

USING INFLUENCE TO CHANGE PEOPLE AND GROUPS OUTSIDE YOUR ORGANIZATION: MAKING A MINOR MIRACLE IN MONTANA

Gaining support from individuals, groups, and organizations outside your organization is one of the most challenging and complex influence situations. It is harder to find common goals, harder to get their attention and share of mind, harder to juggle the multiple currencies they care about, and harder to muster the resources to trade with. Think, for example, of the difficulties involved in getting competitors to agree on standards, getting a multi-organization alliance to collaborate, or convincing an industry association to take a stand that would benefit your organization.

Nonprofits have all these problems, and usually fewer resources to offer. And start-up nonprofits may have the biggest challenges of all. That is why we have chosen to provide a detailed account of how one person, new to an area and with almost no budget, built the complex and multimember alliances needed to move mountains—or as you will see from the example, get people to come to the mountain.

A POWERFUL INFLUENCER

Timlynn Babitsky found us, as she found so many people in the example that follows. She and her husband, Jim Salmons, left their executive consultant jobs in IBM's Object Technology Practice to pursue their dream of helping very small businesses succeed in transforming economies. To do this, they founded Sohodojo (www.sohodojo.com).

Their struggles to make it viable is a fascinating story in its own right, but as a means to doing it, they needed income, and wanted it to come from an activity that would help develop the infrastructure to support microbusiness development. You could say that no one needed influence skills more, and skilled Internet users that they are, they found our first edition of *Influence without Authority*. Not only did they put the ideas to use, but they contacted us and started an e-mail relationship (convincing Allan Cohen to join the Sohodojo advisory board).

Out of our correspondence, we learned about the example that follows, and asked Timlynn if she could recount it. Here, in her words, is the extremely instructive accounting of how she found an important opportunity; let Sohodojo fade in to the background to utilize her role running a local organization (NARFI, the North American Rural Futures Institute at Montana State University—Northern); identified a staggering number of key stakeholders; determined their currencies; made relationships; found, created, or invented resources they cared about; and made the complex exchanges that launched a mighty wind in Montana.

WIND OVER MONTANA WRITTEN BY TIMLYNN BABITSKY OF SOHODOJO AND NARFI

Sohodojo—founded by Timlynn Babitsky and Jim Salmons—is an independent, nonprofit applied research and development lab supporting solo and family-based entrepreneurs in rural and distressed urban communities. Rather than build a traditional community-based organization,

we are evolving Sohodojo as a lean, virtual organization based on cross-sector partnerships and project-based collaborations.

When we engage existing organizations, we practice a form of social entrepreneurship we call “change insurgency.” Our goal is to affect the trajectory of our partners’ organizations such that they help us to meet our objectives while we help our partners to meet theirs. We live, in other words, completely in a world of influence without authority.

We had relocated from urban, high-tech North Carolina to remote, rural north central Montana to help launch the North American Rural Futures Institute (NARFI) at Montana State University—Northern. As NARFI’s director, I decided to help promote the development of wind power as a “renewable crop” to be harvested by ranchers, farmers, and small towns throughout the Hi-Line of north central Montana. I would need a lot of influence to make a dent.

North central Montana is an 11 county region about the size of South Carolina. It is the historic location of a million antelope and 60 million buffalo that have all but disappeared. Today, the region remains sparsely settled with 10 of the 11 counties still designated “frontier” by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is classic cattle and wheat country, home to three Indian reservations, a number of Hutterite colonies, Montana State University—Northern, and over 5,000 farms and ranches.

Havre, a regional hub for north central Montana, is located 40 miles south of the Canadian border. It is a major staging center for the Burlington Northern Railroad and a key stop along the Amtrak passenger route between Chicago and Seattle/Portland. The area stretching out from Havre to the east and the west is called the “Hi-Line.”

With a population just under 10,000, Havre is officially designated a “micropolitan statistical area” in the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2000 data. It is large enough to have a broad, regional economic dynamic, yet small enough to maintain its remote, rural character. The nearest comparable population hub, Great Falls, is 120 miles south of Havre. Havre and north central Montana are, in other words, about as remote and rural as you can get in the continental United States. And it was, therefore, an ideal location for Sohodojo’s applied field research.

PLAY BOOK FOR CHANGE INSURGENCY

Jim and I consider Cohen and Bradford’s *Influence without Authority* as our most important “play book” for change insurgency. When we arrived in Havre, we immediately began developing our network of strategic stakeholders as we studied carefully “how things work” in this very rural, sparsely settled region.

Strangers at the gate; Seeking a Path In

Our first efforts didn’t work. We joined in as avid participants on a north central Montana team that was developing a region-wide 10-year proposal for a North West Area Foundation “poverty reduction” grant and partnership. We engaged community leaders and the business community of Havre in a dialog to introduce creative ideas for local economic development. We introduced a collaborative agenda between Sohodojo and the university that could enhance the school’s

image and reverse the tide of dropping enrollments. We met with local leaders to discuss local economic issues. We volunteered on local projects in town and we listened and learned much about local stakeholders' currencies. Try as we could, nothing clicked.

We were outsiders. So we decided to downplay Sohodojo and focus on the university-connected NARFI as the vehicle for our efforts to affect change along the Hi-Line. Next, we had to identify an agenda that was at a "tipping point"—challenging enough to be worth working on yet something that could be accomplished with hard work and commitment.

THE ANSWER MY FRIEND IS...

Montana is the fifth windiest state in the United States, yet in 2003, there was not a single viable wind farm operating, and only a handful of individuals widely scattered across the state were generating power with a farm- or ranch-based wind turbine. Montana is a fossil fuel energized state and the very powerful coal, oil, and gas stakeholders don't think much of wind power, renewable energy, and what they call "liberal, environmentalist guff."

