

WINNING WITH SOCIAL NETWORKS

With Karen Hicks

ARSHAD HASAN: My name is Arshad, and I'm the Training Director for the DFA Training Academy. Before I get into the nitty-gritty, I'm going to explain what this is, how this works who you are, and who we are.

First off all, this is DFA Night School. It's the online component to DFA's Training Academy. The Training Academy's mission is to focus, network and train the grass roots. So our little saying is, "You have the power." The DFA Training Academy. Though, helps you figure out how to use that power." We at the DFA Training Academy go all over the country and work with activists face-to-face in our communities. The DFA Night School allows us to do a little bit all over the country at once, using the power of the internet. We provide this online service for free to you, and continue to do so because of the generosity that you have shown to DFA.

So how does this work? Well, the presenters are going to go through the slides or the pages, however you're looking at the presentation. We do our best to list off the page numbers of the slides as we go through. We'll have a couple sections where we're going to pause and open it up for question and answer. We facilitate our question-and-answer through email. You would email your questions to training@democracyforamerica.com. And we've got a few staffers in the back, I mentioned earlier, who are going to help us out.

Anna Louise going to be the one who sorts out the questions and figures out what questions people are asking the most. So go ahead and shoot out those questions to her at training@democracyforamerica.com. We try to cover as many of your questions as possible. Last time we had over 200 questions. And I'm still corresponding to some of you folks, so you'll get the answers soon. If you still need to know where to view/download this presentation on the web site or where to get those slides, that's www.democracyforamerica.com/nightschool.

So who are we on the call? Well tonight we'll have a couple presenters. But before we introduce ourselves, I want to introduce the Chairman of Democracy for America. He's going kick us off. Jim, go ahead.

JIM DEAN: Arshad, thank you. Here we are, folks, live from Burlington, Vermont. First I want to thank you again, as I always do. But it really just means so much that you can take the time out of your busy schedules to be on this call so all of us can get a lot smarter and be a lot more effective in this really critical upcoming November elections. I really appreciate your taking the time to do it. I say it all the time that democracy's not a spectator sport, and we got to get in there.

And I think that nowhere does the rubber meet the road more than what we're going to talking about tonight. Because when we talk about reaching out to voters, when we talk about ground game—all those things are critical to victory in November—it's really about family, friends and neighbors and social networks. It is obviously the most powerful tool that we have at

our disposal to persuade others of our values, and to persuade others of the candidates that we support, and the issues that we support, and the movements that we support. So this gonna be a great evening for that, and I think you're all gonna get a lot out of it. And I'm certainly looking forward to it.

And I especially want to thank Karen for being on the phone tonight and on this call. You know, we all talk about the innovation of the Howard Dean campaign. And there's been lots of stuff talked about that. But really, what Karen did in New Hampshire for Howard's campaign was really the forefront of bringing social networking back into politics in a way that could really make sense and compete with the mass media and all the other junk that's out there.

And Karen, it's great for you to be on here. I really appreciate your being so supportive of us and on this call. And I'm looking forward to catching up with you at some point. With that, again, I want to thank everybody else on this call. I think we're going to have a great training tonight. And certainly this is a very, very powerful tool for all of us. And I think a lot of us will get a lot out of this so we can get onward to victory in November. So Arshad, I'll hand it back to you and look forward to this presentation.

AH: Thanks, Jim. If you go to slide 2, you can see tonight's trainers. I'll be on the call, obviously. I promise I'll find a better picture later. But we've got Karen on the call as well. Karen is coming to us from the Harvard Institute of Politics. She's our DFA Night School trainer for today. Obviously we've got some deep connections with her. But Karen, why don't you tell us just a little bit about yourself? Tell us your story.

KAREN HICKS: Sure. First of all, thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this. The work that everybody on the phone is doing is really, really, really important. And I've been going out and speaking to a lot of groups mainly to deal with my own anxiety about not being on a race this election season. This is the first time in eight years that I haven't been actively working on the ground. So in order to manage my guilt, I've been talking to a lot of people.

And part of what I've been saying everywhere is we all have to be part of the solution. None of us can complain about the Democratic Party and what is or what isn't happening. We have to do it. And what's great about this call tonight is clearly everybody who's on the other end of the line is taking that seriously and really stepping up to the plate. So I just want to thank everybody for your efforts so far and your efforts going into this really, really important election season. And I want to thank Jim Dean, too. He has shown extraordinary leadership of this and making this organization into the full potential that it can be. So thanks to the staff at DFA for organizing this, thanks to Jim Dean for his leadership, and thanks to all of you for participating.

