

# CHANNELING ENTHUSIASM INTO SUSTAINED ACTION:

*fostering the changemakers journey*

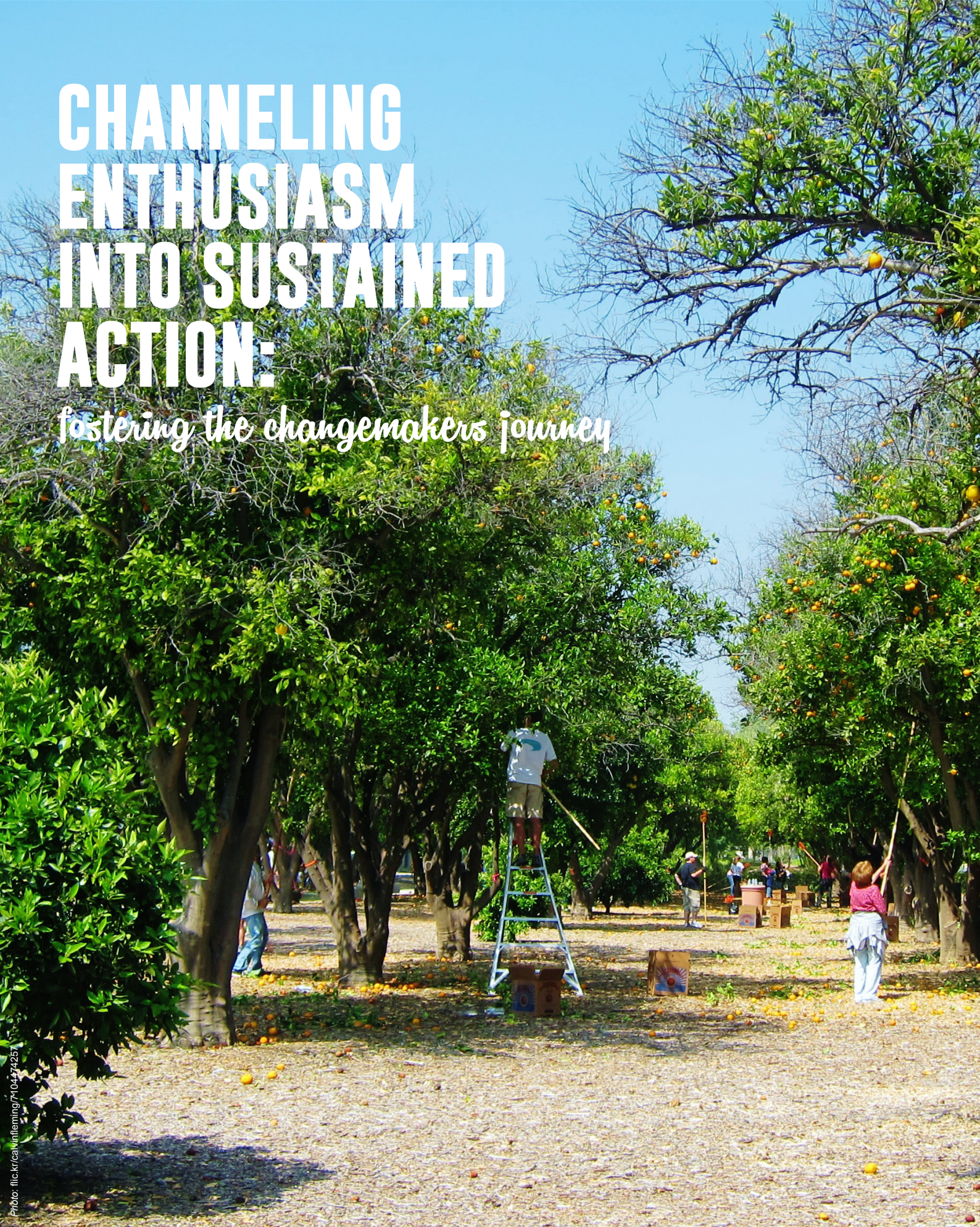


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*make a difference*



**volunteering**  
queensland



# BACKGROUND

This research project was born from a think tank conducted by Volunteering Queensland as gaps in literature were identified by Mark Creyton, Director of Education, Research and Policy, who explored student engagement in universities. A Transformative Engagement literature review was the outcome of the think tank. This research project also continues on from Volunteering Queensland's *Youth Leading Youth* Initiative which focused on examining the key factors that inspire and engage young people to volunteer for non-profit organisations, and how that experience can provide young people with leadership skills.

## AIM

This research aims to identify the core factors on how to foster the changemakers journey in youth-led social change organisations. In doing so it will provide activities and ideas to inspire current young leaders in order to better lead their teams.

