



**Bonner Curriculum**

# Power Mapping: A Tool for Utilizing Networks

**Overview:**

Someone who is interested and involved in promoting positive social changes, through service, advocacy and other vehicles, often needs to think about context and relationships within the spheres she/he works. Power Mapping is a conceptual strategy of determining whom you need to influence, exactly who can influence your target, and whom you can actually influence to start the dominoes in motion. It is a valuable tool for individuals actively working with communities, providing a simple framework and a set of tools to better understand and leverage relationships and networks.

**Category:**

Problem solving; management; leadership development; relationship building; civic engagement

**Level:**

Intermediate to advanced level; a good follow up to *Building a Personal Network*

**Recommended Bonner Sequence:**

This training is recommended for Bonner students during the junior year, especially in conjunction with project coordination roles. It helps prepare students to effectively build on-campus teams or coalitions who will work together on an initiative. It is also effective for seniors who may be involved in capstone-type projects on campus or within the community.

expectation	explore	experience	example	expertise
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VALUES: ALL - civic engagement, community building, diversity

**Type:**

Structured workshop

## Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- This workshop presents participants with a specific process for mapping out relationships between people, organizations, and institutions in a given context that is called power mapping.
- This process helps to teach participants the value of relational power as an important dynamic in social organizing.
- Participants will have the opportunity to tackle a key problem identified by the group using the power mapping process.

## Materials:

- Identity Circle blank sheets or blank sheets of paper
- Index cards or post-its
- Everyone should have something to write with

## How to Prepare:

Prepare yourself to facilitate by reviewing the guide and becoming comfortable with the facilitation process, especially through part two when you must present the steps of power mapping. Create a visual example, using relationships and organizations in your immediate context, as a large flip chart or hand out.

## How to Do/Brief Outline:

In this structured workshop, there are three parts. You can modify them (e.g., eliminate or change the warm up, break the workshop into two parts to fit a brief weekly meeting structure, etc.) if necessary.

The general outline contains the following components:

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1) Warm Up: Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon        | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 2) Presentation of the Power Mapping Strategy | suggested time 40 minutes |
| 3) Wrap up and applications for tool          | suggested time 10 minutes |
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## Part 1) Introductory Warm Up: Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon

Suggested time 20 minutes

This exercise is intended to get people thinking about connections. The game is to figure out how Kevin Bacon is connected to these actors by six connections or less. Give the group four names and have them try to map out the connection. They must think of the name and the movie to make the connection. There may be more than one way.

\* Example: How is Samuel L. Jackson connected to Kevin Bacon?

Samuel L. Jackson was in *Pulp Fiction* with John Travolta.  
John Travolta was in *Face Off* with Nicholas Cage.  
Nicholas Cage was in *Honeymoon in Vegas* with Sarah Jessica Parker.  
Sarah Jessica Parker was in *Footloose* with Kevin Bacon.

Make sure the group understands the game and clarify if needed. Give them 10 minutes to map the following four actors:

Clint Eastwood  
Drew Barrymore  
Will Smith  
Winona Rider

Possible answers (there are others):

Winona Rider: *Beetle Juice* with Geena Davis, *Thelma and Louise* with Brad Pitt, *Sleepers* with Kevin Bacon

Drew Barrymore: *Mad Love* with Chris O'Donnell, *Three Musketeers* with Oliver Platt, *Flatliners* with Kevin Bacon

Will Smith: *Men in Black* with Tommy Lee Jones, *Batman Forever* with Nicole Kidman, *Far and Away* with Tom Cruise, *A Few Good Men* with Kevin Bacon

Clint Eastwood: *Bridges of Madison County* with Merrill Strap, *The River Wild* with Kevin Bacon

After the ten minutes ask the group which ones people have solved. Have the group share their maps with the group.