Yet, early pioneers of wind power hailed from Montana. One of the first practical wind-energy machines was developed by the Jacobs brothers to power their remote Montana ranch back in the 1920s. With their invention, they went on to found the Jacobs Wind Electric Company in Minneapolis that built and sold nearly 50,000 machines over 30 years. The Jacobs turbine powered thousands of isolated farms and ranches all over the world until the 1950s. With this history, why wasn't Montana embracing the potential of its wind?

Back in the 1970s, there was a "wind rush" in the United States. Livingston, Montana, set up a number of wind turbine and blade design prototypes and tried to establish itself as the "test bench of the industry." Turbines blew over, blades were destroyed; all of them failed. This was big news and well publicized. Many Montanans became disenchanted.

In 2003, as soon as you mentioned wind power up here on the Hi-Line, people would recount the disaster in Livingston, shake their heads and say, "We tried wind power, but it just doesn't work here." No matter that the Livingston failures happened 30 years ago with 'test bed' prototypes. No matter that Montana is economically struggling to survive. No matter that wind power in Montana could generate enough energy to meet the needs of the entire state 70 times over, and that the excess could be sold to power hungry states on both the East and West Power Grids. Most folks just didn't believe in the potential of wind power for Montana.

But, wind is a constant element of life here. Everybody feels it, knows it, and has to deal with it on a daily basis. Folks brag about the fierceness of wind they have blowing across their land or the incredible wind-chills they have to endure during winter. Given its past, present, and future potential, Jim and I agreed that if we could accomplish anything of true value while I was under contract with NARFI, it would be to help put wind power on the map in Montana.

WHO'S ON FIRST?

A scan of the activist landscape of Montana identified several academic research groups and organizations that were working on green power projects. Most of the action was in the south of the state and efforts focused on a range of renewable energy agendas, not just wind specifically. However, the Montana Wind Working Group stood out as a new and increasingly active wind

power focused group. It was founded in the summer of 2003 by Montana Secretary of State, Bob Brown, was based in the capital, Helena, and was attracting members among state-level players. (See Figure 1 for a partial list of wind power stakeholders.)

Figure 1
PARTIAL LIST OF WIND POWER STAKEHOLDERS

Private	State	Local	Federal
Sohodojo (nonprofit)	NARFI—North American Rural Futures Institute at Montana State University -Northern (Timlynn Babitsky, Director)	North central Montana “Team” – Developing regional Proposal for 10-year poverty reduction grant	Wind Powering America (WPA; a key player in the MWWG); Larry Flowers, Technical Director
	Montana State University –Northern; administrators	Bear Paw Development Corporation (BPDC); Paul Tuss, CEO, and president of MEDA	National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)
	The Governor’s Office		
	Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf)	Housing Authority— for the Chippewa-Cree (Rocky Boy) Reservation	Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
	The Montana Wind Working Group (MWWG); Van Jamison, coordinator	<i>Havre Daily News</i> , Tim Leeds, senior reporter	Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI)
	Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)	Havre Chamber of Commerce	
	Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)	Randy Hansen, Havre regional director, Department of Commerce	
	Montana Co-op Development Center	Northwestern Energy	
	Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA)	Hill County Electrical Co-op	
	Montana Secretary of State’s Office’ Bob Brown, secretary		

The Montana Wind Working Group (MWWG) is an open group of industry, consumer, and government representatives promoting the development of wind energy in Montana. In October 2003, the group included executives from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC), the Governor's Office, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), and the Montana Secretary of State's Office.

The key focus of the MWWG is on "big wind" projects—wind farms and large turbine output for east and west power grid transmission with limited though active support for small wind projects (referred to as "ag-outreach") as a secondary agenda.

NREL has targeted Montana as a key state of interest because of the enormous economic potential of its wind energy and the nearly total lack of wind energy production. NREL's Wind Powering America (WPA) is a key player in the MWWG; Larry Flowers, the WPA technical director, takes an active role in the MWWG meetings and agendas.

In early October 2003, I had my first significant opportunity to get NARFI involved in promoting wind power. Van Jamison, the coordinator for the MWWG came to Havre's first annual "Ag Expo," set up a table showcasing NREL's "Wind Powering America" program and did a publicized presentation on wind power. The audience was minuscule—three farm couples, two Ag Expo organizers, and me, NARFI's director.

I talked with Van a long while afterward to find out more about the MWWG. By the end of the chat, I was invited to join the group and to come to the next meeting in Helena on October 30.

PLANTING THE SEEDS WITH POTENTIAL ALLIES

In preparation for meeting Van, two days before the Ag Expo I forwarded a press release for the upcoming dedication of two small wind turbines in Montana to a focused handful of potential stakeholders in the wind power domain. My note was sent to top administrators at the university, and chief executives of the Bear Paw Development Corporation (BPDC), the Housing Authority for the Chippewa-Cree (Rocky Boy) Reservation, and the Montana Co-op Development Center, as well as the senior reporter on the *Havre Daily News* (HDN). The *Havre Daily News* is a five-day-a-week afternoon newspaper of about 4,000 circulation. It is the key print source of information on news along the Hi-Line.

The cover note for this press release was purposely a 'teaser' stating: "WOW! What a story shaping up here...the future IS upon us!"

Within days, HDN senior reporter Tim Leeds called to set up a 15-minute interview on wind power. Armed with key data I had gotten from Van Jamison's presentation on the weekend, the 15-minute interview stretched into two hours. By the time Tim Leeds left, he had definitely been infected with 'wind fever.' What he had originally expected would be a few paragraphs had by now grown in his mind to a feature article, maybe a series. But, he had to convince his boss, the HDN managing editor.

I offered NARFI's complete support for this "team effort" and continued to feed Tim with key information about the economic potential of Montana wind. Every call and e-mail query from him was immediately answered. I sent him names with contact information for several people he might want to interview. And, I scrambled to help the HDN nose out a photo site when they were hard up against a deadline to get a good wind turbine photo.

