



DEVELOPING A COMPASSIONATE CITY CAMPAIGN

Based on material provided by
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Revised: Saturday, 24 September 2011

PLAN STEPS

1. **Assemble sponsor coalition** — The groups and individuals who are seen as fair, neutral and credible to be bringing this Campaign to the city and asking for widespread participation. This group could also serve as governance if that were to become necessary. Have each participant affirm the *Charter for Compassion*.²
2. **Establish a web presence** — Creating a webpage, getting a Twitter account, and setting up a page on social media sites (Google+, Facebook) will add significant credibility to your campaign. The Institute offers services in this area.
3. **Start a My Compassionate Action Network group where people join the local Campaign** — Provide information on the *Charter*, the Compassionate Action Network³ and the International Campaign for Compassionate Cities; local conversations on living compassionately; guide on how to host a conversation; and a facility for people to record progress on the compassion work they are doing.
4. **Build a coalition of community groups** — Build a coalition representing a broad range of community groups. These groups will join with the sponsor coalition to present the rationale and draft proclamation to the mayor and city council.
5. **Secure funding** — Raising funds to support your campaign is important. This can be done in a number of funding drive approaches. You can also explore creating a nonprofit organization or partnering with one for tax-deductible contributions to your campaign. The institute offers services in this area.
6. **Make a presentation to the mayor and city council** — Present the rationale behind the request for the mayor and city council to affirm the *Charter for Compassion* and proclaim support of a Compassionate Cities campaign. Submit a listing of endorsements, signatures gathered in support, and other compelling information if available.
7. **Announce Compassionate City Initiative** — Once the *Charter* is affirmed and the mayor and city council have approved the proclamation for a Compassionate City

campaign, a public and publicized announcement (with the mayor presenting the proclamation) can be made emphasizing the *Charter* and the Campaign to seek endorsement of the *Charter* and participation in living into the *Charter* in our individual, family, work, faith, neighborhood and community lives.

8. **Recruit sector champions** — These are people who evangelize for the *Charter* and the Campaign among their peers: business (sectors might be banking, finance, healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, etc.) government (local, state) faith communities, non-profits, civic groups, neighborhood associations, schools and educational institutions, and criminal-justice agencies.

9. **Host several open, community-wide conversations** — These conversations model and set the tone for the whole host of conversations that the Campaign would want to stimulate in families, workplaces, faith communities, schools, neighborhood gatherings, coffee shops, civic organization meetings, etc. These conversations would also be training for sector champions. Conversation questions:

What does living into the Charter for compassion look like in our organization, neighborhood or city?

What do we already have to support that picture of compassion?

What do we need to do or commit to doing to making our organization, neighborhood, or city compassionate?

10. **Encourage many of these conversations in ordinary settings** — Sponsors and sector champions promote and support conversations throughout community in in families, workplaces, faith communities, schools, neighborhood gatherings, coffee shops, civic organization meetings, etc.

Materials to host conversation would be available for download from the local website or group, and/or the International Institute for Compassionate Cities (“Institute”) website.⁴ Conversation organizers would record participation, findings, insights, and plans on the website. Progress would be recorded as it occurs.

11. **Develop progress report** — Establish metrics and significant findings to be reported back to everyone who participates in the *Charter* and the Campaign. Also issue a report to the community.

12. **Support development of larger-scale compassion projects** — Hold action-oriented conversation where participants are invited to bring their project, ideas, questions or whatever they feel called by and need help to launch or advance in the community. The conversation questions:

What project or idea has the power to transform the community and inspire you?

What is the purpose of the project or idea?

What is missing? What is needed to make the project of idea more complete or possible?

What have we learned and what next steps are we ready to take?

13. **Nurture a select group of compassion projects** — Develop a process to screen and adopt a small number of projects for nurturing including mentors, opening doors, introductions, learning opportunities, etc.

14. **Innovate, expand, learn and shear** — These steps, with others, might be sufficient to get things rolling. But the Campaign must view itself as continuously innovating, taking advantage of unanticipated opportunities, inviting new people and ideas, capturing and sharing learning.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The characteristics of successful community initiatives:⁵

1. Are based on clarity of shared purpose and principles.
2. Are self-organizing and self-governing in whole and in part.
3. Exist primarily to enable their constituent parts.
4. Are powered from the periphery, unified from the core.
5. Are durable in purpose and principle, malleable in form and function.
6. Equitably distribute power, rights, responsibility and rewards.
7. Harmoniously combine cooperation and competition.
8. Learn, adapt and innovate in ever expanding cycles.
9. Are compatible with the human spirit and the biosphere.
10. Liberate and amplify ingenuity, initiative and judgment.
11. Are compatible with and foster diversity, complexity and change.
12. Constructively utilize and harmonize ambiguity, conflict and paradox.
13. Restrain and appropriately embed command and control methods.

DISCIPLINES OF THOSE LEADING COMPASSION BUILDING

The goal of building compassion and transcending overt and covert violence is advanced by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build four capacities in people.⁶

1. **The centrality of relationships** — Relationships form the context in which compassion happens and also generate the energy that enables people to transcend violence. As people acknowledge their relational interdependency and recognize themselves as part of the pattern, they may be able to envision a wider set of relationships and take personal responsibility for their own choices and behavior. In short, compassion requires that people be able to envision their interconnectedness and mutuality.
2. **The practice of paradoxical curiosity** — Cycles of violence are often driven by polarities. Choices about to respond to conflict are forced into either-or categories: you are either with us or against us. Compassion involves the capacity to rise above these divisions and reach beyond accepted meanings. Paradoxical curiosity is a matter of

- respecting complexity, seeking something beyond what is visible, and discovering what it is that holds apparently opposed social energies together. It involves accepting people at face value, and yet looking beyond appearances and suspending judgment in order to discover untold new angles, opportunities, and unexpected potentialities.
3. **Provide space for the creative act** — Compassion arises through creative human action that happens out of the everyday and yet moves beyond what exists to something new and unexpected. Because new ways of thinking may pose a threat to the status quo, it is important to provide space for the creative act to emerge. This requires a commitment to creativity and a belief that it is possible to move beyond the limits of what is commonly accepted. This quality of providing for and expecting the unexpected is well-known in the world of artists and needs to be cultivated in the work of compassion building. Creativity opens us to avenues of inquiry and provides us with new ways to think about social change.
 4. **The willingness to risk** — To take a risk is to step into the unknown without any guarantee of success or safety. For many people caught in conflict, violence is known, and compassion is a mystery. Because compassion building typically requires people to move toward a new, mysterious, and unexpected future, it may be a difficult journey.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The International Institute for Compassion Cities provides a growing body of information and resources that can support local Compassionate City campaigns. These include information sheets, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and research information. Some materials can be customized to fit the local Campaign requirements, including contact information for the local Campaign. Please contact the Institute for more information.



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Notes:

- 1 Contact information: +01 502-551-2612, HowardMason@NewPossibilitiesAssociates.com
- 2 Participants can confirm online at: <http://Charterforcompassion.org/site/>
- 3 My Compassionate Action Network (<http://my.compassionateactionnetwork.com/>) participation is free. Members can establish groups (Compassionate Seattle, Maribor — Compassionate City, etc.) quickly and easily on the My CAN website. From there, they can communicate with their members, post news items, photos, audio recordings, and videos as well as conduct conversations.
- 4 <http://www.compassionatecities.org>
- 5 Source: Chaordic Alliance
- 6 Adapted from J. P. Lederach: *The Moral Imagination*.