

FIELD NOTES: Californians for Justice

Californians for Justice is a grassroots organization dedicated to putting political power in the hands of people who have been shut out of the political process. CFJ is a statewide membership organization working to build power in communities that have been pushed to the margins of the political process. These groups--communities of color, and young and poor people of all colors--represent a new, emerging majority in California.

Organizing goal: A 5-year statewide campaign to organize youth and parents for equity and racial justice in public education.

Organizing work area:

1. **Coalition building:** Build an alliance of youth, parent, research, and advocacy groups with the capacity to affect state education policy.
2. **Base building:** Build base of youth & parents through direct organizing in 5 California cities.

What technology was used?

1. **Database** accessible via the Internet to track student volunteers, press contact, allies, donors & funders
2. **Desktop Publishing** to design and produce reports in-house
3. **Filesharing** to share research training curriculum, organizing materials, report drafts and final products across four offices
4. **E-Mail** to coordinate staff, share updates, schedule staff calls
5. **Fax Broadcast** to send press advisories; send report summary to allies statewide
6. **Website** to post report on rudimentary web site for downloading

Capacity needs:

1. **Hardware:** each of CFJ's four offices has at least one imac or comparable; a printer, phone system, scanner one office, all offices are internally network, and all have DSL connection to Internet where they can access their database, fax machines and copy machines.
2. **Software:** Filemaker was used for databases; Microsoft Office package was used for all else -- Outlook for email, Publisher for flyers, and Word for text documents.
3. **Technical Assistance:** CFJ hired a consultant who was a supporter of the organization and familiar with their work. She spent 3 intensive months on the project part time. Since then CFJ has hired a staff member with technology skills to aid in maintaining their systems.
4. **Training:** In the start of the three months the consultant did a 2 hours training giving an overview of networks, Internet and general technology language, theory and strategic ways to think about it fitting into organizing work. For specific software usage she provided one on one hands on training that proved to be most effective. Consultant also trained point staff people to provide assistance to others.

Finances: CFJ used an \$8,000 grant from PTP to pay for the consultant fees. The consultant charged nonprofit rates. The budget to upgrade the equipment came from their general support funds. In the end CFJ spent \$20,000 upgrading their systems, hiring a consultant and training staff.

Impact: CFJ's research study has laid the groundwork for their organizing campaign which will be carried out the next five years. The media coverage they were able to garner strengthened their visibility and got their progressive message out throughout the state. Finally, the creation of their report and numerous press conferences aided in organizing new folks for they help build CFJ's legitimacy and popularity as an organization fighting for justice.