

Power Mapping Your Way to Success

“Power mapping” is a visual exercise that helps you to identify the levers and relationships you can take advantage of to gain access to and influence over your target. Examples of different kinds of power maps can be found on the last page of this how-to.

Power mapping will help you decide:

- the best possible target (i.e., who can make the change you are seeking);
- what and who might persuade them to say “yes” to your request; and
- the pathways or relationships that can get you access to, or put pressure on, the target.

Power mapping can ensure effective alliances, targeted actions, political relevance, and legitimacy. And it can help you see where your technical expertise best fits into existing public efforts and discussions.

Finding the Right Target

Ask yourself these questions:

- “What really needs to change?” It should be something concrete and measurable (e.g., a specific rule, law, contract, business policy, community agreement).

- “Where is that change made?” Think of a time-bound, specific place, such as the state legislature, a federal agency, a city council resolution.
- “Who can make that change happen?” There are often multiple decisionmakers in play (policymakers, institutional leaders, corporate executives, community leaders, agency heads), so consider who has the most authority but is also vulnerable or movable in some way.

Researching Your Target

Before you can know how to reach and influence the target, you need to know the target. Here are a series of questions to help you do your homework:

- What are they interested in, and what’s their track record on the issue?
- What do they stand to win by saying “yes,” or to lose by saying “no”?
- What has prevented them from saying “yes” so far?
- Who do you know on their staff or in their social networks? (Consider spouse, kids, place of worship, golf partners, etc.)
- Who influences them, both personally and professionally? (Consider whose advice they listen to, who gives them money, etc.)



To be as strategic as possible with your limited resources when deciding what actions to do, take a moment to better understand who can say “yes!” to what needs to change—and what makes them tick.

- Whose support is especially important to them, and why? (Consider who campaigned for them, voted for them, etc.)
- Where did they go to college?
- How did they get into politics?
- Who are their business partners, allies, organizations, etc.?
- Which newspapers praise them, and which are critical?
- **Support.** Will constituents be willing to publicly demonstrate their support for the decisionmaker in taking your desired action?
- **Connections.** Can your own connections (other scholars, community groups, institutions, professional groups) support—or put pressure on—the decisionmaker?

Design all your activities and tactics to build strategic relationships, engage audiences, or persuade your target.

It's also important to be realistic about what you *can't* offer. Don't make promises you can't keep: for example, votes or support in the next election if you are not the organizer or community leader who can make it happen, or research that you don't have time to conduct.

Examining Relationships

Based on your answers to the questions above, decide who is most likely to convince the decisionmaker to act. Even if they are not currently your allies, consider:

- Groups, clubs, associations, or a place of worship to which the decisionmaker belongs, or businesses, donors, consumers, and media that have particular influence
- Constituents who care about the issue and the communities most affected by it
- What these groups or individuals bring in terms of credibility, emotional appeal, special skills, newsworthiness

Sometimes your best allies might not be the most obvious. Take the time to have an open, creative brainstorm. Four arenas of influence to think about: public, VIP, personal, and financial.

Narrow down your options by putting each potential influencer into quadrants, with “low leverage” and “high leverage” along one axis and “difficult to access” and “easy to access” on the other. Think about “leverage” not only in terms of financial influence and powerful connections but also in terms of direct experience or unique knowledge on the issue, and the community's trust.

Crafting Your Approach

Now, consider what you can offer the decisionmaker. Think carrots and sticks. For example:

- **Expertise.** Help the decisionmaker understand your position by not only providing facts, but also putting the facts into context (i.e., what it means for their constituents and the affected communities).
- **Research.** The decisionmaker may need “cover,” in the form of scientific research, to support their action on an issue.

Finding the Opportune Times

- When can the decision actually be made? In other words, when is the decisionmaker in working session versus in campaign mode (when their focus will be on the next election and not on legislation)?
- When will there be peak energy around the issue? If it involves students or children, will they be in school or on vacation? Will people be focused on the holidays?

Recognizing Your Foes

- Who are your opponents? What will they lose if you win?
- What obstacles have they put in your way (money, misinformation, celebrity spokespeople), and can you neutralize them? Even if you can't, you should know what to expect.

With strategic planning, collaborations that build influence, and a keen awareness of your strengths and assets, you can be an effective agent for change.

