Initial Action Design

Outcome, audience, message, tactics, plan.

So you have an idea for an action or you picked one up from Design Ideas for Actions or the Action Themes. And hopefully you've got a few friends to start planning with.

You'll want to start by agreeing some core elements with your initial (small) team, which is what this page is about. Once you've got these sorted you can start to recruit others to your team, but first you need to be clear about the fundamentals of your plan.

In its simplest form, non-violent direct action is a means of delivering a message to a specific audience to achieve an outcome. The early design of an action has five elements:

- **The outcome** - what do you want to happen as a result of your action?
- **The audience(s)** - who do you want to hear your message? The audience(s) may be different from the action's target.
- **The message** - what is the central thing you want to communicate to your audience - e.g. what would you write on a banner for the action?
- **The tactics** - what is the target of your action and what is the delivery mechanism for your message?
- **The basic plan** - location, date, start time, and the "how".

Have fun making up a sassy codename so you don't call your blockade of Barclays HQ 'the Barclays action' :)

The Outcome

Your whole action should be designed around the outcome you want to achieve. Be clear from the start what this is and check back as the plan evolves to make sure it is still making sense.

An outcome is often one of the following:

- Raise public awareness and support, create public debate, shift the Overton window.
- Pressure an organisation to change, whether the government or a company.
- Build strength: empower people with knowledge, skills and connections as well as developing coalitions.

You will probably have a demand or a call to action. Discuss and agree on what you are demanding and from whom.

Audience

Clearly define who your audience is: Is it employees of your target? Is it the government? Is it the public? It can be more than one and, if so, you may need to deliver that message in different ways. For example you may have banner messaging for the public via social media but have flyers with more detail for staff.

Your audience may not be the same as your target. Think about Insulate Britain. They *targeted* the public users of the M25, but their *audience* was the government.

You probably have either a demand for your audience (eg "no new oil or gas", or "don't insure EACOP"), or a call to action ("don't bank with Barclays"). Either way, make sure it is within your audience's power to do (a company can’t change Government policy).

Think about whether the audience will understand your messaging. How do you adapt your action, outreach and overall language to that specific audience group(s)?

The Message

So you know what you want to achieve and who your audience is. Next you need to design the message you want them to hear. It's very, very important to consider how your action will come across and prepare your public messaging.

Head over to the Media and Messaging for Actions book for detailed guidance.

If you have a demand or a call to action, this will need to be central to your message. Sometimes we deal with complex issues which we only just about understand ourselves. Think about the message if you were to show it to your parents or a neighbour. Would they get it - *without* you explaining? From this you can start to boil down your key message in as few words as possible. For example “Stop Rosebank” or “Unite to Survive”. You can refine it further as you go.

The Tactics

There are three main tactics we use (often more than one per action):

- Disruption - disrupt your target so that business-as-usual becomes untenable, or simply to get attention.
- Outreach - inform the public of the truth about the issue.
- Media - get media attention.

Non-violent direct action usually involves identifying a target - often the government or a corporate climate criminal. E.g. Disrupting an oil terminal with a bunch of tripods at change of shift.

Keeping it simple is usually the best policy.

Think about:

- What justifies focusing on your chosen target?
- Has your group - or XR in general - already targeted them for similar reasons? If so, what was their behaviour in response to the action?
- Do you need to do more research on your target to support your demands?
- Numbers: how many rebels are needed and can you realistically mobilise that many? Do any roles carry the risk of arrest?

The Basic Plan

Location - double check the target location is suitable. How does your chosen location fit with your message, your audience and your target? Is it safe. Always do a recce and check what's happening at that location on your chosen date.

Date - Check whether it clashes with other actions (check the Movement Calendar) or big national events like a football final, so you're not competing for media coverage. And think about your target and audience: is their office open on that day? Is parliament in session? Etc.

Start time - Consider your location and what type of action you're are doing to choose the most appropriate time, eg. rush hour - do you want to be there when staff get to work? Earlier in the day is sometimes a good idea as actions happening 7-9am often catch that day's press. Check when it gets light or dark (this affects photos).

The "how" - think about the practicalities of how you will do the action. E.g. will you jump on the tanker in the petrol station or wait until it's pulled out onto the road? Do you need climbers to go in ahead of the main group and start climbing before people glue onto the doors? This will help determine roughly how many people and what skills you need.
