

— 114 notes from a
saboteur's « vade mecum »

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A — Use of time lags

1. Respond too soon.
2. Respond too late.
3. Arrange a meeting to discuss the matter at some convenient *future* date.
4. Time the critical meeting, or invite the critical intervention, so that it interferes with people's desire to go away for lunch, for a weekend, or for a holiday period.

B - Use of distance

5. Ensure that the critical intervention is given just too little time, so that the arguments appear incoherent.
 6. Agree to research the topic in depth, so as to introduce a delay.
 7. Encourage submission of the project through a body which already has an overload of projects for consideration.
 8. Encourage submission of the project at a time when budgetary allocations for the following period have already been decided.
9. Condemn with facts which cannot be countered without getting them from some physically distant spot.
 10. Organize the critical meeting in a place just too far away (in terms of travel funds) to permit people critical to the project to participate.
 11. Ensure that the proposers are asked to present the project to an audience in places to which they do not have the resources to travel, particularly by stressing the importance of a "regional" focus — if they can manage it once, repeat the request for another region until finances run out.

C-Use of funds

12. Offer too much money; this leads to acquisition of staff and equipment not essential to the project, complacency, and possible arousal of more interest in the fringe benefits of working on the project than in its original objectives.
13. Offer too little money.
14. Encourage the proposers to request funds at the same time as requesting approval when it is known that the project will be rejected for budgetary reasons (even though general approval or sponsorship would be sufficient, probably, to ensure that the funds could be obtained from other sources).
15. Encourage the proposers to request extensive funding, when this is liable to ensure its rejection as "exaggerated"; or excessively modest funding, when this is liable to ensure its rejection as "unrealistic, inadequate, and ineffective."

D — Use of cultural and working style differences

16. Recommend that proposal be first discussed informally with the person



when the latter is irritated by contacts which have been initiated formally ; or alternatively, recommend formal contact when the person prefers contacts to be first established informally.

17. Ensure that, when the proposer has to meet people critical to the approval of the project, he is subjected to some form of culture shock which will antagonize him, disturb his poise, or make him appear gauche, (e.g., he is forced to wait long past the appointed hour, obliged to discuss generalities as a lengthy preliminary, fails to make provision for a bribe considered normal in his interlocuter's culture, etc.)
18. Ensure that there is a wide difference in age and life style between the proposer and people he has to meet who are critical to approval of the project, in order to establish the proposer's image as a cheeky youngster or an out of date fuddy-duddy.
19. Ensure that the proposer entertains people critical to the approval of the project in a manner liable to cause offence or boredom which will reflect on the proposer's judgement, (e.g., ensure errors based on dietary

restrictions such as taking a vegetarian to a steak house; on moral principles, such as taking a puritan to a strip joint; or musical taste, such as taking a musical puritan to a discotheque, etc.)

20. Ensure that the committee getting the project is overfed and oversupplied with liquor and excessive hospitality to make effective work impossible.

E - Use of intellectual differences and comprehension

21. Interpret the terms used differently from the sense in which they were intended
 - by the proposer
 - commonly understood



know thine enemy...

22. Ensure that the proposal is written at a technical level which is either irritatingly incomprehensible to the person reading it, or as an alternative, is an insult to his intelligence.

F-Use of image, competence and presentation

23. Criticize the proposers as incompetent or ill-informed.
 24. Assert that the person or organization is not representative or qualified.
 25. Condemn proposal as irresponsible — "just when we were beginning to sort things out".
 26. Discredit the proposer by locating "true facts" about him which are irrelevant to what is proposed.
 27. Structure the setting in which the proposal is presented such that the proposer appears to be criticizing past actions (or reactions) of his audience, or appears to be wasting time on the need for niggling minor improvements.
 28. Ensure that the critical presentation is made in a setting in which (irrelevant) characteristics of the proposer will antagonize the audience (e.g., presented by a person of Jewish extraction to an audience with Arab sympathies, by a Hindu to a loyal Moslem audience, by a woman to an audience from anti-feminist cultures).
 29. Ask for a written report when the proposers are unlikely to be able to structure it according to the required style, but avoid it if the written report is liable to be too well prepared and convincing.
 30. Ensure that the proposers do not get the opportunity to present the project to an audience if they have skilled and persuasive orators at their disposal; alternatively, ask for such a presentation if they have little experience of oral presentation.
 31. Ensure that, when the proposers have assembled a team prepared to argue all the facts, the audience is composed of persons liable to be antagonized by eggheads. Alternatively, assemble an audience of tough (hostile) experts when the proposers are only prepared for a non-expert audience.
 32. Encourage written submission of the project in the form of a stencilled document when an offset or printed (professional) document is normal. Alternatively, encourage submission of a deluxe document when the latter is liable to excite suspicion.