Before I get started I want to try to give you a little bit of background about how I came to really believe in this type of organizing so strongly. I grew up in Swannoh, North Carolina, and I didn't come from a particularly political family. I grew up with a single mom, my sisters and I. My parents divorced when I was five, and my mom basically worked two jobs to raise us, to make ends meet. She was very, very busy, a strong, strong influence in my life.

She taught me a lot about hard work and discipline. But also taught me something else that I think really led to my interest in politics, which was that she demonstrated every day in both big ways and small what it is to give back to community. And so it was never particularly political, but we would serve once a month in our soup kitchen. We would regularly take people—family members and others—into our house and really just do a lot of no-brainer type of activity in the community. And so I think this instilled in my sisters and me that belonging to a community means that you both receive from it and give back.

And so I kind of took that ethic off to school. I went to UNC/Chapel Hill, one of the first people in my family to go to college—and basically got involved with a bunch of service-type organizations. I also underwent kind of a political revelation at the time. And the connections started going off in my mind that there's a reason why there are so many people showing up at soup kitchens. And there's a reason that people have to work two and three jobs. And a certain group of people are making choices about that.

And so I set about thinking, you know, I can make a difference. I can do something about this. And so I got my first job going door-to-door for an environmental group. And I thought this is the best thing since sliced bread, because I could go around and talk about an issue that I cared about and got paid for it. And so it really couldn't get much better than this. And so that set in motion a whole series of things for me. And I've always had the really good fortune of having great jobs and learning a lot from people.

And ultimately this led to how I looked at organizing. And so at first I really focused on getting the best argument and the facts. And I thought, "Gee, if people know everything that's happening to the environment, if they just know what causes it, they ought to change their behavior, and that should happen when they're presented with the facts. And so I got as smart as I could about the issues that I cared about. I made good arguments, and it really didn't go anywhere, which is an experience, I think, that a lot of us have.

Then I thought, well I just need to lobby the right people. And so I worked in New Hampshire after I moved up there as a public interest lobbyist working on campaign finance reform and health care reform. And pretty soon after I started that I thought, gee, we really need to figure out how to change the people sitting on the other side of the committee bench. And that'll make everybody's life a lot easier. And so that's kind of the Reader's Digest version of how I came to understand that campaigns matter. And they matter not just because of who's elected at the end of the day. They matter also based on the kinds of campaigns that people run.

I worked for Jean Shaheen in New Hampshire for a number of years, and we used to have a spending limit that you could only spend half a million dollars on the primary and half a million on the general. And so we always relied on a strong grass roots base to get elected. And then when she ran for the Senate in 2002, we could raise and spend more money. And so we spent \$3.5 million on that race, and made what I think is a really bad strategic mistake. And that is we tried to hire a bunch of people to do what volunteers had. We thought we could do a better professional job.

And so while it was a technically proficient campaign, it just didn't have the same energy, the same connectedness that the other campaigns had. And so I was convinced after that campaign that based upon the amount of money every year, every election, that goes into politics, we ought to do a better job figuring out how to grow our party, how to strengthen it, how to really build solid leadership, and have it involve people in a much more meaningful way.

And so that's when I went to work on the Dean campaign, which I have to say was the best professional experience that I've ever had in my life. I think it really did affect people's lives. It showed that we could run a different kind of campaign. And even though we weren't successful in winning the New Hampshire primary, I think that we did help the governor recover from a really disappointing finish in Iowa, and helped him go on to live another day, and then ultimately help give birth to this organization.

And so I have a strong belief that campaign.... We spent in 2004 on just federal and congressional races, not the presidency—we spent \$1.1 billion on them. And the question that I have is what do we get at the end of that? Do we have a stronger democracy? Do we have more people participating actively? Do we have more leaders? And do we start off at the end of the cycle better than we started at the beginning? And, you know, most of the time unfortunately the answer is, "No."

And so the specific tactic that I'm going to talk about tonight—social network organizing—is, I believe, a way that we can start to turn this around. And so before we get into the specific slides, I want to root this in two other concepts. And so with that I'm going to turn it over to the content. I thought it would be helpful to give you a little bit of background about why I believe so passionately in this approach.

One reason that I think that this idea is poised right now to really play a different role in field organizing in general is if you think about ten years ago, if a presidential candidate or candidate wanted to reach their audience, they could reach 80% of them by either getting an earned media story on the news or they could just buy television time. Since Clinton took office, when he first came in, the average person had about 25 TV channels. By the year 2005, people had four times that many. The average US household had four times that many channels. And some people have as much as 600. In 1993 there were 130 internet sites, and now there are literally tens of millions of them. The number of blogs went from practically nothing when Bush took office in 2001 to as many 30,000 in 2005.