On the first few e-mails to Tim, I copied Paul Tuss, CEO of Bear Paw DevCo (BPDC), who had been on the short list of e-addresses for the original 'teaser' note. BPDC administers programs to help improve regional economic conditions across 5 of the 11 counties of north central Montana. More than most organizations, BPDC fully understands the economic vulnerability of this region.

BPDC was the fiscal agent for the \$600K seed grant provided to north central Montana by the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAFF) to fund an 18-month, region-wide effort to develop a 10-year competitive proposal aimed at securing a partnership with and further funding from the Northwest Area Foundation to reduce poverty in the region. BPDC had been central to the entire effort; Paul knew first hand that the region was struggling to survive.

Paul is also president of the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA), an association of economic development professionals from across the state. He is a key supporter of the North American Rural Futures Institute, having been instrumental in securing the funding of NARFI and in getting me and Jim to relocate to Havre to launch the Institute.

After the first three e-mails to Tim Leeds with Paul Tuss on the "CC" line, I called Paul to discuss the "growing story" that Tim was writing. I asked if he wanted me to continue copying him on notes about Montana's wind power. He did. He also asked me to send him directly any information I had or found about the potential of harnessing wind power for economic growth and development. Which I did on a frequent but not too frequent schedule. I wanted his interest, not irritation.

On October 14, the *Havre Daily News* ran the first big piece on wind power. The front page splashed a huge photo of a wind turbine and the headline for its lead article: "New emphasis on wind power." The game was afoot!

UP STATE, DOWN STATE

At the Montana Wind Working Group meeting on October 30, among the many issues covered was the director of Wind Power America Larry Flower's discussion of the USDA Farm Bill 2004 grant cycle coming up.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the Farm Bill) among other things created a grant and loan program to help fund renewable energy projects in rural America. Section 9006 of the Farm Bill, is a five-year program to help farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses purchase renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements. Congress provided \$23 million to fund the program in each of fiscal years 2003 and 2004.

Larry's concern focused on the fact that in 2003 over \$21 million was awarded to 113 applicants from 24 states. Of these, 35 awards totaling \$7.4 million went to support wind power; most of the projects were located in Minnesota, followed by Iowa. Not a single project from Montana was in the funded list. Further, it appeared that Montana ranchers and farmers had submitted no applications for the funds. This was clearly an opportunity blowing right past Montana! And the Montana Wind Working Group had to get involved.

In the past when the grant cycle opened, it lasted about six weeks to grant application deadline. The group decided to put together a Farm Bill workshop to educate folks on the application process so they would be ready to roll when the grant cycle was announced. Presenters would include a wind energy/Farm Bill activist from Minnesota, WPA Director Larry Flowers from Colorado, and a USDA expert from Montana. With many more items on the meeting agenda, it was quickly decided that there should be two MWWG sponsored Farm Bill workshops presented back to back in January, one in Billings and one in Great Falls.

Bias comes in many guises, and in Montana, the boundaries between people crosscut like a window screen. The obvious ones—demarcated by physical, cultural, religious and wealth distinctions—are buttressed and emboldened by the less visibly distinct: political affiliation, ranch versus farm, and urban versus rural. But, in this, physically the fourth largest state in the United States, the most subtle distance between its citizens is an invisible line that cuts “us” in the south and west from “them” in the north and east—it's roughly equivalent to the mountains versus the plains, the developing regions versus the depopulating ones.

As I listened to this blue ribbon group of key stakeholders in wind power making plans to do two ag-outreach workshops in Billings and Great Falls, I was totally amazed!

Billings and Great Falls are two of the four cities in Montana with populations over 50,000. And, strangely enough, neither of them is eligible for any of these Farm Bill grant funds that are specifically targeting rural farms, ranches and small businesses. However, Billings and Great Falls have the two major airports in Montana. They are easily accessible to each other along the Interstate highway between them. It would be a quick in at one airport and out at the other for the out-of-state presenters, and everybody in the meeting that day (except one) hailed from “down state.” With a quick scan for nodding heads, the meeting facilitator was about to move on.

I immediately saw the opportunity to advance my agenda of promoting wind power in north central Montana! I had to move quickly or the opportunity would be gone.

As the only person in that room who wasn't recognized by the others (except by Van Jamison) and being the only person at the meeting that day who wasn't from “down state,” when I shook my head saying “Wait a minute,” people looked at each other trying to figure out who I was.

“Those two cities are both in the south of the state, just a few hours from each other. Why would you not take this workshop up to the Hi-Line? Where is the wind in Montana? And, where are most of the farms and ranches?” I had just thrown ice water on the heat of self-congratulation.

After a lot of uncomfortable shuffling and some mumbled comments about too expensive, too far, too inconvenient for the out-of-state presenters. Somebody finally said, “There’s just no interest up there. It would be a waste of time and effort.”

There was the key and I threw down the gauntlet. I knew that they would expect very little from such a small population.

“I will go back to Havre and see if there is interest for a wind power farm bill workshop on the Hi-Line. If by our next meeting I can guarantee you at least 30 people in that event, will you bring a workshop to Havre?”

Assuming that they knew the Hi-Line, the members of the group chuckled to each other and quickly agreed, “If you can guarantee us 30 people, we’ll bring a workshop to Havre.” The ball was in my court and now I really had to scramble.

TOES IN THE WATER

As soon as I got back to Havre, I made a list of key stakeholders and set about developing a plan. I had to quickly determine if there was enough interest in attending a workshop on wind power and the Farm Bill before the December 2 MWWG meeting. With Thanksgiving fast approaching, time would be short. This wasn’t an agenda I could accomplish alone; I needed a set of principal allies.