G — Use of public relations

33. Ignore.
 34. Pay great attention, go through all the motions, receptions, etc., flatter the person or organization, and do nothing.
 35. Decorate the organization making the proposal — i.e., praise initiative rather than follow it up.
 36. Use public relations machinery to disguise inaction or minimum action.
 37. Overpraise the project so that other people become suspicious of ulterior motives.
 38. Encourage the proposers to lobby those who are irrelevant to the project, or definitely hostile, and avoid pointing out to them those who are likely to be powerful supporters.
 39. Ensure that there are foul-ups in protocol on the occasion of the presentation with regard to the number of seats available, the allocation of seats to VIPs, who is introduced (or not introduced) to whom, etc., in order to build up hostility to the proposers.
 40. Encourage the proposer's organization to issue a communiqué or other document on the project when it is known that this will be considered a breach of procedure, irresponsible and premature by the body reviewing the project; or alternatively, avoid suggesting such a communiqué when the reviewing body or its members like to receive publicity.
 41. Introduce or describe the proposer as an "eminent authority" on the project topic, when he is not, thus arousing the antagonism of the real eminent authorities who will vet the project; or, alternatively, fail to mention that the proposer is the most eminent authority, when he is, and thus ensure that less attention is given to his views.
 42. If a meeting is required, ensure that participation is free if this is appropriate or would give the impression that people would not come otherwise; or, alternatively, charge an entrance fee if potential supporters would expect participation to be free.
 43. Imply that the presentation will be at an informal 'shirtsleeves' meeting, and then ensure that all other participants arrive expecting, and dressed for, a formal meeting; or, alternatively, imply that the proposer should make a highly formal presentation when the participants are liable to be turned off by it.