So you can't run a campaign in the same way that you have been able to by just putting up a 30-second spot on TV. It's too fragmented. People do not get their information in that way. They seek it out themselves. And, more importantly, they listen to what their friends and families tell them. I think people have always done that, but now there's so much information out there that people need a guide. They need navigators; they need people who are going to do the research. And so the value of the tactic of social network organizers is that it helps people—hopefully the people on this call—become leaders in their social network: opinion leaders and action leaders.

So this tactic has to be organized within the context of a larger strategy, and so it's not the focus of this call. But what I would encourage everybody on this call. But what I would encourage everybody to do is really take the time to understand the root goals. What's the number of votes that you need to win in a particular election. If you're focused on building your chapter of DFA, what's the number of votes that DFA can produce? And I encourage you to think about organizing in the context of a campaign, but you all are really engaged in a much more important task, which is building something bigger and more long-lasting. So each campaign ought to grow in size and momentum and impact of what you can do. So root it in that vote goal and really ask people to take on responsibility for generating a certain number of votes.

Then there ought to be a strategy. People talk about this all the time. It's over my head in a lot of ways. So I have a very simple way to think about strategy. Which is how do I take what I have and turn it into what I need to get what I want. So it starts with a very sober assessment of what I have. And so what you may have is a membership list of 75 people, and then about 22 people that show up for meetings, and then about four who are really the movers and shakers. And so do that sober assessment of exactly what I have. And then take a look at what need in order to reach that vote goal. And so I need to quadruple the number of volunteers that I have. I need them to develop a different set of skills than they have. And I need to grow my membership. So think specifically of that intermediate step of what you need to get what you want, which is hopefully winning elections, and winning elections with a different kind of candidate

So once you have the vote goal and the strategy, social network organizing is a way of building organization. And I want to make a key distinction before we get into this tactic that you need to build an organization, and then you mobilize it to do certain things. And so you may mobilize it to really talk to Democrats who voted in the presidential election but didn't vote in 2002—the “Dropoff Dems” that we all talk about. Or you could mobilize the organization that you've built to register more voters if you're in a really red state and you just have to add to the rolls in order to make it competitive for good progressive Democrats. You may want to take out somebody like Joe Lieberman, and so that's a way to specifically mobilize your network in order to do that. And so just be very clear about what you're doing. Build the organization that is necessary, and then be really, really specific about the way that you're mobilizing it.

That's all the precursor to the social network organizing. And so now we'll start on the specific slides. We can skip over “agenda and goals.” So let's first talk about what exactly is a social network. It's basically what everybody thinks it is. It's kind of a blinding flash of the obvious. The way that I like to think of this is who's on your holiday card list, your Christmas card or holiday card list? Usually that includes your family, friends, people that you work with, members of your church or other organizations that you belong to, and your neighbors. It usually includes a little of all of those. And most people—everybody that I've ever done this exercise with—can come up with at least 100 people. And, you know, when I'm doing training, people say, “Oh, I don't know anybody.” But then you go through “Let's talk about your family; let's talk about your friends; let's talk about your co-workers.”

And one thing that's really important when you're mapping your social network, is that you cast a wide net and really be honest about who your social network is. Not the people who

you think are going to agree with you politically or say “yes” to what you’re going to ask them to do. Really cast that wide net. And what most of us have learned when we do this is first of all, contrary to the ideas about red and blue America, most of us do not have a segregated social network. We know Democrats; we know independents; we know Republicans; we know people who are not registered to vote. And so by casting a wide net, you start to build a base that is really, really diverse and strong.

So that’s important. It’s also made up of—in social capital lingo—of loose ties and strong ties. Loose ties may refer to somebody that you just know in the coffee shop. You know them when you see them; you know their name; you say hello; you don’t know much more than that. Strong ties are somebody in your family or your friends who you call with an emergency. And so when you map your social network, make sure that you’re not putting a filter on it. It really does need to be broad. Because most of the time we guess we know where people are coming from but it’s really not the case so much.

So once you’ve mapped that social network, you can start to think about how it can be mobilized. And the reason for this is that in order to build an organization you have to have connections with people. And in order to become a leader in your social network, an opinion leader and somebody leading in action, it’s really import to have that broad, broad base. And, again, the reason it matters is that... I don’t know if any of you have heard of this new book that’s out that’s written by Doug Sosnik and Matthew Dowd and Ron Fournier called Applebee’s America. I encourage everybody to take a look at it. It’s really quite good on this issue.

