



University Students' Council of Western University

How To: Form a Campaign Team

Forming a campaign team can be one of the most intimidating steps and can ultimately influence whether or not you are going to run for an elected position. I remember the moment I decided to run, I was initially ecstatic but then shortly realized I was then faced with the seemingly impossible challenge of compiling a team who would work alongside me to achieve my goal of winning the election (without being paid).

There is no perfect template to structure a campaign team and each will be unique from the other. This brief will outline some suggestions to think about when beginning this process and tips that will be helpful to you in the process. Having a solid campaign team will help you feel set up and equipped to run a successful campaign in your respective election.

Forming a Team - Where to begin?

Domino Effect

This process often operates in a domino-esque manner. At the beginning you may have difficulty locating a place to start, but as soon as you knock one down, the momentum will come and you will be off to the races. Often the best place to start is with people you already know and who would likely support your vision of your candidacy, or people who have experienced an election in some form before. Regardless of where you start, the important takeaway is to just start and the rest will come.

Striking a Balance: Friends and Experts

While it can be a great idea to have a couple of your friends on this team to provide you with the support you need, it is important to strike a balance between those you know personally and those you think would provide tactical/strategic support to you and your team. Depending on the areas you need particular support in, this can dictate how this balance plays out, and is completely a personal preference. Friends can be a great resource to you (emotionally) and the team, but it is important to ensure you have a clear understanding of the expectations between both of you to ensure that the added stress of the campaign does not interfere with your friendship.

Consult with Former Candidates

Another great resource for beginning this process is to speak with other former candidates (successful or not) as they will have plenty of other insights to provide you with from their own perspectives/experiences. Former student leaders will all have their own spin on the campaign



team process, but nonetheless every single one of them are great resources to reach out to, and could provide even further information beyond what is included in this brief.

When in Doubt, Consult it Out

Ultimately, if you have no idea of where to start or who to ask, my advice is to simply begin your consultation process. In this process you will naturally meet more and more people who will either align with your ideas and want to join you, or you will meet people you connect with and will want their given perspective to build out the team you envisioned. By beginning the process of consultation you will both learn more about what you should be including on your platform. Further, you will also meet incredible leaders whom you may have never interacted with before who could also become excellent supporters to your campaign.

Positions to Consider

Build Around You

Again, there is by no means one model for a campaign team that is better than the other, and it is largely to be built around you and what areas you are wanting to particularly focus on or ones you feel may be weaknesses of yourself and could use additional support.

Position Examples

Listed are some positions/areas you will likely want to cover on your team are as follows: A campaign manager, one/two deputy campaign managers, a communications lead (to oversee your overall communications plan as well as social media and branding), a governance (bylaw) lead, an outreach lead, a finance lead, and a policy/research lead. These are common titles/areas that are often quite helpful to have some direct leadership on in order to free you up to operate as a candidate and do what you probably want to do most - talk to students!

Start with a Core and Build Out

Your team will by no means stop at those titles, but a great place to start is setting up your core team and then build it out further with more and more students who want to help on more specific aspects including (but not limited to): graphics, social media, and volunteer management.

Support + Hard Work = Happy Candidate

This is a glimpse at roughly how some teams have approached a team structure, but the main takeaway is to work with people that you know will be willing to work hard especially during a busy time in the months of January/February and people who you feel will provide support to areas that you need help in most. During the campaign you will be exhausted, and this team will serve as your support system that keeps you going. Ultimately this support system may help you find yourself in your dream role.



Who to ask?

Where to Look

There are countless places to find incredible leaders who could help you in this process. A few great starting points are to ask: a) people you know who are already invested in elections/student leadership, b) executive members of campus groups (councils, clubs, teams etc.), and c) stand out students in your classes who you have befriended/admire.

Want them to Join? Ask them!

The first few times you ask someone to join your team it will feel awkward and clunky (almost like the first time you asked someone out on a date), but trust that every candidate before has engaged in the exact same process and you will do nothing but become more comfortable overtime. When having these discussions, ensure that you are clear about what you are hoping they can help with and what the commitment will look like on their end. Also, explain why you want them to join.

Overall, asking people to join your team can feel daunting, but my advice is to never shy away from it and in the worst possible case, you have met a new friend who unfortunately does not want to engage directly in your campaign.

Final Tips/Thoughts

Start the Tedious Pieces Early

Do not worry if you are feeling like you are “starting too late” in this process. With that said, building a team sooner than later will do nothing but serve you well as it will allow for you to offload some of the work you would normally have to do, and to also begin many of the other processes that tend to be more tedious/time consuming such as creating a logo/brand, volunteer management, and scheduling.

Ask for Help!

Do not feel bad asking people to help! I found it extremely difficult to understand why someone would donate their time and expertise for no pay to someone they may not even know very well. People will all have their own reasons for supporting you as a candidate, but trust that they are doing so because they believe in you and your ideas and to never take that for granted. Keep meeting new people, and keep asking people that you admire or have heard great things about to chat and see if there is a fit on your team.

Your Team is Never Full

Do not be afraid to pivot and adapt. As you end up deeper into the process and possibly into the campaign itself, the team structure you imagined will need to change and flow as these campaigns are challenging in so many unique ways. If you find someone who you believe will



be helpful and a good fit with you and your team, never hesitate to ask them to join you and just find them a role. You never know when an incredible asset to the team will emerge and do not limit yourself to a rigid structure of a team as it should be designed to be adaptable as the process goes on.

Find your Manager

There truly is no time like the present. While you are definitely not “too late” even as you are reading this document, it will be extremely helpful to have a team forming quickly, and most importantly I would urge you to find whoever it is that will be your campaign manager ASAP. This person will be your right hand, and will support you more than you thought another human could. Finding this person early will take an incredible amount of weight off your shoulders so the sooner, the better!

Gratitude

Make sure to thank your team during and after the campaign. They joined your team for various reasons but have been instrumental in supporting your vision and campaign. Remember, they put their time and energy into supporting your vision during their semester so express gratitude to the incredible people who helped build and execute your campaign.