44. Invite a charismatic celebrity (particularly of the luscious female variety) so that the tone of the occasion is changed and the presenter of the proposal is made to feel that the presentation is an arid exercise by egghheads.
- H - Use of organizational structure and procedures
45. Appoint a commission to consider it.
- 46- Ask for a written report.
47. Refer the matter to some other department or body.
48. State your interest, but that you are too busy - "come back next year".
49. Ask for the project to be reformulated, especially with the inclusion of key words like "development" and "environment".
50. Refuse to "recognize" the person or organization.
51. "The matter is under study, and we will report on it shortly. Until then it would be better to do nothing."
52. "We are acting on the matter together with the appropriate authorities."
53. "We are appointing" an expert to look into this matter."
54. Organize a meeting with the proposers and structure the meeting so that either they can say nothing, or what they say can be interpreted in such a way as to support the status quo or one's own program — i.e., write up the report to reflect one's own views. Talk to them and respect one's own views.
55. Agree, with reservations, then jump on the program at the first excuse — "I-told-you-so".
56. Fund several projects simultaneously so that they nullify each other.
57. Refuse to receive documents, or, having received them, pigeon-hole them.
58. Ensure that the machinery to consider the project is split into sufficient jurisdictional areas so that the project must either be split into two (or more) or considered by separate departments and therefore becomes a victim of jurisdictional and administrative problems — and loses its coherence.
59. Wait for a permanent change, or temporary absence, of the responsible person, if the newcomer is liable to react more unfavorably, or, alternatively, speed up the submission if the outgoing person will react more unfavorably.
60. Obtain the recommendation or support of a body or person in disfavor or whose credibility is low prior to submission, or, alternatively, ensure that such a body transmits the project on to the next phase, (kiss-of-death)
61. Attempt to tie the project into the general framework of a broader program which will probably be abandoned shortly, or have its non-essential projects eliminated.
62. Inject the project into a setting fraught with political issues so that it will be seized upon by one side or the other as a pawn in negotiation, and dropped as a concession when a compromise solution has to be reached.
63. Ensure that the project is associated with an empire-building faction within the bureaucratic structure so that it will be rejected or restricted by those outside the empire, or alternatively, associate it with the latter so that the empire builders will consider it a threat.
64. Encourage the proposers to rewrite the project in terms of a broader program framework when the approving body requires specific projects, or alternatively, to rewrite it as a more specific program when broader implications have to be stressed to ensure approval.
65. Suggest that it would be more appropriate to submit the proposal via a particular representative body, when it is known that the latter is unable to reach unanimity on any issue.
66. Ensure that the proposal is submitted to everybody but the right one, so that a strenuous attempt is seen to have been made.
67. Ensure that the proposal is initially submitted too low down the hierarchy so that it lacks status when it is then submitted to the appropriate person higher up the hierarchy; alternatively, submit it too high up the hierarchy so that it is resented as an imposition when it is finally referred down to the appropriate level.
68. Ensure that the proposal is rejected by showing that it has already been tried by experts in the matter, and "experience" shows that it does not work.
69. Ensure that the proposal is eagerly accepted for future study, then delay notification of the negative response for as long as it is possible to maintain the illusion that a bit of patience in working through the proper channels is the best solution — despite the progressive loss of relevance of the proposal as the months go by.
70. Suggest the need for a pilot or trial project when the proposal does not merit it; alternatively, encourage haste and avoid a pilot project when one is essential for final success.
71. Ensure that the proposers have to interact with two departments, or a two-official team, one of whom appears in favor and encouraging, the other hostile and discouraging. The encourager can then blame every setback on the lack of comprehension of the discourager, and the discourager can "reinterpret" every advance as temporary, and only due to the abnormal weakness of the other. In this way the proposer is always kept uncertain and will finally give up from frustration.
72. Suggest that it would be injudicious to propose a new project at this stage, because it might "rock the boat" and prevent programs on a number of related issues currently under review.
73. Ask for a detailed elaboration, and financial estimates when this requires unavailable or scarce resources; or, alternatively, fail to request such an elaboration when its absence will ensure rejection at a later stage.
74. Suggest that a complex computer study or data collection project would be worthwhile as a preliminary, when the answers are already known and such a project would be considered a waste of scarce resources. a
- I — Use of prospective supporters and opponents
75. Give resources and attention to dissident groups within the proposing group, so as to split the leadership, support and coherence of arguments.
76. Give resources, praise and attention to those expressing contrary views.
77. Recommend that an international proposal should be submitted to national governments via the national member bodies of the proposer's organization when it is known that there is little understanding of the project's significance at this level; alternatively, ensure that it is submitted at the international level when it is known that there is a powerful lobby prepared to act at the national level, but that international coordination is weak.
78. Undertake the same tactics when dealing with state and federal or local and state agencies.
- 79: Lobby the proposer's supporters, particularly national member organ-

izations, and suggest to them how unwise the project is at this particular stage.

