



ORGANIZING A CONVERSATION ON TECHNOLOGY AND REVOLUTION

WHAT DO WE DO?

The problems the human race faces pose the greatest threat to its existence in history.

If we can use the technology we have appropriately, plan and develop it intelligently and control it democratically, we can solve those problems.

What do we do?

Your agreement to help organize a convergence of this type is so appreciated and, we are convinced, will really help move us all forward. We have prepared this short "guide" to help you organize your session.

The "Frame"

Capitalist culture tries to prevent us from envisioning a future. When we think about the world we want, we are made to feel silly, frivolous and impractical. Even when it isn't frowned upon, visioning is still viewed as a "fun exercise" with no real impact on our lives.

This is because capitalism can't envision a future. It can't do long-term planning. It's an irrational system completely out of control and its culture reflects that.

When you seriously discuss what a future society looks like, you are engaging in behavior that threatens that system. You're thinking in a revolutionary way.

During this convergence, we want to do just that.

During this entire discussion, we want you to keep in mind the world you would like to see. Don't compromise...envision everything as you want to see it. Let that frame of your participation.

GOAL AND DESCRIPTION

You're talking about how technology and fundamental social change relate to each other and what we have to do with technology to bolster the movement for fundamental social change.

The main goal is to freely converse about technology and revolution and, if the conversation is truly free, you'll be surprised at the richness of the outcome. The problem is that, in our movement work, we don't often get to just talk about this theme. We want people to talk but we also want to get someplace concrete with this conversation.

We want people to think about how technology relates to movements for social change and what we need to do to get democratic control of technology. What, in other words, is the strategy to follow? This is obviously not easy - that's why it hasn't been answered yet - and we don't expect anyone to come up with *the* answer. We're looking to start the conversation.

Nobody expects this conversation to be very directed. People are going to say what's on their minds and that, in itself, is an important experience and contribution. But keep in mind that, at some point, we need to think about a strategy.

A convergence session can be as long as you think possible and useful but most will be at least three hours and many will be all day sessions.

SUGGESTIONS ON ORGANIZING THE MEETING

You can organize these things any way you see fit but here are a few ideas to help you.

DO AN INTRODUCTION

This would probably be a quick explanation of what we're doing and a run-down of the day. Take questions but make sure they are about the purpose and day...not the politics or analysis.

You can be sure that people are going to want to discuss the politics before you even get started. Men, in particular, have a tendency to do this.

If you want, by all means go around the room for self-introductions. This will work well with smaller convergences. Once you get to about 100 people or more, introductions can be tough and time-consuming so you may want to have some kind of badge for people to write their names on. Finally, have your facilitator(s) and note-takers (scribes) meet and talk about what's going to happen.

Who's going to do what. Surprises are often wonderful but something going wrong and derailing the process is not the kind of surprise you want.

REVIEW YOUR QUESTIONS

As part of your intro, you may want to review some of the questions you'd like discussed. These are very general guideline type questions. For instance, here are four possible major thematic questions:

- Describe the world you would like to see. Can technology make that world happen?
- Most people recognize that capitalism is in crisis. Does the revolution in technology affect this crisis? If so, how?
- How does the technological revolution affect jobs, work, and the daily reality of workers?
- How does the technological revolution affect us as consumers? What does this mean for capitalism?
- Is there a relationship between the revolution in technology and the developing social and political revolution today? If so, what does this look like?

This is all up to you. You can just have one question or several and they don't have to be these. Not at all. Make up your own based on what you know about your participants. Your discussion facilitator and other people leading the convergence can decide and, during the process itself, people may want to go in particular directions or take up specific questions.

The one suggestion we would make: Ask people to take these themes at a time and try to stick to the the theme being discussed until you're ready to move on. Also make sure all the people in every group have the chance to express themselves on it. While "open discussion" may feel good at first, it will become frustrating and demoralizing in the end. People seek some outcome.

We have some ideas about that in the section of reporting and **we strongly urge you to look at that section before finalizing your questions here.** There are a couple of things we need in your report.

FORM YOUR GROUPS

Each group should have a leader and a scribe who should be working on a computer to take notes on any consensus or major discussion going on.

You want every group to develop some ideas everyone agrees on but you don't want them bogged down in wording, etc. It's not necessary to agree on everything and not necessary to agree on the exact wording of your agreements. We would like you to work on two outcomes:

- Write a two or three sentence statement on "How should technology support revolution?"
- Define three steps that you think our movement should follow to get there.

There will frequently be no agreements reached. This is not a failure; it's a reflection of where we are as a movement. Just hearing the different perspectives and understanding them is a huge step forward: possibly the most important step in this process. If it's possible, though, we want groups to record major differences. So if your group shows two or three prominent perspectives on a question, please record all of them.

You should probably make all this clear before sending people into their groups.

REPORT BACKS

There should be some way of integrating what people have talked about and gotten to consensus on.

You can do this through reports back or emailing of outcome notes or even a short meeting of scribes. **In any case, we'd like you to prepare a report on these discussions so group reports are going to be important and you're going to need to include them in some larger report.**

It might be a good idea to have discussion of each report by the entire group. In some groups, depending on size, that might not be possible.

REPORT UPLOAD

Someone specifically selected should email your report to info@mayfirst.org and it will be made available via the website. Please let people know how to access the web site (<https://techandrev.org/>) so they can view all the reports.

SNACKS AND FOOD

We mention this here because it's so important but people frequently forget about it. If people aren't comfortable (and hunger is uncomfortable), they don't concentrate as well. There is nothing trivial about this. Experience tells us that having refreshment for people greatly improves meetings of this type and also shows that you, as organizers, are thinking about their well-being.

THE FUTURE

Feel free to move on any way you'd like - make that part of our report if you want. Some may opt for future convergences or smaller types of meetings or an email list (which we can set up for you). People can also opt to just go and let the experience sink in, reporting to their organizations and networks and letting the conversation affect those conversations.

SUGGESTIONS ON RUNNING A SMALL GROUP

1. Make sure you have a chairperson and scribe - these may have been pre-selected.
2. Look around your group and notice women and people of color. Make absolutely sure all of them speak and that, if necessary, they are given preference.
3. Remember: You're talking about how technology and fundamental social change relate to each other and what we have to do with technology to bolster the movement for fundamental social change.

4. Try to reach some consensus on some points but sometimes this won't be possible. Some groups may be unable to reach consensus on anything. All of that is understandable and expected. It's still a positive experience.
5. Do **not** get bogged down. If people can't seem to agree on something, break off that conversation. Conversations extend when there's no possibility of agreement. Just start talking about another aspect of the point or another point.

FINALLY

Forgive us if we sound preachy or like we're talking down to you but this should be said.

The priority for you as an organizer is to make sure people enjoy themselves. There are other purposes, of course, but you want people to leave with a positive and empowered feeling. You want everyone to think they are important to this group and that this is hope for us all if we keep doing these kinds of processes.

There is no correct line here. There is no victory in one line winning over another. There is no reason to split or feel that someone in that room is your opponent. We're getting together to talk to each other and listen to each other...for a start...as a first step.