## TERMS

Volunteer, team member, young volunteer are used interchangeably

## INTRODUCTION

Young people are empowered to change the world; an opportunity gives them the will to make it so. In Australia generation Y have been brought up in a multi-cultural society with a global view. They understand that the world extends further than our backyard and that being an active global citizen is crucial to the world's development. Youth-led organisations have changed volunteering, young people don't think of themselves as volunteers but as changemakers, social pioneers and most of all leaders. These leaders are making a difference to people around them and the world. Leaders not of the future but of today. Age is no barrier for these determined social pioneers.

Ultimately young people want to connect, learn and engage. People volunteer for different reasons.

## METHOD

In order to explore the topic, two research methods were used to engage a broad range of experts in the area of youth-led social change organisations including semi-structured interviews and a focus group.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with five leaders in their respective organisations across Australia to identify common trends which developed into three key themes.

A focus group was used to explore the identified key themes further with experts in the field of youth volunteering.

## CREDITS

This publication has been written by Ellie Chadwick, with support from Mark Creyton, Director of Education, Research and Policy at Volunteering Queensland. Ellie has worked as a marketing and research intern with Volunteering Queensland, supporting events such as the Innovate Symposium. Ellie has also worked as the VGen State Manager for World Vision Australia. She is passionate about creating an equal world by being an active global citizen and educating others about ways they can have a positive impact on the world.

This publication was designed by Melanie Dal Maso, a marketing intern with Volunteering Queensland.



*Written by Ellie Chadwick*

# FINDINGS

Three key themes were identified across all research methods within different organisations engaging with youth which include: **culture, care, and growth**. These key themes will be discussed in more detail to follow.

It was found that engaging youth were much easier to capture than sustain as one could imagine. Signing up is easy, but committing time is much more effort. The main reason for this is young people are drawn to the cause, whether or not they have a defining passion. In most cases they will join an organisation that aligns with their values and beliefs.



# CULTURE

Culture is one of the biggest reasons why people are drawn to an organisation. The nature of a group; how they act, what they look like and what they believe in will determine the kinds of people the organisation will attract. As one interviewee said, “It’s just all about happy, vibrant, positive, crazy young people and that brings people in. They see us and say that’s the kind of group I want to be a part of.” A sense of belonging is formed when a young person can relate to other young people who believe in the same things and think of the world in a similar way. People feel most comfortable when around others that understand them, this is how a young person feels when they become part of an organisation whose vision and mission align with their own values and beliefs.

As a leader, you have the power to set the culture of your team. Your culture is communicated from the moment a young person interacts with your organisation. No matter if that’s on your website, on Facebook or in person at a stall or on the street corner. The message you send to that young person about who you are as an organisation is set at each interaction. Part of the culture is determined by the organisation’s brand and marketing but ultimately you are in control of the culture you set for your team. So remember how you act, what you say, how you say it, things you don’t do and the nature of your personality and leadership style all affect the culture of the team. Essentially as a leader, people are looking up to you. They will read your body language and take note of the things you say and copy what you do. That is why it is important as a leader to be extremely self aware and deliberate in your actions to influence your team in a positive way.

One young leader said it’s about, “Leading by example... it’s leading from above and bit of it is leading from below.” As a leader by default you are an example to the team and all volunteers within the organisation, they do not want to see a tired, burnt-out leader. One important note is to be honest with your team and most likely they are friends of yours also and at times it can be hard to put your leadership hat on and ignore the things going on in your life. It can be difficult to remove your personal life away from your leadership role as you may be close friends with your team or find it a safe environment to be able to express yourself. Your team may also feel the same way and at times you’ll find yourself being a counselor. One young leader identified, “it’s really important to be mindful of what else they’ve got going on in their lives and how you can be supportive for them outside of volunteering as well as in.” This is where communication plays a very important role.

## [ACTIVITY] WAYS TO SET CULTURE

- Choose language which reflects your passion, your organisation and your purpose
- Be positive even when things may not be going right
- Be self aware - remember you are influential to your team
- Encourage participation
- Treat your volunteers in a way you would like to be treated
- Choose meeting styles / training activities which you would like to be a part of - challenge traditional practices
- Build a sense of common-ground
- Create a greater sense of community through social catch-up’s and national events



It can get tiring when a volunteer is carrying out their duties. They sometimes feel uninspired when they can't see the impact they are having. That's where social events can play a vital role in re-connecting your team, to have a bit of fun or share a meal together, reminding them they are not alone in the battle and that they have a group of like-minded friends who act as a support network who they can share their challenges and successes with. This allows volunteers to connect with one another and later on call on each other for advice and help within their role. Consequently, this makes the role of the leader much easier to be a support to the team.