Using the leverage of the MWWG’s decision at the October meeting to expand its influence by inviting key stakeholders from around the state to join the group, as reflected by the wind power workshops, and working from my commitment to deliver representatives from organizations up on the Hi-Line, on November 3rd, I sent an e-mail to the Dean of MSU-N’s College of Technology, inviting him to join this most important group and copied the note to the MSU-N Chancellor. I suggested that Northern might want to have a wind-enthusiast faculty member join one of the MWWG subcommittees if the university expected to be moving into wind-energy research or curriculum any time soon. The response was barely lukewarm.

Another invitation went to Paul Tuss of BPDC. I noted that he might want someone from his staff at Bear Paw or someone from MEDA join one of the MWWG subcommittees to keep him and his Board of Directors directly informed on this very important state-wide agenda.

“The challenge for folks up here on the Hi-Line is to harness all the wind we have and turn it into dollars for sustained economic development.” I suggested. My invitation got no response. It was a busy time, and folks were focused on their own agendas.

Clearly, my key allies would not come from the university or “the usual suspects.” I had to move quickly, time was running short.

LINING UP THE FIELD MARSHALS: IS ANYONE OUT THERE?

On November 13, I sent high importance e-mail to 13 VIPs representing a broad spectrum of potential wind power stakeholders in the region. The subject line of the e-mail read: “NARFI: Request to Determine Interest for Farm Bill Workshop.” I knew each of the thirteen personally from our strategic network development early on when we first arrived in Montana and through shared participation at a number of meetings over many months. If anyone would be interested in the Farm Bill workshop I assumed it would be these regional leaders—from the Havre Chamber of Commerce, both nearby Indian reservations, and MSU-N top administrators, as well as executives in economic development, county commissioners, the Mayor of Havre, and so on.

The e-mail message was not long. It was an executive brief on the economic potential of wind power for Montana, the Farm Bill Section 9006, the Montana Wind Working Group and the proposed workshop. I was up front about needing to determine the level of interest we could generate on the Hi-Line for such a workshop. I asked four questions: (1) Do you think there’s interest up here? (2) Would you be willing to help encourage attendance? (3) Where do you think we should hold the workshop? (4) Who else should I approach with the same questions? The attachment was an official one-page USDA brief on the Farm Bill covering: Who is eligible, what kinds of projects are funded, and how does one apply.

I did not get a single reply to this message. Key stakeholders and opinion leaders were busy with their own agendas. It was clear to me that the *Havre Daily News* was likely to be my only ally, and together we would have to “take it to the people” to create grassroots support.

DO I REALLY HAVE AN ALLY?

Fortunately, I had developed a good working relationship with Tim Leeds of the *Havre Daily News*. But was it solid enough to ask directly for help on this agenda? I reviewed our exchange of currencies.

Two days after Tim’s article on wind power appeared on the front page of the HDN on October 14, I had sent him an e-mail commending him on the quality of the piece he had written and thanked him for the excellent coverage. Tim’s managing editor was copied on the e-mail. I suggested, in the message, that he print it out and give it to his boss so she could place it in his employee file. He really had done a nice job. I was impressed and said so.

When Tim expressed interest in a hybrid system he had heard about that was out on the Rocky Boy Reservation somewhere, I knew who it was that owned the hybrid system and who in my network could help us contact the owner. I told him that I was interested in interviewing the same fellow for an article on the NARFI web site.

Tim appeared to understand that Jim and I were trying to accomplish something important in Montana. In turn, we understood his need to turn out well informed stories on a daily basis, so we passed him information on issues that we knew he would find useful. We made sure that we provided the context information for any news clip we passed him from elsewhere. And, as I

heard about potential news worthy items for the Hi-Line, I would send Tim a “NARFI Heads Up” message.

The MWWG meeting was a little over two weeks away and one of those weeks was Thanksgiving. I had no choice but to ask Tim for help else I’d go down to Helena with my hat in my hand and my toes kicking dust.

GOING STRAIGHT TO THE TROOPS

On November 14, I sent Tim a personal e-mail along with a forwarded copy of the original message I had earlier sent to the 13 regional stakeholders. I wanted him to see whom I was trying to enlist for help on this agenda. I asked Tim what the chance might be of getting a small article in the HDN about this potential workshop with a phone number included where farmers/ranchers could call in to express their interest.

I told him: “The folks down state were really reluctant to consider bringing this workshop up to the Hi-Line...one of my goals is to get state decision makers to pay attention to north central Montana as being every bit as important as the more populous areas of the state.” Within hours Tim responded. He needed to fly the idea past his editor, who was out of town that Friday, but he would talk with me on Monday and the article could likely be accomplished.

By late afternoon Monday, November 17, I had not heard from Tim. I pinged him with a “NARFI Heads Up” note just to keep my request on his radar.

On Wednesday afternoon, Tim sent me a note to say that he was really swamped with a queue of things he had to write, but that he was interested still in providing some kind of coverage about the possible workshop on the Hi-Line. I understood the situation and the currency needed to get Tim’s help. I quickly provided a draft of the key information he would need to write his article and emphasized what a huge help even just a short article in a prominent location would be. This time I also noted how important the HDN was to the Hi-Line getting some attention from “down state.”

On Monday, November 24, after a flurry of phone calls, the *Havre Daily News* ran a front page story with headline: “Institute trying to bring wind power meeting to the Hi-Line.” The article was PERFECT.

CALL TO ARMS

With just the right message that would get the most attention, the HDN article lead-in read, “A local institute wants to know if people are interested in using wind to offset their power bills.”

Then came a range of provocative quotes from interview sessions I had had with Tim. I was presented as a keeper of the carrots through quotes saying that wind power could decrease farm/ranch energy costs, generate income, stimulate the economy, create jobs, and increase the tax base. I knew of many sources of grants and loans to help pay for small wind turbines, and the MWWG was planning to hold some workshops on this topic.