One of the things that we need to keep in mind is that our society is incredibly mobile right now. One in five people in the country moves in a given year; 33% of the base of the Democratic Party moves in a given year. We’re incredibly mobile. And so by thinking about your social network and how you become a leader in it, you’re not thinking in terms of the old political geography, which is “in my precinct; in my town.” You’re really thinking about “Where is my own personal constituency?” And so one of the things we know that happens, and one of the troubling things in politics, is there’s a big migration out of cities, where the Democrats have quite a strong base. And in places like Pennsylvania, Democrats tend to win in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and lose everywhere else. And so there’s a massive exodus out of our cities. The population of Detroit dropping over the past ten years in a significant way. And it makes what these what have been traditionally blue states start to trend a little bit redder.

And so what we have is people moving from the cities to the exurbs to the suburbs, and they’re changing political behavior. And so they could move from a very, very Democratic area where they behave like Democrats into an exurban area where all of a sudden they’re falling in with their neighbors who happen to be red. George Bush won 98 of the 100 fastest growing 100 counties in the country in the last election. And not only did he win them by a significant margin, the base of those counties is growing and he increased his vote share.

And so connection to party and politics, we need to think of it as being really informed by issues. But it’s really informed by who you’re around and who’s talking to you and these opinion leaders who are talking to you. So that is the potential of why this tactic has so much

potential power if it's organized in the right way. And people tend to make up their mind about who to vote for based on what their friends and family say.

If you go to the next slide, there's a couple of examples of how this works. This tactic, I learned it from the Farmworkers, what they did on the west coast and really throughout the country around the grape boycotts. The civil rights movement also used this as a tactic. And then we used this extensively in the campaign in New Hampshire, where we had over 2,000 house meetings. And before the election we put this question on a poll and 86% of the likely primary voters had been personally invited to one of these house meetings. So I want to talk about it as a tool that you can use in your programs. And so I'm actually going to ask you to skip ahead to slide 10. And then I'll come back to "story," which is really, really important.

So how do you do it? Everybody has a social network. Okay, I'm ready to step up and be a leader in my social network. Well one way to think about this is that you organize an event around it. And we call these house meetings in New Hampshire. Other people call them coffees. I've done them in lots of different places around the country. In New York City we use a bunch of public spaces to organize them in, because people's houses are so small. So "house meeting" is the word that I think of as the best tactic for helping people become leaders in their social networks.

So basically you do this to build your organization. You recruit people who are going to host a house meeting in a particular timeframe. You can do them all at the same time; you can stagger them over the course of a week or two. And so once you recruit your host, you ask them to invite their entire social network. Then you work diligently with them to get that invite list up to 100 people. So once they create the list, they reach out. And it's important that it be either email or a postcard invitation followed up with a phone call.

And so I want to stop right there, because that is the most valuable political communication that you can have in a campaign, which is asking someone to come to your house. That communicates a couple of different things. One, it says that I'm with [Lamont] in this race. Two, I care about him so much that I'm inviting people to my house for an event. And so that, in and of itself, is the most effective persuasion that a campaign can hope for, because you're calling someone you have a relationship with and inviting them to participate. So when you invite 100 people, you usually get 10 to show up. And that's assuming that you do the appropriate follow-up and reminders.

So this will get us back to the story of what happens in a house meeting, because that's also really, really, really important. But that invitation process is really important. In New Hampshire we also had a database that actually linked people in the database, so that you could map social networks so we could call up 75 of the most connected people in the state if we needed to respond to something very quickly, produce a crowd very quickly. And so it was helpful to know who were the most connected people in our campaign.

So at the actually event, I think it's really helpful for people to have them in their house. It puts hosts on the line more, because they don't want to be attached to an event that's a flop. So if you're inviting them into your house, there's going to be extra pressure to really build a

crowd and get people there. So making the event as inviting as possible, welcoming people, start with introductions—and the host usually starts—saying who they are, why they're there, and what they hope to get out of the evening. So go around and make sure everybody has a chance to speak.

And then the organizer or the host—I don't know exactly how you're structuring this. I assume the host is the organizer—stands up and basically tells their story. And so their story is—if you go back now to slide #8, this is a little bit about your story. Your story is what I call a “neck down” expression. It's not, “I'm here because I care about this, that and the other issue.” It's, “This who I am; this is why I'm interested in politics; and this is what I hope to accomplish.”