Large national events are a great way for volunteers to feel a part of the greater movement. Once they see how many other young people in different states are working towards the same goal they will feel excited and proud of the organisation they are a part of. National events can be training or campaigning focused, e.g. Oaktree Roadtrip to End Poverty, VGen Trek Against Trafficking, AYCC Powershift and more. Events such as these aim to educate volunteers and further deepen their passion. It is a great way to sustain engagement with volunteers, it is almost like a detox because you are taking them out of their daily environment to be surrounded by like-minded, passionate, fun young people. It's invigorating for young people to learn from each other. Learning about other people's success within the organisation motivates young people to strive to achieve.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is key. The way you, as a leader communicate with your team affects culture and ultimately the way your team communicate with you and each other. From the moment a young person enquires to be a part of your team you set the culture for communication. If you take a long time to reply to their email then you cannot expect they will be prompt to reply. As previously mentioned you need to lead by example. If you expect your team to be in contact with you regularly you need to set that culture from day one. How you communicate with each other can be set in the team agreement and as you learn more about your team members you will learn how they like to be communicated with as well.

Having open communication with each of your team members is a critical factor in sustaining their involvement with the organisation. By touching base regularly you are showing them you value them as a person and you value their time and efforts within their role. Keeping up consistent communication allows you to identify problems as they arise and find a solution early before it gets worse. All leaders spoke about checking-in with their volunteers regularly whether it's over coffee or if it's simply a call, a text message or an email. One leader identified them as, "strategic one-on-ones.", where the leader organises a time to meet up and check-in with the volunteer to ensure they are comfortable in their role and have the capacity to carry out their responsibilities. At times when assessment is due for example, check-ins become more critical as you do not want to put pressure on your volunteers during important and stressful times.



Timing is another important aspect of culture and communication. The timing of campaign events, team meetings and training need to work around your team's schedule. As most volunteers are university students, avoid planning events during high assessment periods. It makes you, as the leader stressed because your team are not contributing to the organisation or didn't turn up to a meeting / training and your team are stressed with various things on their plate. This is mentioned in the next section on the personality type of volunteers.

Reflection is key to learning. Without reflection you are robbing yourself from learning critical skills. It can get difficult to stop and reflect as things move so fast but in creating a successful learning journey for your team reflection is critical. Reflection does not have to be extensive, a short debrief after an event or at a time where things aren't as busy can assist your team immensely.

**Setting a culture of acknowledgement is key to sustaining volunteers.** Ensure to focus on the success of the organisation, your team and individual volunteers. Each minute volunteers are working on the campaign, they are contributing to a better world. Make sure to acknowledge their contribution and say thank you often. One young volunteer said, "Don't forget to let them know how much their work is actually making a contribution because it is so important that they feel valued particularly in volunteer roles as well." Celebrate campaign wins and recognise volunteers for their individual contribution.

## [ACTIVITIES]

### REWARDS SYSTEM

A rewards system such as volunteer of the month could be introduced to show volunteers your appreciation for their time and effort.

### QUESTIONS

Some questions to ask yourself; when do you feel most valued? How do you acknowledge your volunteers? Do we, as an organisation / team recognise our volunteers enough?

### TEAM AGREEMENT

A team agreement is a good activity to do at the first meeting with a new team or with new team members. The agreement has two purposes, the first is to create a set of expectations for the group. The second to see how the team interacts with one another and a chance for you to observe how they work together.

*Materials: butchers paper and coloured pens.*

Ask the group to draw three columns collectively write down expectations of each other, of you, as the leader and of themselves in a 5 minute time frame. Tell them to think of expectations surrounding communication, time and respect. You will note some will be louder than others, some may not contribute and there is always one or two who will take control. Simply observe the behaviour of the group and only interject when necessary. Once 5 minutes is up read the expectations aloud, ask if there are any changes they would like to make or additions to the list then print out a copy for each member and sign off on it. Explain that the team agreement ensures we treat each other with respect and honesty to work together as a team to achieve great things.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

At some point in your role you will face conflict whether it's between yourself and another volunteer or two of your team members. With a range of personality types holding strong beliefs and values, passionate disagreement is inevitable. The best way to deal with a disagreement between two people is to identify it immediately as to not upset either side, especially if others are around for example in a meeting. Listen to both sides and encourage respectful behaviour. Refer to the team agreement mentioned previously and facilitate a discussion where both sides are able to voice their opinion and come to a conclusion where they can agree with each other and a point of action is planned to ensure the conflict does not occur again.

## STORY TELLING

Sharing stories is one of the most powerful communication techniques. Stories can inspire action therefore being able to tell a good story will put a lot of influence in your hands. Know your own story and encourage your team to develop their own. The public narrative, story of self, us, now framework has been used in campaigns and developmental work for some time and you may be familiar with it already. For those who are not see *Appendix 1*.



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Value volunteers, include them in the decision making process and provide them with ownership. When you include volunteers in the decision making process you are showing them you value their input and trust them to help make critical decisions on the future of the organisation. Being transparent and inclusive is a way to sustain volunteers. Be sure to update your team on changes, no matter how small they may be and consolidate them before changes are implemented. You can lose people if you have not taken them through the process of change and simply deliver the change. This can be overwhelming for some so it's best to keep information accessible, have conversations about changes and take on suggestions. An important note is your team are the ones on the ground doing the work. They know what suits best, they know what works, although being respectful to your organisation and the leaders above you who will bring about change is pertinent. It's about understanding and respecting people's ideas and opinions.

