

May 2019

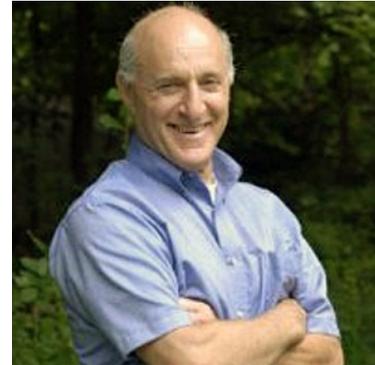
**Michael Jacoby Brown**  
training & coaching

*Helping organizations achieve their goals  
through recruiting and motivating others*

# Organizer's Edge ▶

Greetings!

## Door Knocking for an Election -- Michael Jacoby Brown



Last month, I proposed we see if neighbors knocking on doors of their neighbors might increase voter turn-out. I have been doing this the last month. Our town, Arlington, MA has a local election coming up on Tuesday, June 11. The two ballot questions ask if voters will raise property taxes to fund a new high school and increase local property taxes to fund Town services.

Arlington, MA is a close-in suburb of Boston. Most people are white, well-educated middle class and Democrats. There are also Republicans, Trump supporters, low income people and people of color. There are home owners, some long time owners, some new. There are renters, some affluent, some transient. Some are low income, some disabled and elderly, living in run down housing. My precinct, includes apartments and some low income rental housing. The people I met are like the people I have met in many places.

Here is what I found out:

**Many people are friendly. Some not so much.** Some give me their phone numbers and email. Others slam the door in my face, or more politely tell me to leave and won't give me their phone numbers. Some are glad that someone who can listen showed up at their door.

**It helps that I am a neighbor.** One woman told me, "If you I were a paid canvasser I would definitely not give you my phone number." I can go out when have just an hour or even a half hour, since I am going close to my home. I have immediate credibility since I can say "I live just over there." I can also follow up, since I hope to live here for years to come.

**I can register new voters easily.** I carry around a clip board with the voter registration list and voter registration forms. When I meet someone who wants to register, it takes two minutes to fill out the form. This also gives me their contact info so I can follow up. In the days I was out I registered 8 new voters. I also got to know something about them. Where they are from, where they work, and more. Since they live close by, it will be easy to stay in touch with them.

**I need a simple data base to keep records.** I found *Organize Together* thru a friend. It is free for me since I am a very small "organization." It is not perfect. (For example, the phone numbers don't have spaces in them, and I have to go to a new Edit page to put in addresses and notes.) I will learn more about how useful it is when I try to remind the 114 people on my list to vote.

**It helps to return to the same houses** I door knocked some of these house in the 2016 election. People remembered me. One lady who first thought I was the cable guy and told me to leave. Then saw my face thru her window and invited me in and offered me part of her dinner. And she was a Trump voter.

**It helps to bring useful information:** I came with information -- in this case about property tax abatements for low income elderly. People appreciated this and it got them to think if they knew someone who qualified.

**A few people will do more if you ask them..** One guy agreed to pass out flyers in his apartment building. Another agreed to host a "coffee" in her building.

If "all politics is local," as Tip O'Neil, former Speaker of the House, said, then maybe this primitive communication can make a difference in elections. Door knocking is not for everyone. I am an extrovert. I like meeting new people. I know this is torture for many.

My hope is that if enough people do this where they live it will make a difference. Not only in elections, where the result is often determined by the people who DON'T vote but also in strengthening community organizations over the long haul, as I find people who want to do more than vote. I can put people in touch with one another. For example, a neighbor, a local pastor and I are pulling together a neighborhood party in July. When people meet face to face, good things can happen. **Love to hear what you are thinking and doing in this area.**

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## Feedback Welcome

We want to hear from you, your reactions, ideas, what is at the edge YOUR "envelope." Just go to...

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### Who else you will hear from.....

We are just starting, but so far you can expect to hear what the following people are thinking:

Jessica Tang: Boston Teachers Union, AFT  
George Luse of the Mass Teachers Assn,  
Scott Reed with the PICO Network, ,  
Cathy Howell, in Oregon and El Salvador, formerly with the AFL-CIO,  
Caesar McDowell of the Interaction Institute for Social Justice,  
Diana Bell of Community and Labor United,

David Hernandez of the California Education Assn,  
Attica Scott, State Rep Louisville, Kentucky  
Bob Van Meter with the Local Initiative Support Corporation in Boston,  
Walter Davis, of the Tennessee, Health Care Coalition.  
Debra Askenase, of Community Organizing 2.0,  
Deb Fastino, of the Coalition for Social Justice in New Bedford, MA,  
Rebecca Gutman, with SEIU-1199,  
Tim Dean, of SEIU-1199,  
Mary Ochs, long time organizer in Los Angeles  
and others, hopefully, including YOU

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### Other Useful Links

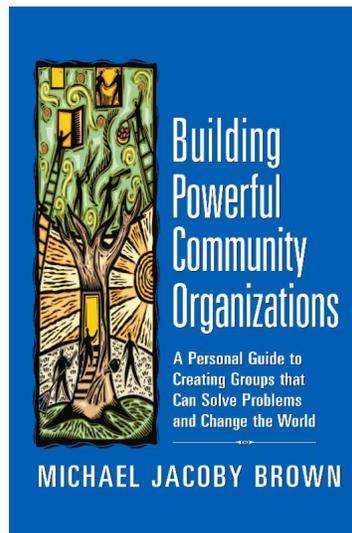
<http://michaeljacobybrown.com/>

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