And so if you do really care about health care, the emphasis is put on why you care about health care. If you have a child with a disability who's been kept out of a health insurance program. If you have a child who's been kicked out of school, that leads you to education. If you care about law enforcement because you've been a victim of a crime. These are all important parts of your narrative. And it's really, really, really important to have the conversation based in your own narrative, introduce your own story, and your own interest in why you're getting involved in this campaign—why it matters to you.

First of all, this is really hard to get people to do. We're really accustomed to talking about issues and neck-up issues in terms of what motivates you. But the power of sharing your own narrative... First of all, everybody has a story. Everybody can connect to it. It's not something that you disagree or agree with. It's an authentic expression of why you're interested. And so it roots the conversation in values, which is a really good disposition to then pivot to action. And so after you tell your story—depending on how many people are at your house meeting—you urge other people to tell their story, and really are responsible for guiding the story, to keep it away from that kind of issues-based conversation and a policy debate, which is not what you want. This is your own narrative, why you're interested in politics.

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 And so once people have had a chance to share their story and talk about it, you then bring the conversation back to the joint narrative of the group—why you're there together. And so this is the point where you really share your strategy. And so I can't speak specifically enough to each of the strategies that you guys are developing, but when we were running the Dean campaign the strategy was, here in Rindge, if Howard Dean is going to get the nomination, we need to organize 446 votes. Now 446 votes seems like a lot in Rindge out of the 1200 people that can vote, but let me share the strategy with you for how we're going to get there.

First of all, we're asking everybody in this room to host a house meeting of their own within the next ten days. And so if everybody in this room hosts a house meeting and there are ten people, and you all invite your 100 friends in the area, we've already reached out to 1000 people. Then if the ten of you host your house meetings, then there's going to be 100 people within ten days sitting in living rooms all across Rindge. And we're going to identify a heck of a lot of Howard Dean supporters through that. We would then show a video which gave them a little bit of information. But basically, you're really being transparent about the strategy and what their role is in executing the strategy is.

And so we always focused on three asks, which you have here on the slide as the call to action. So the first and most important is hosting a house meeting. The second is joining the local group, because you really want to build your organization. And the third ask is usually some type of mobilization. “We’re all going canvassing to knock on doors to talk to more people this Saturday.” “We’re all doing phone banking.” Whatever we’re doing together, but it’s three things: one is another house meeting which helps to build the organization; two is a commitment to join the ongoing local group; and three is a mobilization that reaches out beyond the social network.

And so if these house meetings are executed correctly, you can grow your organization exponentially. And we literally saw this from week to week, that 100 house meetings would turn into 200 within ten days. And so it’s a very, very powerful way to build the organization, bring politics into people’s living rooms using the language that they use in their day-to-day lives. So it’s not something far and away. It’s not something that only dirty people are involved in. It’s in their community; it’s in their house; and it’s using the language that they’re using everyday that’s based on values and a moral claim about what we’re all doing together.

And so I think it can be very, very powerful. It’s based on your own personal narrative. The next slide, #9, has some of the characteristics of good stories, and then some of the characteristics of bad stories. The power of this model is based on modeling. And so if the host models good behavior in the introduction and good story telling themselves, people pick up on that and that’s what they gravitate to. And they’re frankly relieved that it’s not a conversation about health care policy or homeland security policy. Those things may matter, but you want to get people talking about it in a neck-down fashion that really forges an emotional connection between folks.

KH: Let me just say before we take some questions that making politics more acceptable is really, really important. And part of what the Dean Campaign demonstrated is that if you invite people in and make them feel like they’re a part of something, they will come and stick around. And so this tactic, more than anything else that I’ve done in campaigns, really does that. And it’s easier than going in and doing a phone bank, where you’re reaching out to people that you don’t know; talking to them about something that you have no idea what you’re interrupting. Not that I’ve ever said, “Don’t phone bank.” That’s an important part of it. But that it’s so much easier and so much more valuable in terms of the kind of communication that it provides to people about politics.

QUESTION from Jane in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania: How do you decide whether to approach a friend or acquaintance if you’re not sure how they will be receptive?

KH: Good question. And I meant to say something about that. One of the things that freaks people out is the idea that you would talk about money, sex or politics with your social network. And so I think first of all it’s understandable why this would make you anxious. Second of all, I think that when you root something in your own story, it makes it much less scary when you’re talking to someone you know. So even in the approach of... Let’s say you

work with someone. You say, “I’m new to politics. I’m getting involved in the ’06 elections because recently I’ve realized how much is on the line.”