Taking volunteers through the critical path of a campaign and working backwards to where you are now can help your team understand the purpose of the campaign and the milestones along the way. You need to ensure you are constantly making it clear why you are doing something because people can lose motivation if they don't see the point. You can't tell them what to do because that doesn't work. You need to take them on the decision making journey with you and ensure they contribute to the cause. Once they feel their ideas are valued they will feel they have a place and will be excited to help roll out the campaign and ensure it is a success. **Making assumptions on what they want to do doesn't work, you need to actually ask their opinion.**



Induction is an important part of a volunteers journey. By making an induction as simple and efficient as possible allows a lot of people to experience what the organisation is like with little effort for you as the leader. One youth leader explained, “get people started straight away. I don’t throw them in the deep end or into a long-term commitment. I would rather get them on board early, get a feel for what their interests are, how long they’ll be with the organisation and build their journey from there. This approach gets people ready early and allows room for them to grow into leaders.” Another important point is to ensure new people understand your theory of change, as it’s the backbone of why your organisation exists. Induction should capture the young person’s enthusiasm and passion. This means making induction interactive and engaging.

## [ACTIVITY] ENVIRONMENT

Consider the environment, are you going to host your new excited volunteers in a boardroom? I hope not. Make sure the environment matches your content, if you’re doing activities think about meeting in the park, try to only talk 30-50% of the time and let your new volunteers speak, this shows them you value their voice and get’s them thinking and engaged straight away and learning from each other and making friends.

At the core of your team you need to have people who are “very engaged and very passionate and believe whole-heartedly in what they’re doing”. You’ll find as a leader these people will be your best friends. You’ll say what you really think behind closed doors of course. Which is totally ok, you need people within your team who understand you, who you can talk with about problems within the team, nationally or with the campaign in confidence.





## CARE

**As a leader of a team it is important to get to know each of your team members on a personal level. As previously mentioned they may already be friends of yours but it's important to know their passion, what makes them tick and the warning signs of when they are stressed. This is basic leadership 101 but it is critical in managing a successful team.**

Adapting your management style to suit your team members is an essential skill to have. You will find some may work independently, others may need more guidance or direction. If you try to tell someone who likes to work independently what to do they will feel you are coddling them and that you don't trust they can do their job. On the flip side the same goes for someone who needs direction and you let them go. They will feel unsupported and very lost. Knowing what your team members need from you is a skill which is learned over time but once gained it makes you a great leader.

As you know, telling someone what to do is not empowering. Make sure to communicate with your team in a way which is engaging and supportive. Once you assign them a task with a deadline ask if they would like help setting small goals leading up to the deadline to achieve the task on time. This provides you with key times to check-in with your team member to see how they are progressing and provides them with a plan to execute knowing your expectations of them by having a clear idea of the reason why they are doing it and the outcome to expect. This way you are not doing all the work, eliminating the 'irreplaceable leader', but instead working along side them, not above, and partnering with them to provide on-going support and guidance creating a team of well equipped volunteers who feel involved and a part of the greater movement. Empowerment is intuitive to growth. See below section *Growth* for more information.

You need to be the first point of contact for your team for enquiries, questions, concerns and all of the above. Letting your team know you are there for them will ensure they feel supported. When they need someone to talk to they will immediately think of you. This is what you want. As previously mentioned open two-way communication provides the best foundation to be able to achieve great things. This ensures you know what they're doing and cannot veer of course.

Passing down learned knowledge to someone new in a role or taking on a new task which has been experienced before is a great way to support them. Informing them of what to expect including key times where the pressure will be on them and help them equip to be able to handle that. Make sure they feel supported and empowered with the knowledge to follow their passion, achieve within their role and learn.

**As part of knowing your team you should know what motivates them to act and know how to encourage action.**



Along with care comes capacity. Once you know your team you know how much they can handle. One reoccurring characteristic of young people is their tendency to over-commit. As young people they have more expendable time compared to the generation their senior and more disposable money than the younger generation. These factors give young people the freedom to choose what they do with their spare time (and money). Many find opportunities in school, university or in the community to give back, to find or fulfill a passion of theirs. When a young person over-commits and takes on too many responsibilities they may suffer from burn out. This is a common experience among all interviewees when discussing their own experience of over commitment. Burn out is when a person has over worked themselves, is suffering from sleep deprivation and is struggling to manage time and responsibilities. The effects of burn out on the mind and body are substantial. Some of the effects include; memory loss, cold symptoms and general deterioration in work ethic.