Summarize by drawing a connection between the concept used in this quirky little game and the concept of power mapping. The idea of power mapping is to figure out the connections and relationships that you (or people in your group and organization) can access to solve problems, enhance your programs, develop your resources, or engage in other tasks. This game also illustrates that there may be more than one path to your need or answer! You can think of as many ways as possible!

## **Part 2) Presentation of the Power Mapping Strategy**

Suggested time: 40 minutes

In this section, you need to demonstrate the framework and concept of the power mapping tool by doing it with the group. Review the definition of power mapping on handout.

*Power mapping is a framework for addressing issues and problem solving through leveraging relationships and networks. It is a conceptual strategy of determining whom you need to influence, exactly who can influence your target, and whom you can actually influence to start the dominoes in motion. This framework is based on the assumption that networks of relationships (between individuals, organizations, institutions, etc.) are critical resources, and that stronger networks yield stronger solutions.*

Follow these steps and identify the names of each step. You may want to have them written on newsprint and posted around the room.

### **Step 1: Problem location**

You can map around an issue (in the community or as a general program need) or a person or institution you think can solve a problem. Refer to handout. You may end up with several overlapping power maps that get you closer and closer to solving your problem. For the purpose of this exercise we will start with the most general power map ~ mapping a problem.

Ask the group to come up with a particular issue for their group (make sure to have a back up if no one comes up with a problem). Provide a few examples like:

- “We need to secure a site for the spring conference,”
- “We need to get funding for our Alternative Spring Break program,”
- “We need to enhance the training component of our America Reads initiative,”
- “We need to find a faculty advisor for our learning in the community course,”
- “We need to enhance the diversity of this team,”
- “We need to run a successful campaign for on-campus recycling,”
- “We need to secure the President as a supporter on this issue.”

Write the issue in the middle of the newsprint.

### **Step 2: Map major institutions**

Identify key decision-making institutions or associations that are related to that problem. Write these names on the newsprint in a ring around the problem.

Using the example of finding the faculty advisor, participants may shout out things like:

- public service center
- religious life department
- innovative courses program
- dean of students
- college president
- public policy department
- business school

And so on. As they do so, you write these names up in a circular (free-form) fashion around the center circle in which the “problem” is written.

### **Step 3: Map individuals associated with the institutions**

Put the names of 2-3 individuals who are associated with each of those institutions in the second ring (moving out concentrically) around the problem. These can be people you know or don't know.

For the example above (of course, during the facilitation, it won't line up so neatly):

- Mary Jo Peat, Director
- Chaplin Thomas
- That graduate student who t.a.'s my education course
- Dean Bosch
- President Torres and that Vice President who really loves service
- Professor Brown, who's really into social justice issues
- That guy Harold Maud who founded the businesses for social responsibility chapter

Of course, there may be more than one person associated with each of the institutions, or there may be some institutions where people don't know the names. Here you can note a question like, "Who is the Academic Dean?"

### **Step 4: Map all other associations with these individuals**

Ask participants to think about people they know connected to these key individuals. The purpose of this is to help identify easier ways to access the individuals or institutions that could help solve the problem, by tapping into existing relationships between people. At this step, you can note any relationships that members in the group have with the people listed and any information you have about them. Encourage people to be creative in thinking about how they may be connected to the people brainstormed.

Again, drawing on the example above:

- Mary Jo's my mentor - Bob
- I have a course with Chaplin Thomas - Geraldine
- I can talk to my t.a. - Sanjeev
- I don't know Dean Bosch, but my mom and his wife are in a book club together - Maria
- Dean Bosch did a training in my dorm, and our group still works with him - Bob
- My roommate Brandy is the newspaper editor and has met with President Torres
- Professor Brown's daughter is in my sorority - Johnette
- Professor Brown is going to be my thesis advisor - Sanjeev
- Harold is going to be speaking at the Black Student Union event this month - Rick

Also, look over the list of areas to consider while power mapping. This information should go in the third ring around the problem.

### **Step 5: Determine relational power lines**

The next step is to step back and conceptually review the networks that the group has mapped out. You can do this by drawing lines connecting people and institutions that have relations to each other. Some people will have many connections while others may not have any.