The article went on to describe how I had suggested at the MWWG meeting that a workshop be brought to Havre and was told that this would only happen if there was enough demonstrated interest to justify asking out-of-state experts to travel so far. To set the hook, Tim noted that although I had approached Hi-Line organizations for help, I really needed to hear from people directly because the stronger the case I could make for a Havre workshop, the more likely we'd be to get it.

The article was brilliant and it had immediate effect. As soon as the HDN hit the newsstands, NARFI started getting phone calls. I was delighted, but I also knew I still had a long way to go. With the Thanksgiving holiday now upon us, I had to ratchet up the volume of interest any way I could. The MWWG meeting was only one week away!

LEVERAGING NETWORK CONNECTIONS

With the article now available online at the HDN web site, I immediately began tapping into my growing network of wind enthusiasts in hopes they would help spread the word. Tuesday morning, November 25, I sent e-mail to Van Jamison and Gayle Shirley with a link to the online version of the HDN article and an update of activities in support of the Havre workshop. I wanted Van to see that things were definitely in play.

Gayle was assistant to Secretary of State, Bob Brown, and had been doubling as the MWWG secretary as well. Gayle brought public relations savvy to her job. She had recently been sending members of the MWWG occasional wind-issue related news clips and I hoped she would pass along the article in the HDN.

Paul Tuss of BPDC and Randy Hanson, the Havre regional director of Montana's Department of Commerce, were copied on the note; both had been on the executive brief mailing of November 13. They were the only two who had eventually responded with any interest in the workshop.

Randy had been particularly supportive. Two days before the HDN article came out, Randy had dropped by the NARFI office to assure me that he and his organization would do everything possible to help promote this workshop in Havre.

Since Randy was relatively known in the rural areas of Havre and Glendive, but less so outside of the region, I wanted to give him some visibility with Van and Gayle who were state-level players. In this note, I passed along Randy's offer of support for the workshop and particularly his suggestion that a workshop loop of Billings-Glendive-Havre-Great Falls would cover a large number of farmers and ranchers. Glendive is located in eastern Montana; it's a hub town servicing the windy plains that border North Dakota. Randy had worked there before coming to Havre.

I knew that Randy had access to some key stakeholders across a Havre-centered region as well as connections to the other regional commerce directors in Montana. I very much appreciated Randy's help and advice, and hoped that his offer of support would include passing the HDN article along through his network.

Within hours of receiving my e-mail, Gayle copied the HDN article and passed it along to everyone on the MWWG mailing list. Randy was out of town for the holiday, but I had (desperate) hopes for him mobilizing his network when he returned on December 1.

Despite it being the day before Thanksgiving, NARFI started receiving a swarm of phone calls, phone messages and e-mails. Over the weekend and even at home, I was getting phone calls and voice mail. The word was now definitely out there, and in even bigger ways than any of us ever expected.

Calls were coming in from all over the state. People reported reading about the workshops in newspapers in Helena, Billings, Great Falls, Missoula, Bozeman, and everywhere in between. Gayle Shirley began forwarding some of the news clips to members of the MWWG. It suddenly became clear that every major Montana newspaper had picked up the *Havre Daily News* story. Each paper ran a much shorter version of the original article and focused on a different aspect of the range of currencies—whichever would be most interesting to the paper’s readers. Two callers reported hearing about the workshop on their local radio station 400 miles to the west of Havre. We had certainly accomplished a clear case of network “virus” effect.

By the afternoon of December 2, I had 35 names of people who had called in with commitments to attend the workshops and we had dozens of names of folks with at least a general interest. When we got to the Farm Bill Workshop item on the agenda of the MWWG meeting, everyone burst into laughter as Van Jamison announced, “Okay, Timlynn, looks like you’ve got your Havre workshop.”

I had won the battle, now I had to win the war. My potential to engage these important stakeholders from here on out was definitely on the line. Randy Hanson, my early supporter, offered to help in any way he could to make the Havre workshop a success. His offer proved invaluable; he became my most important ally.

PACKING FOR BEAR

Workshop dates and agendas were yet to be set. To make sure that NARFI was in the thick of any information about the Farm Bill Workshop Tour, I volunteered to be on the core planning team, and to have NARFI be a statewide sponsor for the tour, as well as the host of the Havre workshop.

As soon as I got back to Havre, I drafted a battle plan—listing the key stakeholders, identifying their most probable motivations and currencies, and making notes on how to articulate messages. It was important to make sure that all those “promises” from the phone calls turned into bodies at the Havre workshop, but even more important to generate grassroots interest in the economic power of Montana’s wind.

The most crucial gatekeepers to the success of small wind projects in general, and certainly in Montana, are the rural electric co-operatives which control farm and ranch access to the energy grid. Access to sell excess wind power determines if wind projects will be economically viable. For anyone seeking to hook a power generator into the grid, the myriad regulation, restriction, and policy hurdles are daunting. Further, public utilities and rural co-operatives differ

significantly in their grid-access support. Investor owned utilities are required by both federal and state laws to allow small wind turbines—10 kW to 50kW—access to the transmission system. But, electric co-operatives are not at all required to allow such access. Those that do, make generating your own power much less economically attractive.

It is much easier to connect a small turbine to one of the Montana public utilities than to any of the 26 rural co-ops within the state. Since farms and ranches are generally serviced by rural co-operatives, the biggest hurdle to getting small wind projects going is the rural electric co-operative. But, co-ops are member-owned organizations. Policies, leadership, and boards of directors are all engaged at the will of the members. And, members are generally farmers and ranchers.

The MWWG is working from the top-down to get Montana Cooperatives to change policies regarding grid access and accounting. The Farm Bill Workshop Tour was an excellent opportunity to work the same agenda from the bottom-up. Clearly NARFI had to generate “wind-fever” among co-op members any place it could.