And then you stop the political conversation there and talk about your story. Why is it important for you? And it’s actually very, very hard to do this kind of thinking, because we’re so schooled to de-emphasize our emotional side, our narrative side. Really a lot of us are more comfortable with facts and figures and other people being experts. What’s nice about this model is that it really puts the emphasis on you, on what your beliefs are, and who you know.

So if you root the ask in why this is important to you, then even if someone says no (which you need to be prepared for someone to say know if you’re making the ask), I don’t think that they’re going to be offended, especially if it’s rooted in that personal narrative. And always practice! That’s the value of doing this as a group. So in our local chapter of DFA we’re going to have a goal of having 15 house meetings. And so let’s practice the ask with each other.

AH: I’m a huge fan. Every time I go to any of our training sessions, we’re very big on role playing. Even though we don’t role play every single thing at the training, it’s just a huge emphasis to just do it yourself once in front of a friend.

KH: Exactly. You think it’s going to be easier to get the right words out if you try it.

QUESTION from Doug in Pine, Arizona: Does a social network have geographic boundaries?

KH: This is a really good question, Doug. This is one of the hard things that’s really tricky about matching up your social network with political geography. And so if you’re working on a state-wide race, this is obviously easier. And we really grappled with this in New Hampshire, because each organizer was assigned a specific geographic area. And so obviously it’s easier if it’s state-wide. Unless your ask is for money, I would say limit your outreach to your social network to whatever the appropriate boundaries are.

Most people understand, especially in this election coming up, if they’re going to take action they don’t necessarily have to live in the congressional district, for example, that’s targeted. So I would go ahead and make the pitch for why this matters. And if you’re focusing on an election that can be won, you can draw people from all over. But it’s worth really thinking about. And since it’s a house meeting, the limiting factor is also that people have to be able to get to your house in a reasonable time. So I guess it does have specific geographic bounds in terms of who you think you can actually get to turn up at your house.

QUESTION from Nancy: What return or response should be anticipated from a social network? She’s asking for a measure of success, how to figure it out.

KH: Good. I’m at Harvard right now at the Institute of Politics. And so I’m working with all these really, really smart students here who are use to giving 90-100% of everything, whatever they try. So my first job is teaching them failure, which helps them understand that the yardstick in politics is really, really different. And so the first thing is making that list of 100 people when you’re hosting a house meeting.

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So if you really do the invitation process well and follow-up, you should be able to produce ten people in a living room. If you're successful in running the meeting, you should get at least two house meetings out of it. And two house meetings in a two-week time period, I would say. You should really try for three or four—you should try to get everybody to commit—but a successful program grows exponentially. And so it means that one house meeting leads to two, and that two leads to four. And so that's how you get exponential growth.

A lot of this, as everybody knows, is real. The difference is made in the follow-up. So giving people reminder calls and then giving them a specific ask. And so you ought to get at least two more house meetings out of it. You ought to get at least two commitments to join your local team. And then, on the mobilization, depending on what it is, that can range from one commitment to maybe five commitments. You have to keep at it and practice and understand that you'll get better. But those are the measures that I use.

AH: That is a great question. I'm really big into being able to quantitatively assess where you are and where you need to go.

QUESTION from Mary: What exactly do you put on an invitation that's most effective?

KH: That's a good question. I can tell that people are getting ready to do this. I always put, first of all, "I'd like to invite you to my house. We're having a strategy session about the whatever campaign." And so that's important (1) because it's not just "I'm hitting you up for money," which is what people think you're going to do. So if you're not asking for money—which we would sometime and wouldn't sometimes in New Hampshire. So it's important that they understand it's not just a fundraiser, because most people are accustomed to being invited to house parties that are fundraisers. And so using the term "strategy session" is really important. And that's what you're doing. You're sharing strategy and helping people understand how they can get involved.

QUESTION from Kate: Do you ever use house parties for fund raising?

KH: Yes. Figure out the three asks. And I wouldn't ask for more than three things. They need to be something that people can (1) say yes to one of them; (2) really help you implement your strategy in the short and the long term. And so one of those three asks could be to write a check. And here's the other thing. I'm always a stickler about this language. I'm really quite deliberate with using the term "house meeting" rather than "house party." People have a whole set of experience and expectations around "house parties." And "house meeting" is really, really different. House parties are someone—usually a candidate—standing up and giving a pitch. Giving you their stump speech and then making a pitch for fundraising. There's nothing wrong with that; it's just very different from a house meeting. And so using the language that's different from house party helps set expectations for what's going to happen.

QUESTION from Colleen in Madison, Wisconsin: When I tell my story, how long should it take. Should we use the 27-9-3 model?



