

More Information: One-on-one

One of the most effective strategies used in American community organizing is the one-on-one or face-to-face visit. Its purpose is to discover a person's self-interests and to initiate a relationship of trust and respect. While it is very rare during a first visit that the person visited will be invited to participate or become involved in something, a foundation is laid to do so in the future.

A one-on-one visit is an intentional conversation, always arranged ahead of time, and lasts for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. It begins with the person doing the visit establishing the reason for visiting. The following example is typical within the context of a faith-based community organization where one lay person is visiting another from their own congregation.

Thank you for taking the time and allowing me to visit. As I mentioned when I called to arrange this visit, I am part of a team of twenty persons from our church who are each visiting five to ten other members as a way of strengthening the fellowship of the church and understanding our members concerns for the church, our neighborhood, and our city. Before we talk about visions and concerns, however, I would enjoy getting to know you better. Please tell me more about yourself.

Visitors ask about the background, family, work, hobbies, and future aspirations of the person they are visiting. Questions such as, "How did you choose your job and what do you really like about it?", and "Were there any key people or events in the past that really helped shape who you are today?" lead the conversation to a deeper level. Eventually the visitor will ask about the community and church with such questions as, "If there was one or two things that would make our church a better place than it already is, what would that be?", and "What makes you angry and what would you like to see changed in your neighborhood or our city?" The visit ends with the visitor saying something like this.

Thank you for taking the time to visit and share. Next month our church team will report back to the full congregation what we have found. Then we will invite the membership to take part in developing strategies to address the visions and concerns we have heard. I will call you when this occurs.

Persons conducting such one-on-one visits consistently report how rewarding they are, how it expands the number of people they know, and amazement at how much people are willing to share about themselves during an initial conversation. Upon reflection, this final conclusion should not be surprising. It is a wonderful experience when someone truly listens to and takes a genuine interest in us, all the more so in our increasingly busy and impersonal culture.

As alluded to in the one-on-one example just cited, these visits often occur in the context of a "listening process", an eight week period when a trained group of people will each visit five to ten others. After the visits are completed, the visitors will share with each other what they have heard, look for a pattern of repeated concerns and visions, and then report back to the membership their findings and preliminary recommendations for next steps. Within a faith-based community organizations of thirty congregations working together, it is not uncommon for 2,000 people to be visited and listened to during this eight week period. Each parish listening team, in addition to reporting back to their own membership, will also share the community concerns they heard at a meeting with listening teams from other congregations and parishes. Such a joint listening process generates great energy, excitement, and hope that community problems will be effectively addressed. *What helps guarantee success, however, is that the listening teams can now invite the 2,000 people they visited to participate in the organization based upon the self-interests they have discovered and the relationships they have begun to establish.*

Source: <http://www.fo-co.info/Cromwell.htm>