As a youth organisation it is their duty to care for the welfare of its volunteers because without them there would be no action, no outcome and essentially no change. Burn out cannot be an afterthought or only a recovery strategy. Prevention is the ideal outcome because no volunteer should experience burn out if they have a support network around them that is caring for their welfare.

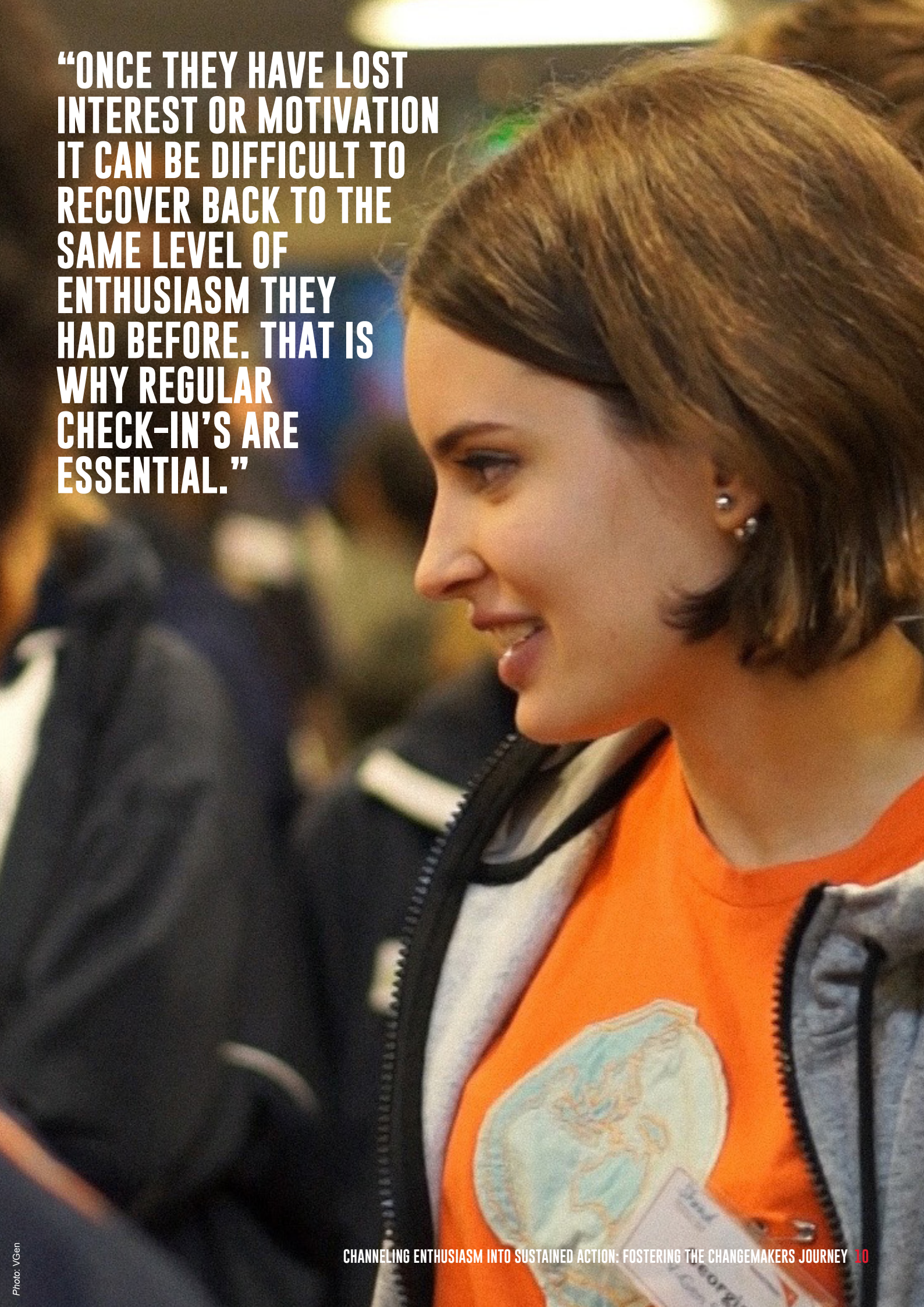
This can be achieved through mentoring, check-in's and one-on-one intentional meetings. As stated previously it's important to know your volunteers on a personal level in order to pick up on the warning signs of stress and when they feel inundated with work / responsibilities. This is where the structure of the organisation comes into play. What if a volunteer in a leadership position cannot complete a task due to reaching breaking point? Who steps in? Do you as the leader take on one of your team's responsibilities? What happens if 3 of your team members burn out and their responsibilities lay on your shoulders? Is that not a recipe for burn out on you? This scenario has a few factors which need to be considered before it reaches this point.

