

## Overview

Most civic advocacy groups instigate support and gain revenue by influencing people's personal views. This can prove difficult, for not only are people often unwilling to part with their money, they are also hesitant to join and support a group unless it is simple to do so and provides some sort of benefit, credit, or prestige for them. For this reason, civic advocacy groups have to think constantly about their audiences' own points of view, goals, and constraints (financial, time, or otherwise). Without strong support from its members, an organization has no stability and will collapse. The Sierra Club is no exception. An avid environmental organization, the Sierra Club publicly voices its opinions and mission on the internet, through local chapter newspapers, handouts, brochures, and much more. This wide array of easily accessible information makes it easier for the Sierra Club to reach out to new members of the community. However, simply making flyers and handouts available is rather pointless if the content is lacking. The Sierra Club has to think about its audience and how to best sway environmentally-conscious people to its own views and aspirations. Through such strategies as establishing credibility, appealing to a large and diverse group of people, evoking pathos through photos and graphics, and making it both simple and personally beneficial to join, the Sierra Club effectively utilizes its resources to better carry out its purpose.

## Establishing Credibility

Some organizations provide a plethora of ungrounded opinions without establishing credibility. However, the Sierra Club goes out of its way to come across as trustworthy and stable in its website and literature. The best example of this appeal to ethos is the timeline which is provided as a link off of the Sierra Club website. A lengthy

Nicely said

list of the Sierra Club's many accomplishments is provided, along with people's names and the years in which the accomplishments occurred. For example, the list states that in 1892, not only was the Sierra Club established, but "in its first conservation campaign, [the club lead an] effort to defeat a proposed reduction in the boundaries of Yosemite National Park" (Sierra Club 'History'). The fact that the Sierra Club had already made valuable contributions to the environment by 1892 automatically impresses the reader and thereby makes him or her more open to the Sierra Club's opinions. This same timeline states that the club had already recruited 1,000 members by 1908. Showing these statistics is another effective strategy to recruit more members, for people are more likely to join a club if they know that others are actively involved in it. One of the last items on this timeline states that the Sierra Club caused President Clinton to preserve areas in Nevada for the endangered sequoias. Hearing such a recent success of the club helps the reader to see that not only was the Sierra Club involved in the environment over one hundred years ago, they continue to be active today. By providing a detailed history, the club strongly establishes credibility to its audience.

The Sierra Club itself establishes credibility by providing a history of its deeds and success stories on its website. However, the club shows further credentials by providing information about its environmental law program. The law program of the Sierra Club is the portion which carries out any legal issues that may arise, and also speaks out against Bush's environmental policies. According to the Environmental Law Program's mission statement, "The Sierra Club Law Program has established an unprecedented track record as a strategic, effective protector of the environment in the courts." This is a fairly broad statement which does not provide any solid credibility.

However, the site goes on to provide a history of the law program, much like the main website provides a timeline of important events of the Sierra Club. For example, "In 1971, the pioneering Sierra Club v. Morton lawsuit—the case that challenged a proposed ski area in the Mineral King valley of California—gave citizens the right to sue to enforce environmental laws" (Environmental Law Program: History). The web site not only provides a particular event that occurred, but also lets the reader see that the law program is concerned with getting the average citizen involved in environmental issues. It also states that the law program has "launched an expansion of its legal program at the turn of the millennium, bringing on board a highly accomplished team of lawyers to direct the Club's nationwide, strategic legal efforts." This statement shows the reader that the club is expanding and is as concerned as ever with environmental issues, as well as the fact that it is willing to adjust to the world's ever-changing problems and issues.

### Appealing to a Diverse Audience

The Sierra Club is successful partly in that it appeals to a large, highly diverse group of people. Most apparent would be the club's appeal to those people who oppose President Bush's environmental policies. A statement from Aaron Isherwood, an attorney for the Environmental Law Program, effectively portrays the Sierra Club's view of President Bush: "It's unconscionable that the Bush administration is claiming to help communities while actually putting them at risk. ... If hubris were an Olympic sport, the Bush administration would easily take the gold" (Bush Administration Timber Sale Creates Major Fire Risk at Duncan Canyon Roadless Area, 2004). This is a strong statement, showing the club's disdain for Bush's policies. Similarly, a Sierra Club brochure from the Southwest Environmental Center makes the bold statement,

Very useful  
evidence  
to back  
up your  
point

“Childhood lesson #1: You make a mess, you clean it up. The Bush administration’s lesson #1: Corporate polluters make the mess, taxpayers clean it up.” The environmentally-conscious are the main audience of the Sierra Club. The club assumes that this type of person will be against most of Bush’s environmental policies, and thereby appeals to this audience by providing ample links to anti-Bush web pages, as well as examples of what he has done through informative articles.

