What is relational organizing?

The theory is simple: Organizing is about relationships. Reaching out to someone you already know—who trusts you—is more effective than having a conversation with a stranger. This isn't new, but we know that it works.

Why it works

Increased reach

We can't ask someone to commit, register, or prepare to vote if we can't get in touch with them. In today's political climate, the messenger can matter just as much as (if not more than) the message itself. That's one reason this strategy is so effective—a potential volunteer or voter is more likely pick up a call from someone they know than from someone they don't.

Increased effectiveness

We know that social pressure can be an effective tool for getting someone to take an action—and few people can exert more pressure than a friend or family member. Asking your niece to come canvass or phone-bank with you next Thursday is more effective than a stranger asking your niece to take the same action.

And because the ask comes from someone they trust, instead of spending valuable time trying to develop a relationship in order to make an ask, you can take advantage of an existing relationship to get that person to register, vote, volunteer, or whatever you need them to do.

Why it's important

In the last midterm election, nearly 60% of Americans who were eligible to vote decided not to—that's a higher percentage than the portion of the country who voted for either major party candidate in the last presidential election.

This year, we can't just rely on the folks who are already committed and vote on a regular basis—we need to expand the electorate. We need to turn allies and supporters into voters, especially in midterm elections. We can't leave anything on the table.

And it's this kind of organizing, using our own networks, will have a higher impact on turnout than having a stranger try to reach and mobilize that community from outside of it.

Friend Mapping

This simple activity will help you identify those in your network who need to hear from you the most and help get them to commit to vote in November. No matter where you live, you can have an impact on the upcoming election— and not just within your own community, but in pivotal districts and states across the country.

In an election cycle where races are being decided by the slimmest of margins, we can't leave any votes on the table this year—especially those of the people we know. Talking to people in our own networks is one of the most effective methods for increasing voter contact and turnout rates, so we're going to use this tactic in the places where our efforts will have the most impact.

Here's how it works:

Step 1

Focus your efforts. You don't want to just write down everyone you know, so think about who in your network votes and who doesn't.

People who vote regularly are already bought in and will need the least amount of your time. They just need a quick reminder to make sure their registration is up to date and that they have a voting plan.

Those who don't vote regularly, especially outside of Presidential elections, are those you should prioritize and spend the most time on. It may take more than a couple conversations to get them to commit to vote, so use this guide to help you prepare.

Step 2

Write down your contacts. Take 10-15 minutes to brainstorm all the folks you know who might not be planning on voting this year, and then write down their names and phone numbers in the contact sheet below.

Some questions for you to consider as you're forming your contact list:

- Who would you send a holiday card to?
- Who chats with you after church?
- Which family members sometimes forget to vote or say they get too busy?
- What issues might impact the lives of your friends, family, or co-workers?

Use OFA's priority districts as a reference for places where your calls can make the most impact. See OFA's target districts and states to find information on the incumbent's voting record, the platform of their challenger, local news articles, and resources for your friend or family member to register to vote, find their polling place, and volunteer for the local campaign.

Check out OFA's House priorities

Check out OFA's Redistricting Priorities

Step 3

Collect resources. Make sure you're prepared with the right information and next steps for your friend or family member to take. Each of the priority areas linked above in Step 1 will lead to pages that include a handful of great resources, including the following:

- Check your voter registration status
- Register to vote
- Commit to vote
- Find your polling place and other Election Day information
- Look up your congressional district

Step 4

Say What? Now that you have a list of contacts to reach out to, think of what kinds of points would be the most effective for activating them to turn out and vote in November. What are some of the issues that your friend or family member cares about most? For example, if access to affordable health care is something they really care about, talk with them about how the issue impacts you both and where their elected official stands on the issue.

Use the information listed on OFA's House priority pages (see Step 1) to be ready to talk about what's at stake in your friends' district or state.

Pro-tip: Try to avoid simple Yes / No questions like "Will you vote this year?" Instead, be prepared with a few resources (see Step 3) and try using questions that can help address some of the typical challenges that can prevent people from voting. For example:

- When was the last time you updated your voter registration status?
- Will you be in town on November 6 or will you need to prepare to vote beforehand?
- Do you know if you state has an early voting period (or even vote by mail), and if so, do you know when that is?
- Will you vote early or on election day?
- Is your polling location close enough to walk or drive?
- Do you plan to vote before or after work?

If you're in a group setting for this exercise, consider breaking into pairs to practice what you'll say, give feedback to one another, and refine your ask—commit to vote.

Step 5

Make the call (or text!). Once most folks feel relatively comfortable with what they're going to say, have them start reaching out to their contacts. They should feel free to catch up with them first and then let them know why they're calling. Touch on the impact that their election can have on the issues we all care about and that we really need everyone to turnout this year.

These materials were created with help from the team at the Analyst Institute. For more background on relational organizing and other GOTV research, please check out their website.

Family & Friends Contact Sheet

Scientific research shows that adding friend-to-friend contact to traditional GOTV is a promising way to turnout more voters. This is meant to be a list of people you're committing to get to the polls this year. So keep this list and put it somewhere you can see it—like on your fridge!

Directions: Please call and/or text 2-5 friends, family members, or neighbors who may need your reminder to vote.

Your name   **Phone number**

Name of Friend or Family member	Contact Method *E.g. Text, FaceTime, In-person*	Issue of Interest *E.g. Health care, climate*	Priority Location *E.g. Colorado, CA-49*	Outcome(s)
				☐ Spoke to voter ☐ Left voicemail ☐ Text w/response ☐ Text, no response
				☐ Spoke to voter ☐ Left voicemail ☐ Text w/response ☐ Text, no response
				☐ Spoke to voter ☐ Left voicemail ☐ Text w/response ☐ Text, no response
				☐ Spoke to voter ☐ Left voicemail ☐ Text w/response ☐ Text, no response
				☐ Spoke to voter ☐ Left voicemail ☐ Text w/response ☐ Text, no response
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				☐ Spoke to voter ☐ Left voicemail ☐ Text w/response ☐ Text, no response
				☐ Spoke to voter ☐ Left voicemail ☐ Text w/response ☐ Text, no response

Reminder: *Prioritize like-minded people who might not be planning on voting this year, and people who live in priority districts or states.*