J — Use of superficial response, decoys and lures

50. State that it already forms part of your program (whether you are doing anything about it or not).
81. Have a meeting on the topic, but do not do anything about it.
82. Pass a resolution.
83. Call for a day or a year of remembrance or celebration — as a token.
54. Cite action or programs - particularly in distant parts - as evidence that something is being done.
85. Offer the proposer a job on a different project.
86. Suggest that the person write a book, or start a periodical, or organize an information service on the topic.
87. Consider a narrow aspect of what needs to be done, ignoring the context. Propose and implement a program to handle it, then acclaim one's own success, despite its irrelevance to the problem as a whole.
88. Devote considerable resources to discussing the program and writing it up in a "positive" manner in annual reports, and draw attention away from the actual budget for it.
89. Start the program in an ambitious, positive way and then terminate it on the first excuse.
90. Express admiration for the insignificant, superficial or irrelevant achievement, and ignore real achievements or real problems which the program has failed to solve.
91. Arrange for alternative meetings or projects so as to attract away the appropriate people at the critical moment.
92. Receive a person, agree to do something about it so that the person leaves satisfied, then do nothing or support opposing programs.
93. Agree to act as intermediary to transfer a message or draft to the responsible body in time for a critical meeting and fail to do so — while inserting one's own proposal in its place.
94. Suggest to people in the chain reviewing the project that their career advancement might be affected by approval of the project, or of a project coming from the proposer's organization.
95. Suggest to the proposing organization that funds could be guaranteed for another project, if efforts on the initial project were abandoned.
96. Focus criticism on "picky", minor details, drawing attention away from

the major content and substance of the proposal.

K - Use of technical matters

97. Swamp the proposer with "relevant" demands that prevent him from accomplishing anything effective.
 98. "Misplace", or fail to distribute, or imply that relevant documents have not arrived, at the critical moment.
 99. Fail to reproduce or translate sufficient relevant documents so that only specially selected persons have copies and others are not in a position to evaluate their contents, and they are offended or annoyed by being so deprived - or develop the view that the documents are therefore unimportant.
 100. Ensure that, when the proposers are to make an oral presentation, the quality of the foreign languages interpretation is low (to the point of making arguments ambiguous), or that interpreters in key languages, or covering the specialized vocabulary, are unavailable. Alternatively make use of highly intelligent interpreters to make common sense arguments trivial, to the point of being insulting, or to make general arguments inelegant, inconsistent, or incoherent.
 101. Ensure that the audio-visual equipment is out of order or incompatible when the case is highly dependent on information in charts and other graphic displays, or, alternatively, ensure that the personnel operating the equipment are incompetent (e.g., that slides are shown in the wrong order or upside down).
 102. Ensure that the final report of the meeting at which the proposal is presented either ignores or de-emphasizes that proposal or stresses the negative arguments concerning it. If the report and its recommendations have to be approved by the meeting in a final session, ensure that there is little time available so that any protests will appear niggling.
- L — Use of project personnel
103. Offer the proposer a job doing what he suggests but ensuring that he works with constraints which will ensure that nothing is achieved.
 104. Appoint an incompetent to run the program or two incompatible competent people so that one will undermine the efforts of the other.
 105. Supply funds, personnel and machines for a program in such a way that nothing can be achieved.
 106. Give them enough rope "to hang themselves".

107. Encourage the appointment of persons who will be more concerned with the prestige of the program than with its effectiveness.

108. Collaborate enthusiastically by offering the services of all the wrong people, particularly the deadwood in one's own department or in those with which one is in contact.
109. Supply generous support, but make it a condition that the project take on many assistants (for whom jobs cannot be found elsewhere) whose personal objectives are to avoid work and any form of responsibility.

M — Use of strong arm methods

110. For the sake of completeness, it should not be forgotten that, in extreme cases, projects can be sabotaged using a wide range of bribery, blackmail, threats of violence, etc.

N — Use of information

111. Fail to make available the list of other people known to be interested in such a project, or other information which could facilitate its approval.
112. Select facts from the proposal and summarize them to give weight to opposing conclusions.
113. Transfer a mass of documents on to the appropriate body when it is confused by anything more than a summary, or a summary when it is annoyed by the absence of detailed documents.
114. Encourage submission of the project through a body which already has an overload of projects for consideration.

Reprinted, with minor modifications by the author, from Urban and Social Change Review (USA), 5, 2, Spring 1972. Despite its title and the nature of the contents, this list is published here for a serious purpose. Some such checklist should be in the hands of anyone anxious to see project effectively implemented so that he or she can ensure that each administrative step made in response to the project proposal is not disguised sabotage. In fact, in case of doubt, the burden of proof should be on those responding to the project proposal. NGOs will recognize many of these methods from their associations with IGOs...