Exercise: Overcoming Tough Objections

Total Exercise Time: 45 minutes

Scenario:
You are part of an AAUW state public policy team that is building local grassroots advocacy teams in each of your state’s congressional districts. As part of this effort, you are charged with training branch public policy chairs on the types of objections or challenges they might encounter as they talk to fellow members about becoming involved in AAUW’s policy work.

The Task:
This exercise is set up in two parts. The first part will be a quick brainstorm of the types of obstacles or objections that you expect you might face in trying to persuade fellow members. This will also involve prioritizing what you think will be the most difficult and/or most common objections/challenges that will be raised.

In the second part of the simulation, you will practice strategies for addressing these common obstacles or objections. Note: Be sure to draw on the lessons of the presentation about Problem-Solution-Action and discovering a person’s issues, interests, and values.

Part 1: Brainstorm Objections/Challenges: (large group – 10 minutes)
Brainstorm a list of the most common objections or challenges you expect to hear from fellow members about not wanting to get involved in our policy work and grassroots advocacy actions. Then collectively prioritize that list into a top five.

Part 2: Overcoming the Objections/Challenges: (35 minutes)

Step 1: Creating a Strategy (small groups – 10 minutes)
Each small group will be assigned one of the top objections brainstormed above. You will have 15 minutes to discuss as a team the best ways to address the specific objection or challenge and then persuade the member to join a local grassroots advocacy team. Be prepared to have a person from your group actually demonstrate your response. Be sure to focus not only on what you will say, but also on how you will approach the member.

Step 2: Demonstrations (large group – 15 minutes)
Then, before the large group, a volunteer from each small group will have a conversation with a “member” played by one of the facilitators. The volunteer will approach the member, engage in a 1:1 conversation, and make an ask. Be sure to ask questions to determine where the member is at and what her main issue(s) is/are. (Remember: Problem-Solution-Action; issues, interests, and values.) Based on what is said, the volunteer will attempt to secure a commitment for joining a local grassroots advocacy team or another appropriate ask.

Step 3: Debrief (large group – 10 minutes)
After each group demonstrates their “strategy” for overcoming objections, there will be a brief period of feedback on what worked and what didn’t work.