Havre and its surrounding region are serviced by both a public utility (Northwestern Energy) and the Hill County Electric Co-Operative. In its commitment to the communities it serves, the co-op houses a Hospitality Room and an ITV (Interactive Television) Room for community use.

As soon as the dates were decided for the Farm Bill Workshop Tour, I immediately contacted the Co-op facility office to reserve their Hospitality Room for the Havre workshop on February 4th. The co-op facility is well recognized and easily accessed. The Hospitality Room is located right inside the co-op building, just down a short hall from the general manager’s office. The Hospitality Room can comfortably accommodate about a 120-person event. I intended to fill that room with co-op members and to grab the attention of the co-op’s executives.

STAND AND DELIVER

If I could get at least 50 people there I felt it would show the folks from Helena that there was indeed interest in wind on the plains. I wasn’t sure how people generally responded to attending events requiring travel from their farms and ranches. Distances are huge in north central Montana, and outside of Havre, population is sparse and widely dispersed. Attending any of the workshops would mean a long drive to get there. In February, the weather could be a problem. I would start first with the people who had already called in or sent e-mail in support of the Havre workshop.

Workshop supporters each received a special invitation letter on NARFI letterhead, to let them know that due to their influence, the Farm Bill Workshop was coming to town. I personally thanked them for their interest, announced the schedule for all four workshops on the tour and especially invited them to join us in Havre. Each letter asked the receiver to bring along an interested other and included an RSVP postcard. The postcard asked folks to check off which workshop they wanted to attend and how many people would be in their group so we could be sure to have special information packets ready for each person who attended.

Next I turned to the list of key stakeholders I had already begun developing. I listed everyone I could think of across the five county region of the Hi-Line, who needed to know, who should want to know, or who could pass the word to a network of interested others. I added in any person I had come across who had been a “naysayer” to wind power.

When the mailing list was ready it included: tribal chairpersons, educators and agency heads of the two closest Indian reservations; colony leaders from the 12 nearest Hutterite colonies; 15 county commissioners; two town mayors; communication directors for two key associations with farmer/rancher membership; executives from four economic development agencies; head of the Havre Chamber of Commerce; top administrators and technical faculty from MSU-N; newspapers and radio station managers; and of course the general managers and engineering managers of each of the region’s three rural electric co-operatives and the owners of the Red Rock Powerline Construction Company.

Each of these very key, regional stakeholders received a personal letter from me. A personal invitation had some cachet, but the content of the letter had to provide some currency that would motivate them to attend.

Aside from general information about the workshop tour, and who was hosting it, I wanted to impress upon the stakeholders that Montana’s “world class wind power resources” were so significant, that experts from out of state were coming here to help us take advantage of Farm Bill funding. For some stakeholders, I added a unique sentence or two around a particular currency that might be of special interest. But in general, this was a personal invitation to come hear about the importance to Montana of its huge potential in wind power.

The key message was: “Montana is the fifth windiest state in the country yet to date, Montanans have not tapped into this free energy source. We hope that these workshops will generate projects in Montana, and that workshop attendees will be on the list of successful applicants in this year’s round of funding.”

I included a workshop agenda so recipients could see exactly who would cover what topics. More importantly, they could see that the presenters were VIPs from Colorado, Minnesota and down state Montana who were coming to Havre. (To keep mailing costs down, I didn’t include a stamped RSVP card. How many would find the invitation motivating was really a great unknown.)

Next I focused on sponsors for the food events and referenced my list of key stakeholders. Since anyone who wanted a small wind turbine would need financing, construction, electrical, and engineering help, I asked my assistant, Leah to skim through the Havre phone directory to see which businesses fit the small wind project puzzle. She indicated that she wanted to go get the sponsors.

I agreed to leave sponsorship efforts in her hands but only if she approached it from an IWA perspective. When Leah came to work as my assistant, I had given her an inscribed copy of “Influence Without Authority,” and suggested she take time to read it. I needed her to develop her skills in putting those ideas to use and here was an opportunity.

We agreed that she was to visit each potential sponsor armed with a file folder for that executive or local businessperson. In it there would be an executive brief on the potential of wind power in Montana, a full color (NREL) wind map of the state of Montana, a special invitation letter to join us at the workshop, and a final agenda for the Havre workshop presentations. She was to develop a short verbal presentation for potential sponsors explaining how they fit into the Farm Bill grants project puzzle. For bottled water, soft drink, and juice distributors, she just talked about Montana wind power, gave them a folder and asked for their support.

We had no trouble getting sponsors. Leah gathered sponsor-logoed pens, pencils, note pads and such, and enough money to cover the costs of snacks, coffee, and break time cookies. Two sponsors gave us “door prizes” which are important magnets up here on the Hi-Line. One bank requested an exclusive-bank sponsorship, which I decided would be counterproductive to the over-all goals of my plan.

Throughout the process, I kept Tim Leeds of the *Havre Daily News* informed on a regular basis through short e-mails and pointers to news items on the economic potential for wind power in rural places. In early December Tim and I had tracked down the hybrid wind-solar system owner on the Rocky Boy reservation to do a story for the Havre Daily News and the NARFI web site. The article helped keep interest in wind in the public eye.

Two days before the workshop, Tim was able to place a short article on the front page of the HDN with final details for the tour in general with particular focus on Havre. A local radio station interviewed me by telephone and played the interview clip regularly throughout the week before the workshop. Luckily the weather across the entire state co-operated throughout most of the week. We expected probably 70 people at the Havre workshop. But, we had no idea how many would actually come.