It's important to have well equipped volunteers. This does not mean they need to know everything but it is essential to provide them with enough training, resources and experiences to be able to handle any situation. This prevents the 'irreplaceable leader'. The leader who when things get tough or completely fall apart will take full responsibility to fix it. This does not help the development of your team or allow them to problem solve. Problem solving provides unique experiences where the team will gain invaluable skills which will benefit their growth and expand their knowledge to be more equipped to tackle situations thrown at them. The biggest issue with the irreplaceable leader is once they have left the organisation nobody else knows what to do or how to handle certain situations. Therefore creating a team of equipped and capable volunteers is essential to creating a culture of sustained, healthy momentum without the sacrifice of a volunteer's well-being. See more in the next section *Growth* in regards to creating an equipped and capable team.

As part of check-in's one young leader identified, "Just being able to recognise when people are losing interest or losing their motivation in something is important." Once they have lost interest or motivation it can be difficult to recover back to the same level of enthusiasm they had before. That is why regular check-in's are essential to identify the warning signs before someone gets to that stage because then there would be a reason behind the withdrawal.



**“ONCE THEY HAVE LOST INTEREST OR MOTIVATION IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO RECOVER BACK TO THE SAME LEVEL OF ENTHUSIASM THEY HAD BEFORE. THAT IS WHY REGULAR CHECK-IN’S ARE ESSENTIAL.”**





# GROWTH

Intuitive young people are seeking to gain experiences which will equip them with new skills to develop their personal and professional selves. That is why providing opportunities for growth within a youth organisation is one of the most important aspects. People will stay in an organisation if they see the path they are heading down or at least if they can see there is opportunity for them to grow and step up. Training or up-skilling and responsibility are two key factors of growth. Giving a young person the training they need to equip them to take on a new responsibility, giving them ownership over a task or project will increase their involvement in the organisation as they feel a sense of purpose and belonging. Ensuring that the volunteers are in a role that they are happy with and avoid promoting roles out of necessity. It is important to know what the volunteer wants to gain from the experience and it's your job as the leader to foster their learning journey.

All volunteers are on a journey. The experience they are gaining from volunteering with your organisation is just the beginning of the rest of their life. Volunteering is proven to have a range of positive outcomes on the individual as well as the community of people around them. You are providing an avenue for them to express themselves, deepen their passion and continue shaking up the social norm to make a positive impact on the world.

When a new volunteer starts with your organisation it is essential to ask them what they want out of the experience because it is just as much about the role and their contribution to the team as it is what they want. One young leader said, "Our job isn't to get maximum value out of them. It's more about providing them a way to support whatever is important to them." Knowing their passion and where they want to go with the experience provides you with an avenue to invest in them and guide them in the right direction, ensuring they gain invaluable skills and achieve their goals. It is also important to note what skill sets they bring to the table as they may have a talent for something you need assistance doing. In doing so you are preventing the 'irreplaceable leader' by delegating tasks to your team and they are applying their skills to a responsibility you entrusted them with so essentially both sides are satisfied.

Ensuring the volunteer is in a role they enjoy and are excited about is key to their participation and productivity. When roles are filled out of necessity the volunteer is not as enthused, not as proud of their place within the organisation and may not appreciate the opportunity. Therefore it is important to recruit the right person for the role as they will respect their opportunity and commit to their responsibilities.

Goal setting is important because it provides the volunteer with key milestones to track how they are going. As the volunteer it can be difficult to see the difference they are making but if you help them build their journey they are able to track their progress and you can show them when you look back to see how much they have achieved.





## [TALKING POINT]

What happens if you can't find a position for a new volunteer? Do you create a role to suit the volunteer that may not serve a purpose in the campaign outcome but fulfills their sense of purpose within the team and enhances their experience?

## TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the main reasons why young people volunteer is to learn more. Providing ongoing training and professional development to your team are ways to sustain their involvement. Training needs to be a variety of content which will grow the capacity of the volunteer, inspire them and broaden their knowledge of current issues and campaigns. Training can be delivered by yourself, your team, people within your organisation and other experts in that field. Training provides volunteers with the opportunity to learn more, to gain a better understanding and participate in the issue.

## [TALKING POINT]

How do you train a team at different levels? Can't bring them in on the same day if some are far more advanced than others and won't benefit from the content but is it important to come together as a team to bond?

## SUCCESSION PLANNING

One of the key ways to ensure an on-going successful team is by planning ahead and preparing for succession planning. You should have a strong plan in place for the end of the year to replace those who are leaving and start recruitment. Talking before about timing, recruitment will not be successful during university exam period or over the Christmas break. Therefore find a time in between these dates or better yet do it before. Considering the wider environment could save you a big waste of time when you know what is happening around you.

## [ACTIVITY]

- 1. Analyse** – the current situation of the team; who's staying and who's leaving? And the state, what capacity do we need to run successfully, how many roles need filling? Identify issues and gaps.
- 2. Develop** – a plan for your team for the next year or more. Develop role descriptions and distribute.
- 3. Select** – interview and select new team members.
- 4. Transition** – have a hand-over and induction into the organisation and team and training for their role.

