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Wednesday, February 24, 2010

tips for feminist organizing

This month the Feminist Action Project has taken upon itself the task of raising the final sum of funds necessary for our conference - which is harder than it sounds. In order to share some of the knowledge we have gained along the way, the Feminist Action Project has decided to put together a list of tips and tricks that can be useful for other people looking to put to organize and / or put on an event.

1.) Organization

This is probably going to sound a bit like an advertising spiel, but trust us - the following have been SO important in keeping all of us organized:

With so many free and easy-to-use services, Google has been vital to our organization and planning. Google Docs allows for the sharing and collaborative editing (and real time updating) of documents and spreadsheets, which has been great in maintaining lists of professors to contact for help, potential speakers, and donors. In addition, Google provided all the codes for the forms you see on our blog. Best of all? Google automatically puts information entered on the form onto a spreadsheet kept on Google docs. The Google Groups feature makes e-mail communication to multiple group members a breeze. Google has so many great programs, virtually limitless space, and it's free! It is definitely a valuable tool for groups wanting to maintain a web presence, but who operating on a tight budget.

Another helpful online resource has been [Doodle](#). Scheduling meetings when folks have different life, work, and school schedules is often one of the biggest headaches of organizing. Doodle allows individuals to set up a series of potential meeting times, and then folks can follow a link to fill out their availability. No username or registration is required.

2.) Goals and Planning

We often playfully remark on how things should have been done a month ago, only most of the time we are not REALLY joking. Make a plan, make it feasible, and stick to it. Set weekly and monthly goals. Make sure all members are aware of them. Have regular meetings to check up on your progress, and allow time to reevaluate your approach if things seem to be falling apart.

In the beginning of our planning process, we aimed big when developing our budget. Today? Our budget is probably a third of the original. We occasionally had to ask ourselves: Is this really doable in the time remaining? Is this particular thing important to the overall goals of the group and conference? Can we still have a conference that is meaningful to the participants and ourselves if we cut this part of the budget? In the end, the things we decided to cut are not totally out of the picture for us - they make up a sort of secondary budget of things that would be nice to have, but are not completely necessary. This gives us an absolute goal as well as additional incentives to strive for.

In addition to regular meetings, we at the Feminist Action Project try to keep a weekly collaborative work time. An informal meeting with no agenda, the collaborative work time is a place where we can help each other with difficult tasks. We also try to include some sort of treat, talking, and lots of laughing.

If that seems like a lot of time spent in meetings, be assured that sometimes it feels like it - but the meetings are important. Regular meetings force us to be organized, hold ourselves accountable, make sure members are on the same (or similar) page, and help maintain connections to members we do not see every day.

3.) Ask

Whether it be for donations or general help, sometimes having to ask for anything can be difficult.

Do not be afraid to ask for help - even from people you do not know. There are so many great free resources available and teachers / professors often have many great connections. One thing we have continually been amazed by is the people who continually help us out with places to find things like printing, people to lead workshops, and donors.

Asking for money sometimes feels like running your nails down a chalkboard. It is a painful, but necessary part of the process. Make a list of EVERY POSSIBLE person, organization, restaurant, store, school department, or other business that you think might be remotely sympathetic to your cause (this is where Google docs becomes so helpful). Cast your net far and wide. The more people you ask, the more sponsors you are likely to have. If you do not ask, you will not get money. Plain and simple. Once you have a list, divide and conquer. Split the list up among all organizers, and not just those in charge of fundraising. Talking about and promoting your project is important for all participants. How you ask can vary - by face-to-face meeting, by email, by letter, by phone call.

One last thing - be confident in what you are doing. Know that you are valuable and so is your project! Advocate for yourself.

People have different projects and needs, but we hope these tips will make your planning easier for you. They have for us!

You can find more information like this at the conference - there will be workshops on finding money and activist self-care, as well as opportunities to share organizing experiences. [Register now!](#)

Thank you,
The Feminist Action Project
Ileana Gomez
Fundraising Committee Co-chair

Posted by [Feminist Action Project](#) at 8:21 PM

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About the Feminist Action Project

The Feminist Action Project is a student group at the University of Texas at Austin which organizes activist programs, conversations and events for gender justice with the collaboration of the Gender and Sexuality Center.

Questions? Interested? E-mail us at feministactionproject@gmail.com

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