In the example above, there would be many lines. In practice, depending on the scale or newness of the “problem,” it may be harder to identify institutions, people, and relationships that connect them. This step helps the group to identify what may be called the “nodes of power” within a given network.

### **Step 6: Target priority relationships**

The next step is to analyze some of the relationships and connections and make some decisions.

One way to do this is to circle the few people that have the most relational power lines drawn to them. Involving these people through your group’s current relationships may be deemed a priority. In the example above, the group might say, “Dean Bosch seems to be critical in this picture, and both Maria and Bob have a way to connect with him.” If no one in the group seems to be directly connected to a key target, you can go another step deeper and directly create another power map around each of these people.

Another thing to consider may be a person or institution in the map that doesn’t necessarily have many different relational lines running to him/her/it but nonetheless has a few critical ones and seems to hold a lot of influence. If you can identify a priority person/institution for which there isn’t a clear relationship, the take away may be to go and do some homework about this person/institution.

### **Step 7: Make a plan**

The next step is to create some action steps for what to do next. These can be fairly straightforward. Taking the example above, the group could decide:

Maria is going to talk to her mom about Dean Bosch and his wife and what may be good ways to get their support.

Bob is going to ask Mary Jo to help him request a meeting with Dean Bosch to seek his support for the course, perhaps through the public service center

Sanjeev is going to talk to Professor Brown about good faculty members to talk with and Rick is going to meet Harold Maud to scout out people at the business school

And so on.

Determine the best approaches to accessing these individuals and institutions through relationships and who will be responsible for what by when.

### Part 3) Wrap and Next Steps

Suggested time 10-30 minutes

You may want to try any of the following as a way to move forward or close this workshop:

- **Review the process again, using another example (perhaps more complicated):** it often helps to repeat a process, perhaps with a different facilitator or issue, or you can break the larger group into smaller groups to do so (for example in an extended workshop at a retreat or leadership training event).
- **Brainstorm potential applications:** this process is useful for many things and is more about being resourceful. To illustrate this point have the group brainstorm ways that this process could work for other things. Record on newsprint.
- **Have each person (if it's a group that doesn't work as a team) name one thing he/she can use the power mapping process for and follow up in an upcoming meeting:** if you are a student or administrator doing this training, perhaps in the context of your ongoing work with the group, you may want to have individuals/groups actually try the process on their own and share reports at an upcoming meeting.

You can also do a brief evaluation of the workshop itself, using a simple tool like:

- **Brainstorm of pluses/deltas:** things that worked well and suggestions for things to change next time
- **Written workshop evaluation:** perhaps using a simple scale
- **Open comments by the group**

# Steps to Power Mapping

## **Step 1: Problem location**

You can map around a problem or a person or institution you think can solve a problem. Identify a particular problem or issue.

## **Step 2: Map major institutions**

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## **Step 3: Map individuals associated with the institutions**

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## **Step 4: Map all other associations with these individuals**

Think about people they know connected to these key individuals. The purpose of this is to help identify easier ways to access the individuals or institutions that could help solve the problem, by tapping into existing relationships between people. At this step, you can note any relationships that members in the group have with the people listed and any information you have about them.

## **Step 5: Determine relational power lines**

The next step is to step back and conceptually review the networks that the group has mapped out. You can do this by drawing lines connecting people and institutions that have relations to each other. Some people will have many connections while others may not have any.

## **Step 6: Target priority relationships**

Analyze some of the relationships and connections elaborated and make some decisions. One way to do this is to circle the few people that have the most relational power lines drawn to them.

Another thing to consider may be a person or institution in the map that doesn't necessarily have many different relational lines running to him/her/it but nonetheless has a few critical ones and seems to hold a lot of influence.

## **Step 7: Make a plan**

The next step is to create some action steps for what to do. What will people do next? Create 3-5 steps.