Sustaining volunteers who have been around for a number of years can be harmful as they can clash with new members. When new people join the team and want to change things it can be difficult for the oldies to accept the change as it is the way they have done things for a long time. It is important to handle change gently with these volunteers. Change should always be consulted with the team. That's what being transparent and inclusive is about.

One young volunteer said, "The biggest thing about keeping people involved is making sure their voice is heard...making sure they get those friends and they connect...making sure they feel like they're making a difference." It's about understanding what they want out of the experience, providing them with training and resources, leveraging their skill set, helping them set their pathway, thanking them for their contribution, encouraging them to achieve their goals and assuring them that you believe in them to step up.

As an organisation, you want to be able to provide a platform for young people to speak out about what they are passionate about. You want to spark something in them which stimulates action and inspires others to create change. Young people are catalysts for others to influence them, enthuse them, excite them, or scare them with the joys of their experience and their personal narrative. It's the experience itself as a young leader within an organisation which helps that young person decide how they want to apply that experience which helps determine what they do in life.

## CONCLUSION

Young people are change makers. They believe they can change the current world we live in to make it a better place for future generations. All they need is the support; resources and a framework to foster their journey. Their experience with a youth-led social change organisation allows them to explore the issues of the world and deepen their passion in a safe environment. Once a young person is surrounded by like-minded people, is equipped with knowledge and fuelled by passion they are on their way to create change through meaningful action. Sustaining that action is dependent on the framework of the organisation and its leaders. It critical to ensure young people feel valued and understood so that their leaders are able to respond to their needs, which will sustain their journey with the organisation. Young people who are passionate and resourced, taking meaningful action together can create change to society for the better.



# SUMMARY

## CULTURE

It is the nature of the group or organisation that brings people in. Leading by example and setting the culture of your team is vital. It is all about happy, vibrant and positive people having formed a sense of belonging within an organisation as they feel its mission and vision aligns with their own values and beliefs. People see these individuals, their positivity and say “that is the kind of group I want to be part of.”

## COMMUNICATION

The way you as a leader communicate with your team affects culture and ultimately the way your team communicates with you and each other. Having open communication with each of your team members is a critical factor in sustaining their involvement with the organisation. By touching base regularly it shows you value their time and efforts, and allows you to identify any issues that arise and find solutions early.

## CARE

As a team leader it is important to get to know each of your team members on a personal level. Adapting your management style to suit your team is an essential skill. You need to be the first point of contact for your teams enquiries, questions and concerns. You need to know what motivates them to act, how to encourage action and specifically how much work they can handle to ensure no burn-outs.

## GROWTH

Intuitive young people seek to gain experiences which will equip them with new skills to develop their personal and professional skills. Providing a young person with the training they need to take on a new responsibility will increase their involvement in the organisation as they feel a sense of purpose and belonging. It is important to know what the volunteer wants to gain from the experience and it is your job as the leader to foster the learning journey.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Passionate disagreement among team members is inevitable. The best way to deal with a disagreement is to identify the issue immediately. Listen to both sides, mention the team agreement and facilitate a discussion where a conclusion is met. Agree on a point of action planned to ensure conflict is not reoccurring.

## STORY TELLING / PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Sharing stories is one of the most powerful communication techniques. We tell stories to share, to learn new experiences, to inspire and to motivate. By developing your own personal and organisational narratives which combines the Story of Self, the Story of Us and the Story of Now, it allows you to tell a compelling story about yourself, your organisation, the community you engage with and your strategy to encourage others to create change, overcome any challenges and make a difference.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1. PERSONAL NARRATIVE

### INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC NARRATIVE & THE STORY OF SELF

Each of us has a compelling story to tell and each of us has a story that can move others to action. You will learn how to tell a compelling story about yourself, the community you associate with, and your strategy to encourage others to create change. Learning how to create an effective public narrative is a founding step in creating your campaign.

### WHY USE A PUBLIC NARRATIVE?

We tell stories to share, to learn new experiences, to inspire and to motivate. Telling stories links back to the two 'ways of knowing' by which humans learn: through our heads and through our hearts. We need to employ both ways in order to effectively mobilise others to act. Using public narrative when creating a campaign connects your issue with the emotional side of peoples brains and forms the 'Why' in the equation: Why should people care about the issue like you do? Why should they get involved?

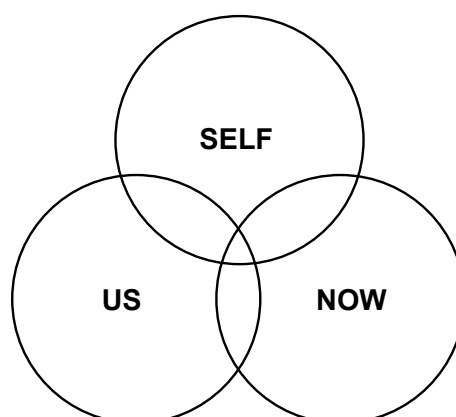
### DEVELOPING YOUR OWN PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Public narrative combines three stories; a **Story of Self**, a **Story of Us** and a **Story of Now**.