KH: What I think is your story shouldn't run any more than four to five minutes at all. Remember, when you're telling your story at these house meetings, you're also modeling the behavior that you want other people to emulate. And so it really ought to be quite short and to the point.

AH: Four to five minutes is Karen's answer to that. That contrasts with the 27-9-3. The 27-9-3. And there are a lot of people on the phone who don't know what that is either. We covered this in our previous Night School session from spring, and we touched on it again in the summer. 27-9-3 is your quick sound bite. It's your foot in the door when you're canvassing. It's your quote in the paper when the reporter's suddenly asking you for a quote. It's something that you use when to get people interested so that you can get them talking, you can get them asking you more questions. It's 27 words, which is where the 27 comes from. It should take no more than 9 seconds, which is where the 9 comes from. And you're using 3 points or some series of 3, which is where the 3 comes from—27-9-3. If other people are interested in learning about the 27-9-3 and the other media tips that we have for folks, you can go to www.democracyforamerica.com/nightschool and see our past sessions.

The story, though, is deeper. It's something that you're using to engage people, something that you're using to involve people. They're already in your house, and they're in a familiar setting. And they're there to figure out well what is it that drives this person to invite a whole bunch of people to stand up in front of us and encourage us to get involved. That's your story.

KH: And the other thing is a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. And there's a whole session—the best session that I've ever been to on stories and how to tell your story was done by Marshall Ganz, who's actually a professor here at the Kennedy School. And so he has organizing notes, which I can get to you guys, and you could probably post on your web site. I don't think he'd be opposed to it at all. It really goes into good detail about what makes a compelling story. It has momentum in it. It is compelling. It conveys emotion. It conveys values. It can take a surprise. It can be funny. You know, it needs to be authentic and who you are.

AH: And what we'll do is we'll look to find an example of some of those stories or some of Marshall Ganz' work and make some of that available for folks whenever it's publicly out there. And then I think we have one last question left.

QUESTION from Bob in Indiana: Do you ever invite the candidate to a house meeting, maybe for small offices like state representative or city council?

KH: Yes. It's a tricky thing. Because one of the things that I love about the tactic of house meetings is that it's about the people in the room. And it's about their story. It's about how they're going to act together. It's about developing a shared narrative. And so that's what I love about it not being directly about the candidate. When you have a local candidate who can come to these, it generally changes the dynamic. It takes a very skilled facilitator once the candidate leaves. If you plan on having them, I would have them come for a specific period of time—not more than 10 or 15 minutes—and you have to finesse how to not have them take a

bunch of questions, because it puts the participants in the position of being audience rather than participants when they start firing questions at the candidate. And it makes it really much more of a conversation about issues, what they're going to do.

And so it's a tricky thing. If you have someone who's not well known—a city council candidates, a local person for mayor—what I would do is have an event that's larger, a house party, where they can meet people and it's more of a traditional program. And then after the house party, one of the asks is give money, sign up on the campaign, and sign up to host a house meeting. I think that's a better approach generally to do this. And that's what we would do with Governor Dean all the time. Because before they would take an action, people really wanted to see it. The other really effective tactic is having a short video that really does speak to the candidate's story, to get the candidate modeling, telling their own narrative.

AH: Thank you very much, Karen. This night school we want to make sure that we spend a lot more time answering these questions. And Karen, I think you've been doing a fantastic job. But before we leave I've got a few things that we can do. When we're all on the phone like this—we've got over 700 people signed up right now—it's one thing to start talking about action with each other and asking questions of experts like Karen. But what we really need to be doing is taking this and actually doing something with it. We want you to model your own activities, sort of viral networking, organizing, whatever name that you give it.

What we want to do is start growing not only your local group but also the momentum behind each one of the campaigns and candidates that folks are working on out there. So let's go to slide #11. On slide #11, we've got a suggested activity for you. Some of you may know this, and some of you may not, but DFA is right now involved in these "Iraq for Sale" screenings all over the country. And what we want to do is get as many people talking about Iraq as possible, because what we know is that this is one of the major, major issues that is on people's minds right now that makes them question the direction that our country is headed. And the more they question the direction that our country is headed, the better off we're going to be.

So on slide #11, we've got these "Iraq for Sale" screenings. Of course, we want you to attend one near you. Of course, we want you to host one if don't find one immediately near you, or if the one near you has gotten too large. We have over 200 in the country right now organized. What we'd love to do is prepare your story to be told at the screening and get people motivated. And people then aren't just sitting and watching something. We want them there for a reason. We want them there so that they're motivated not just by what's happening in a distant country and what could be happening in the United States, but what drove you to actually host a screening. So we want that to be told as a story if you can. And the most important part is that call to action, start getting other people talking about it.