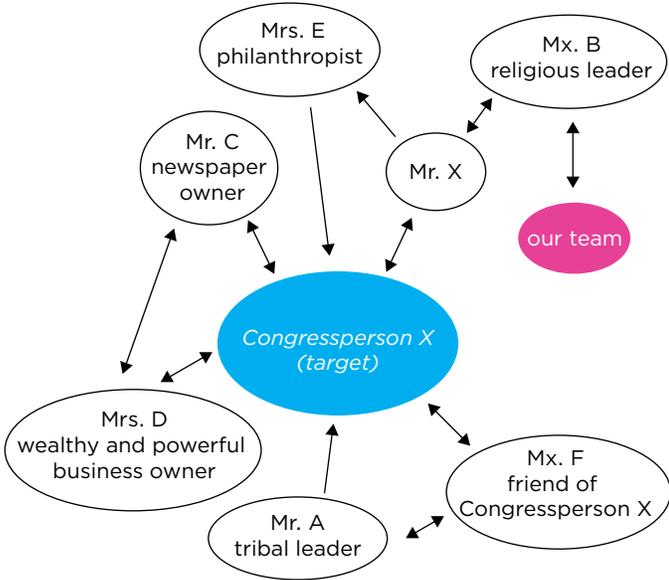
Learn More

You can use our “Ten Questions for Researching Policymakers” worksheet to guide the power-mapping process; learn more in our Scientist Advocacy Toolkit at www.ucsus.org/scientiststoolkit.

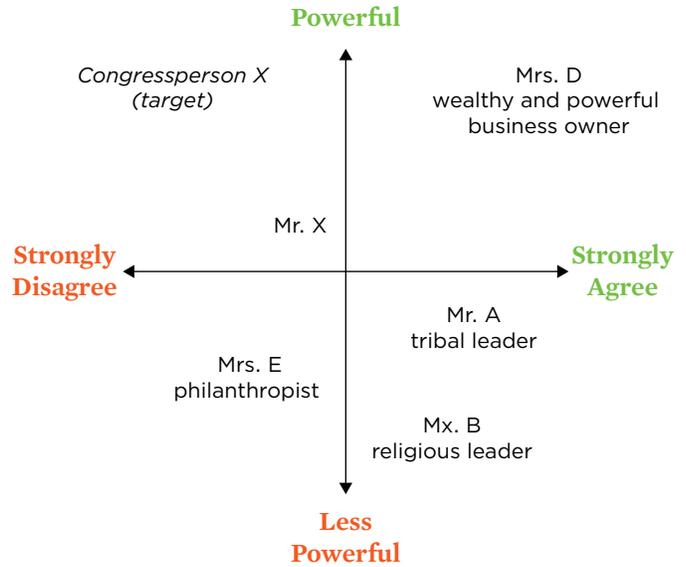
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Types of Power Maps

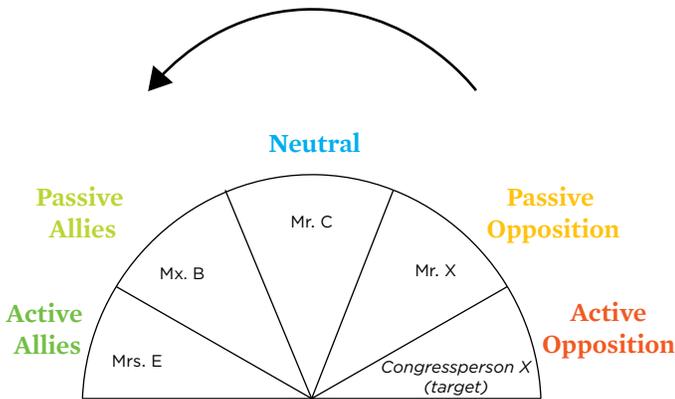
a. Relationship Circles



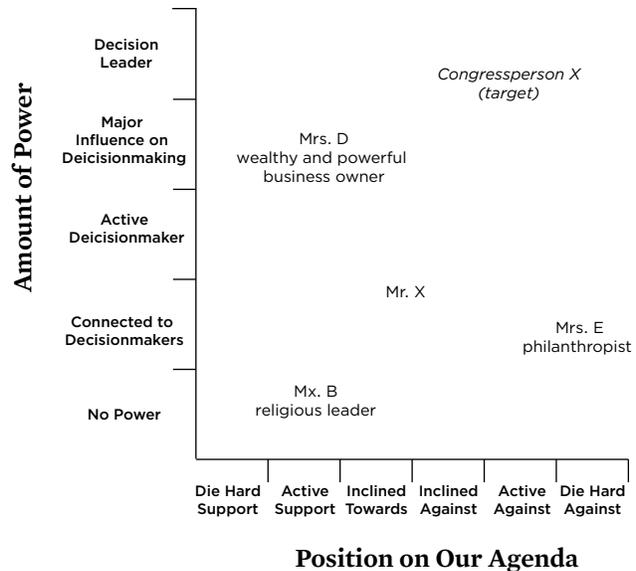
b. Quadrant Analysis



c. Spectrum of Allyship



d. Landscape Analysis



There are a variety of options for how to organize your power mapping, and different options may work better than others for your particular scenario, depending on its complexity.

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