaders themselves builds a community's ability to control the forces that affect it. Large-scale change is possible when organising is coordinated across many communities at the same time.

There are many great examples of organising that have captured headlines and brought about real change on the ground.

6. Volunteering

Volunteers bring new skills, energy and ideas to a campaign or organisation (and may also increase how much you can get done). The benefit goes both ways: volunteers give skills, knowledge and time while receiving experience, new friends and satisfaction.

7. Crowdsourcing

The internet is enabling large groups of people to take on tasks, get involved in decision-making, and contribute to solving specific problems. Crowdsourced campaigns organise efforts across communities, social networks and groups to draw on a deeper pool of creativity, knowledge and resources.

8. Donating

Donations allow campaigns and organisations to conduct sustained research, investigations, education, pay for equipment and much more. Money is important, of course, but people can also donate goods that can be used or sold. Donations also offer a way for the donor to connect with a cause they are passionate about and see the good their money, goods or services can do out in the world.

9. Behaviour Change

Behaviour change has been (and remains) a goal of many advocacy campaigns. Activists have, for example, urged people to choose tap water over bottled water, recycle their waste, or purchase fair-trade products.

Online platforms and social networks are rewriting the role people play in behaviour change campaigns. Word of mouth is more powerful than ever in the digital age: People can quickly learn what family, friends and colleagues believe through social media like Facebook, Twitter, or even text messages.

10. Non-Violent Direct Action

Individuals and groups of people can disrupt or stop the work of companies, governments and other actors causing harm. These non-violent direct actions can raise the level and quality of public debate, engage people and provoke action from those with the power to change law and policy. Efforts led by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. are often used as classic examples, but NVDA has a long history around the globe with thousands more examples big and small every year.

Adapted from: <https://mobilisationlab.org/resources/10-ways-people-power-can-change-theworld/>