On last week's call George Lakoff talked so much about our values. It's about what we know; it's about what we can instinctively say is right, and what we can instinctively say this is not. Karen, at the very beginning of the call, talked about values without having to use the word. You know, personal responsibility, empathy, or whatever else. She demonstrated through example, through her own story, how important it is for her to not only take from the community but also to give back to the community. What you can do is go to www.dfalink.com/iraqforsale,

and you can take a look at some of the events that are around you. Tell your story, and tell your story of why you think everyone needs to start talking about Iraq, what's happening there, and why that is many of the reasons why we need to change the direction the country's going.

KH: And that's a good opportunity to really sharpen your skills as facilitators on this, because when the conversation is about Iraq, figuring out how to help people talk about it in a way that directly affects them rather than a policy debate, you know, it's just a much safer place for people to be in. So figuring out the skilled facilitator questions, and really thinking through how do we make sure this isn't a conversation about debating the different policy initiatives before Congress, or whether or not we should have gone in or out. But really figuring out a conversation that's going to include everybody in the room will be important.

AH: We'll put a link on the web site so that you can incorporate the stuff that you're doing in night school with the stuff that our field program is doing with "Iraq for Sale." Let's go to the next slide, slide #12. I'm always thinking about and talking about what's going to happen next. This is a series. This is the second part in a series of four. We're not just sort of doing this because it's a lot of fun, although I think it is. We want to win this election in 2006 in November. This is our chance to really make a huge difference. And we can do so when we've got thousands of people across the country keying in on this kind of stuff—The "Iraq for Sale" forums, the Night School, and everything else that we're doing. We're tying it in together.

The next two sessions are going to be on "Voting Early, Voting Easily & Voting Safely." That's next Tuesday, October 3. It's with Deb Markovitz. She's Vermont's Secretary of State. She's also president of the National Secretaries of State Association. And then on Tuesday, October, 10, is "Getting Out the Vote." We're going to be talking about what we do in the last few days and on election day with Robby Mook who is the Maryland Democratic Coordinated Campaign Director. So again we have some amazing experts on. And what this is, this is a narrative. We're going to talk about how to talk about our values, how to turn that into a story so that we can turn that into action, and how to get those folks out there voting. That's what we're going to be talking about in the next two sections.

Before we leave, let's turn to slide #13. Of course, I want to thank you for joining us at this call. I know that you guys take an hour out of your day, and it's a different hour every time zone. I've been getting a lot of emails about what you're doing at that particular hour. On the west coast we're here at work, and on the east coast it's late at night. So it's amazing to have everyone on. It's amazing that everyone can give an hour of their time so we can be together like this.

If you want to learn more about the DFA Training Academy—These are the in-person intensive trainings that we do. They're over two days on the weekends, and they're all over the country. You don't have to come to us; we come to you. And we're going to start a whole new series of these in 2007, so that we can get ready and we're not prepping at the last minute. Go to www.democracyforamerica.com/training. We talked at length about your vote goals and about targeting strategies, about the tactics we use to contact voters. We talked at length about this house meeting program that Karen and my boss Tom executed in New Hampshire. We talked about message and we talked about communications.

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These sessions and our previous sessions are going to be or are currently on DVD. If you want to catch up on earlier Night School presentations, you can go to the web site listed on page 13 there and pick which CD you want. If you're paying for both the DVD's, you save five bucks. We're going to turn this series of four also into DVD's and include information that we have on the web site there. There will be an audio recording as well as a visual that we have here.

And possibly one of the most important things that I can tell you, if you enjoy DFA Night School, I'm really happy that you do. We are able to do the work that we are able to do because of your dedication and passion, because of your commitment, and also, very importantly, because of your generosity. If this is a program that you support, if you want to help us continue to keep this free for everyone on the call... I got an email literally just a few hours ago that was, "Well, you know, I can't really pay, so if the call is really crowded, then I'll step back and let somebody who can pay." That's not what the DFA Night School is all about. It's because of your generosity that we can keep it free for everyone else out there.

The contributor link is right there. It's contribute.domocracyforamerica.com. Please consider helping us expand these efforts in reaching out to people. You're going to see a whole not more of the DFA Night School. It's clearly very popular. So thank you very much, again, Karen. Thank you Jim for taking some of your time out. And thank you to the 700 or so of you out there in phone conference land.

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