ICING ON THE CAKE

The Havre workshop was to start at 1:00 pm. The four presenters were flying or driving in from presenting the Billings and Glendive workshops the afternoon and evening before. They were scheduled to leave immediately following the Havre event to drive 120 miles south to do the Great Falls workshop in the evening. I knew they would be hungry and asked Van Jamison if he thought they would like to have lunch provided when they arrived in Havre. He was delighted.

Recognizing the opportunity to leverage the lunch into a VIP opportunity, I proposed that a handful of the most important regional “gatekeepers” be invited to join the presenters for this brief luncheon event. By providing a special “VIP Luncheon” right in the Hospitality Room there was a good chance, I thought, that these folks would actually come to the workshop event. But I wanted to be sure the presenters agreed, as the schedule was grueling enough already.

Given the okay by Van, I then sent personal invitations to 12 VIPs to come have lunch with the presenters. The invitation letters identified the experts that VIPs would meet, noted their very tight schedule, and suggested that there would be little time for questions during the workshop because of the tight schedule.

“To provide the most important renewable energy stakeholders in the Havre area the opportunity to talk with the workshop experts in a small, informal setting, NARFI is hosting a light lunch for the team and a few invited guests from 11:30-12:45 in the Hospitality Room of the Hill County Electric Co-operative. We would like to personally invite you to join us,” read the invitation. The 12 VIPs who were invited to attend included the general managers of each of the three key electric co-operatives; the mayor of Havre; Tribal Council chairmen from the two nearby Indian reservations; MSU-N’s Provost and the Dean of the College of Technical Science; the executive from bank who had been seeking an exclusive bank sponsorship for the workshop; Paul Tuss, Randy Hanson, and Jim Salmons representing Sohodojo.

I wanted to impress upon the workshop presenters that this VIP luncheon was providing an opportunity for them to help motivate regional gatekeepers to the ultimate success of small wind projects on the Hi-Line. I sent e-mail invitations to the five presenters attaching a copy of the VIP invitation letter and a list of the invited VIPs and the constituencies they represent.

Of the 12 VIPs invited, only half could attend. However, the most crucial gatekeepers—the three general managers from the rural electric co-ops and the chief engineer from Hill County Co-op—came for lunch. I made sure they had immediate access to Larry Flowers and John Guthmiller (Montana’s USDA Business and Co-op Services Director) inviting them to sit with Larry and John as soon as they had their plates full. Larry and John took good advantage of the opportunity. Bob Brown was in deep discussion with Paul Tuss and Randy Hanson; Lisa Daniels was talking with Jim. Even with short notice on the invitations, the luncheon event accomplished its goals.

FRUITS OF THE LABOR: A TORNADO OF INTEREST

Just after noon on February 4, three Hutterite colony leaders appeared for the workshop and settled in. By 12:40, there were only 10 more people in the room and I really began to worry. I didn’t need to. Within minutes, a flood of people were lining up at the door to sign in. By 1:00, the parking lots were jammed, the room was packed, the crowd spilled over into the hallways—but still they stayed to hear about wind power.

Rick Stevens, general manager of the Hill County Co-op couldn’t believe the turn out. He told his chief engineer to cancel his afternoon appointments and stay for the entire event. As more people crowded into the room, general staff from the co-op went out of their way to help us. They moved tables, rounded up more chairs and scrambled to put in a sound system so the crowd of people could hear the presenters. When people began spilling into the hallways and nearby conference room, co-op employees brought speakers into the hallways and set up remote listening stations.

Someone called the *Havre Daily News* and Tim Leeds quickly appeared; 30 minutes later the HDN photographer arrived. It was standing room only in a workshop on wind power; this was indeed BIG NEWS up here on the Hi-Line.

The official workshop tour attendee count was 40 in Billings, 50 in Glendive, 50 in Great Falls—and 245 in Havre! Larry Flowers and the other presenters were completely overwhelmed. Tim

Leeds' headline on the front page of the next day's *Havre Daily News* read: "Workshop on Wind Power Draws Big Turnout." What almost didn't happen had definitely turned out to be a roaring success!

BATTING CLEAN UP

There were lots of 'thank you' notes that were specially written and sent. I wanted each person who had helped make the event a success to know how appreciated their involvement had been. Tim Leeds and Randy Hanson had been particular allies.

As the general manager of the Hill County Electric Co-op, I especially wanted Rick Stevens to develop a feeling of "shared ownership" of this successful event. He was the new GM for this established organization and I understood the value of providing him with an opportunity to address his staff with my heartfelt appreciation.

"You have much to be proud of in the people in your organization. A "we're here to help" attitude was evident in every single person we met on your staff. They saw our predicament, assessed the challenge and did everything they could to support our situation. This speaks volumes about the Hill County Electric/Triangle Telephone Co-op. Please pass along a huge "thank you" from NARFI to everyone."

I also wanted him to begin viewing me as a potential ally, rather than a wind power adversary. I was candid about the reality of the wind power issue in Montana, was forthright about the bias evident on both sides.

"Hopefully this workshop and the information provided have sparked an interest to at least look into the wind energy issue further. It's no magic bullet, but there is good potential for some healthy economic development if we can harness the wind energy that blows so freely across Montana," was my message. I encouraged him to ask me for information as he pursued his own agendas. I wanted him to see the win-win of continuing to build a NARFI/Co-Op relationship.

The five presenters and the support staff at the Montana DEQ who put together the information packets were all sent e-mail 'thank you' notes with a link to the *Havre Daily News* article detailing the Havre workshop event. Within hours, e-mail came in from top-level stakeholders at NREL congratulating us on an incredible success.

We had definitely sparked wind fever on the Hi-Line, but without continued fanning of those flames, I was afraid that the spark would die out. We still had a huge challenge to take care of: only 65 special information packets had been available at the Havre workshop. We needed to first motivate the packet preparers in Helena to send us more information packets, and then come up with a plan for distributing them to 180 people without incurring the huge cost of mailing. But that's a whole other story.