**Story of Self:** Tells why you have been called to serve. We all have our own individual stories to tell and have all had differing life experiences which have shaped our core values and beliefs. The power in a Story of Self is to reveal something of yourself and your values – not your deepest darkest secrets, but the key shaping moments in your life. Consider when you first started to care about the issue you have chosen. Why is it important to you? Why do you feel you have to do something about it?

**Story of Us:** Describes why your community in particular is called to act, and why you as a group have the capacity to lead. Just as in your Story of Self, the key is to focus on telling a story about specific people and specific moments that have shaped your organising community to then invite others to join and get involved with this community.

**Story of Now:** Communicates the urgent challenge we are called upon to face right now. The story includes a description of the path to take to achieve goals relative to the mission. That is the unique strategy or set of ideas that will help you to overcome any challenges and succeed. The story also invites your listeners to make a specific actionable commitment now to help build your campaign.





## THE SELF-US-NOW STRUCTURE

The Three Key Elements of Public Narrative Structure: **Challenge**, **Choice** and **Outcome**

Like in any good story, a plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts the main character with an urgent need to pay attention and to make a choice. This choice then yields an outcome, and the outcome teaches a moral.

Let's explain more clearly what these elements mean:

**Challenge:** This is the part of the story where you consider exactly what it is your campaign is trying to overcome. What is the problem to be solved and why must it happen now? Think about who you are serving in the community and the world by taking on this issue.

**Choice:** This is where you explain what is your strategy to address the issue. It is critical to highlight to your supporters what exactly they can do, in clear concrete terms, to take action today. Make it specific and make it achievable. Then, it is about connecting this individual action to the ultimate goal of your campaign, to make sure that people feel as if they are an integral part of the bigger picture.

**Outcome:** The outcome section represents 'the dream' – this is the inspiration behind your campaign. It is where you paint a picture of the future and what this will look like if people take action on the issue. It's important to emphasise what potential change can be created by the campaign and also keeping your supporters motivated to keep working towards this goal. The task for you is to figure out how you can incorporate these three key elements of Challenge, Choice and Outcome in your own story.

## THE STORY OF US

A Story of Self tells people who you are and why you are called to do the work that you are doing. On its own however, the Story of Self is insufficient to set the stage for collective action. Since organising is about collective action, your public narrative needs to make a connection to the "us" with whom you are engaged.

Telling a Story of Us requires learning how to put into narrative form the experiences that the "us" in the community share with each other and then motivating these people to take action with you, based upon the values that you share.

## THE STORY OF NOW

*"If I'm not for myself, who will be for me?  
When I am only for myself what am I?  
And if not now, when?" (Rabbi Hillel)*

### What is the Story of Now?

The Story of Now represents the final stage in the narrative of a campaign. Whereas the Story of Self and Story of Us are used to connect your supporters with the 'heart' of your campaign. The Story of Now is all about adding in the 'head'. The purpose of your Story of Now is to explain your group strategy and ask your followers to join you in taking action in your campaign. It is where you set out in clear, concrete terms exactly what they can do to help you to reach your goal. It is about telling them why now is important, and not later.

## **Why it matters?**

The Story of Now is the crucial point at which you can take the emotional connection you've created within your Stories of Self and Us and provide it with a strategic outlet and where this emotion can be enlivened through common action. A Story of Now is an urgent call to action that you can use to ask for commitments. But it becomes much more than an 'ask'. It is a choice about whether somebody is going to stay on the sidelines or dive into the campaign. It's a choice about whether they'll take advantage of this historic opportunity, or let history pass them by.

## **Essential elements of a Story of Now**

- The strategy – your plan to achieve your goal
- A strategic 'hopeful' choice that each person in your audience can make
- A specific ask for each person that involves a commitment of time and resources
- A description of what collectively can be achieved

## **Writing your Story of Now**

Before you get started with writing your Story of Now, it's important to think about the underlying morals and values you are trying to inspire in your listeners. What are the common value threads apparent in all three of your stories; Self, Us and Now? Like the Story of Self and Story of Us outlined previously, your Story of Now should also be structured using the concepts of Challenge, Choice and Outcome.

*Originally adapted from the works of Marshall Ganz, Harvard University and modified by the New Organising Institute and Oliver MacColl. Source: <https://campaigntips.wordpress.com/public-narrative-training/>*



World Vision  
**“THE BIGGEST THING ABOUT KEEPING PEOPLE INVOLVED IS MAKING SURE THEY FEEL LIKE THEY’RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.”**



I STAND FOR  
A fair go  
for all!

#WhatIStandFor