The club encourages other groups of people to join its mission, as well. For example, also at the Southwest Environmental Center is a bilingual packet of articles about environmental issues entitled, *Comunidades Latinas en Peligro* (Latin Communities at Risk). The fact that this packet is in both Spanish and English, with such articles as “Donde Respirar es como Fumar sin Filtro” (Where Breathing is Like Smoking Without Filters) and “Las Cicatrices del Libre Comercio” (The Scars of Free Trade) shows the Sierra Club’s awareness and concern for the Latin community. Making bilingual literature available to Hispanic people makes them more receptive to what the Sierra Club has to say, and it makes it easier for those who speak no English to understand the club’s mission, thereby broadening its audience.

The Sierra Club also shows no discrimination towards its members’ ages. The club has a branch called the “Sierra Student Coalition” which focuses more on the youth of the nation. “The Sierra Student Coalition is a broad network of high school and college students from around the country working to protect the environment on the local, regional, national and international level” (Sierra Student Coalition: Who We Are). The website also states, “We’ve got moderate Democrats, radical anarchists and everything in between.” The fact that the Sierra Club does not appeal to any one type of person and

This is another strong example

directs its efforts toward a diverse group of people provides evidence as to why it is such a large and well-supported organization. An organization which remains open-minded and diverse is more appealing than one that targets only one specific group.

### Use of Graphics

Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. The Sierra Club seems to understand this, and supports its environmental articles by including pictures that evoke emotion in the reader, perhaps making him or her realize the dire situation of the environment. Such pictures make a person want to take action, and what better way to do this than by joining the Sierra Club? This is how the club wants the reader's logic to work. For example, in the *Rio Grande Sierran* is an article by reporter Bobby Magill, entitled, "Valley of Life: Drilling Foes Say Both Nature and Man Will Lose if Valle Vidal Opens to Industry" (2004, p. 1). The article speaks of the devastating loss of the beautiful Valle Vidal, should it be subjected to drilling. Magill states, "The Valle Vidal is a place where the natural beauty is as dramatic as any the Land of Enchantment can conjure." Taking up the majority of the page is a photo of Valle Vidal, a huge, beautiful expanse of land which shows the comparative insignificance of humans by portraying two horseback riders so small that they seem swallowed up in the landscape. The thought that this beautiful expanse could feasibly be drilled evokes a strong sense of emotion in the reader. yes

Even more devastating are the pictures included with the article "Fantasy vs. Reality," which enlightens the reader to the unspeakable conditions of dairies (Elders and Elders, 2004, p. 5). The first picture shows a billboard portraying what a dairy should be, with productive cows and clean, rolling pastures. The next picture shows a startling

contrast by showing an *actual* dairy, in which cattle are crowded together, forced to stand in their own excrement. Lastly, the article shows a picture of dead calves that a dairy dumped off to the side of the road. These pictures evoke pathos, and make the reader want to help in any way he or she can. Through these pictures, the Sierra Club makes people want to become actively involved in protecting the environment.

### Recruitment Strategies

The Sierra Club makes it easy and beneficial to join, which is yet another strategy to gain support. A link off the main website even provides reasons as to why a person should join the club. For example, it states, "Your voice will be added to those of more than 700,000 of your fellow Americans who are committed to leave our children a living legacy—clean air, clean water, and natural grandeur" (*Why Join the Sierra Club?*). The club also makes it easy to join, as a person can instantly join online by simply clicking a button. In addition, it offers future members free items, such as a "Sierra Club backpack" and a subscription to the magazine. The Sierra Club backpack appeals to the environmentalist (a potential Sierra Club member), who will be more likely to embark on outdoor activities. Such methods are effective, for not only do people enjoy free items; they will be more willing to join an organization if it is easy and fast to do so.

### Rhetoric of the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club was founded in 1892, and has since gained 700,000 members. This growth is incredible, and shows that it must have effective recruitment strategies. It also must gain much revenue, for it has remained an active environmental agency where other agencies try and fail due to lack of funds. The club comes across as trustworthy because it provides documentation of its previous work and success stories. It shows a

non-biased attitude through recruiting a wide variety of people, including Latino communities and the youth of the nation. It makes people want to take action through strong and emotional photography in it articles, and it makes it easy for them to join the club and do so. It is apparent that the Sierra Club spends much of its money keeping its website updated and providing literature in environmental agencies so that people might better learn about the club and how to join. It is an effective organization, and it shows a knowledgeable grasp of rhetorical strategies in order to gain and maintain support from its members.

This is a persuasive and well written paper. It accomplishes all the goals of the assignment and was truly a pleasure to read. Nice job.