SIGNS OF IMPACT

I continue to leverage what has already been set. Whether fever will translate into small wind turbines and Farm Bill funded projects in 2004 on the plains of Montana is grassroots work to be done.

There are signs “out there” that the wind fever spark has long term potential. Daily I get a phone call, e-mail or someone dropping by the office asking for wind power or turbine information. The Havre workshop and the shock it generated by the volume of attendee response has sent the message all over Montana, that “maybe there really is something to this Montana wind energy stuff.”

A year ago, none of the following would have happened. Each has occurred since the Havre workshop:

1. Commissioners from both Liberty and Hill counties called NARFI seeking a stack of Farm Bill Workshop information packets.
2. Over 70 people attended the Chester (pop. 893; 62 mi. west of Havre) small wind turbine dedication on February 24.
3. Babitsky invited to do wind power presentation for Economic Development Council of Valier (pop. 511; 134 mi west of Havre).
4. Babitsky invited to teach renewable energy workshop at Stone Child College “teepee fever” (Rocky Boy Indian Reservation).
5. Tribal Councils at both Rocky Boy and Fort Belknap Indian reservations assigned official representatives to MWWG.
6. Montana Farmers’ Union offers follow-up conference on small wind power for farms and ranches (4/29/04).
7. Bear Paw DevCo hosts web-cast on “Wind Energy: Opportunities for Local Governments” at Hill County Co-Op ITV Room (3/24/04).
8. Liberty County Commissioner, Don Marble, and Bear Paw DevCo Community Planner seek NARFI mini-grant to attend Minneapolis conference on community wind projects.
9. Top administrators from both near-by tribal colleges are looking to jointly develop renewable energy curricula.
10. When 20 town, county and state level stakeholders met to list Havre’s priorities for its future, support for wind power was #2.
11. Wind-related headline and lead articles appear regularly on the front page of the *Havre Daily News*:

- a) Energy group targets power transmission needs (2/20/04)
 - b) Wind power draws crowd in Chester (2/25/04)
 - c) Havre residents meet to identify priorities (2nd place tie - support wind power) (3/30/04)
 - d) Mayor Rice interested in wind power (4/12/04)
 - e) Wind power potential obvious on the Hi-Line (4/13/04, editorial)
12. Hill County Electric Co-op was so amazed by the turnout at their facility when NARFI hosted the Farm Bill Wind Power Workshop there and then so overwhelmed by inquiries afterwards that they felt they had to respond with some something significant or get left behind (!). So they decided to host a wind power seminar from the Rural Electric Co-ops (RECs) perspective. (Note RECs are perceived as not supporting renewable energy across the US which just isn't so we're addressing that one too but that's another IWA story). The HCE Wind Seminar was held on July 19th, 2004. Over 80 people, mostly Hill County Co-op members, attended. This is the first wind interconnection meeting organized and put on by any of the 930 rural electric co-operatives across the country!

One of the most unexpected and rewarding outcomes was a phone call on April 16 from Trudy Forsyth, head of NREL's Small Wind Systems (ag-outreach) agenda. She called to offer NREL resources that would be of help in follow up activities to NARFI's wind power ag-outreach. In the course of our conversation about the goals and strategies I'm using up here on the Hi-Line, a light bulb went off in Trudy's head. She realized that the grassroots, bottom-up approach to organizing multiple stakeholders and generating public interest could help her efforts at the national level. I'm pleased to report that this case study along with a mini-course based on and citing the strategies and tactics of *Influence Without Authority* will be used to develop a handbook for grassroots organizers and ag-outreach on wind power.

EPILOG

Montana is huge, with complex problems that need innovative solutions. Because of the great distances and the inertia of rural isolation, change comes slowly to the Hi-Line. All these things that make innovative change difficult in north central Montana also make it an ideal location to give the "acid test" to our growing abilities to apply the strategies and tactics of influence without authority.

We used strategic networks of diverse stakeholders to influence behavior at the grassroots level around a complex issue. We carefully identified and negotiated buy-in with key gatekeepers and opinion leaders. We identified the currencies that might motivate interest, and continually looked for the win-win strategies that would accomplish our respective and shared agendas. Reflecting on this case now, we see that the ultimate win-win was on behalf of Sohodojo and north central Montana. For our part, we extended our appreciation for, and skills in applying, influence without authority. For north central Montana, we've lit fires of interest in the

development of wind power that will help to shape the landscape and regional economic health of this area long after we've moved on to the next stop in Sohodojo's journey.

While we don't exactly know where our next stop will be, one thing is certain—wherever it is we'll be working in the world of influence without authority.

CONCLUSIONS BY COHEN AND BRADFORD

Timlynn Babitsky used a storm of influence concepts, skills and techniques to accomplish an amazing energizing of a community, and it appears that it has much wider potential impact. She used just about everything we emphasized in the recent edition of *Influence without Authority*. Because her accounting is so complete, we will only highlight the lessons that you might take to any important project you want to implement. However difficult your situation, it probably isn't up against more skepticism, negative tradition, geographical dispersion, or fewer monetary and organizational resources. And you are probably better known to the people you have to influence than she was.

- Finding an issue you care passionately about
- Locating all the relevant stakeholders
- Seeing everyone as a potential ally
- Using any connections to them you have
- Seeking any natural advantages you possess from your organizational position
- Listening carefully, both to learn and to establish relationships
- Discovering their agendas, valued currencies
- Using any and every communication device, including the newspaper to spread (individualized) variations of your message
- Helping a key player figure out how to influence his boss
- Expanding the resources available to you
- Providing information, access, responsiveness, homework to relieve time pressure for stakeholder, new contacts for people
- Building credibility through hard work that delivers
- Flexibility and PERSISTENCE

More power to you.