



strategy + support for  
musicians creating change

Air Traffic Control

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## CREATIVE WAYS TO WORK WITH AN ORGANIZATION (WITH WHATEVER AMOUNT OF TIME A MUSICIAN CAN SPARE)

Below we've outlined creative and effective examples of strategies for working with organizations based on the amount of time an artist may have to work on the project (in order from lowest time commitment to the highest). Please note that while allowing nonprofits to table at shows can be effective for specific activities such as fan-based voter registration campaigns, it is otherwise not effective unless a musician asks fans to go to the table.<sup>1</sup>

1. Sign on to an organization's existing campaign, letter, or press release. Examples include The Gulf Restoration Network's letter urging immediate action to save Louisiana's coastal wetlands signed by over 200 musicians, artist's involvement in the Save The Internet campaign and many more.<sup>2</sup>
2. Provide a personalized written or videotaped message of support to an organization or campaign that can be used in newsletters, public service announcements, fundraising appeal, and/or post quote to the band's website.
3. Give a pair of tickets to an organization to use as a "thank you" to a special staff, board member or volunteer for their hard work.
4. Donate an item (signed merchandise, gear, backstage passes, etc) for auction. There are companies that can manage an auction and give all of the proceeds to a charity. If working with a particular organization, make sure that they talk to some of these companies as well—they may take a commission, but the recipient organization will often get more money for the donated item than if they were to do the auction on their own (i.e. on eBay).
5. Donate a song (or other media) for a benefit album or digital download. Digital downloads can be used to raise money and to ask fans to take an action. There are many examples of these efforts that have been increasingly successful that we can share with musicians and managers.
6. Engage fans in action through social media tools (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter) and/or website. For example: Blog or tweet about an issue or organization. Be sure to include links to where followers/fans can go to learn more or to take action.

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<sup>1</sup> A voter validation study by the New Organizing Institute on the work of HeadCount shows that 72% of the people the organization registered at concerts voted--11% more than the national average: [http://atctower.net/atc/tiki-read\\_article.php?articleId=591](http://atctower.net/atc/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=591)

<sup>2</sup> More information can be found here: <http://www.healthygulf.org/> or <http://www.savetheinternet.com/>

7. Allow organizations to table at a concert—but only if a musician is willing to make announcements from the stage as this is what will drive fans to the tables. ATC has done extensive research on tabling and concert-based fan engagement. We've found that tabling is best for voter registration activities when coupled with an announcement from the stage. Another effective strategy at concerts is to use mobile and phone-based strategies. See our reports on this in the research section of the toolkit.
8. Raise money through ticket or merch sales by adding a surcharge as a donation. There are a number of interesting ways to do this, see some examples and recommendations on ticket surcharges on ATC's research and reports that can be found later in this toolkit or on our website.<sup>3</sup>
9. Participate in a press conference or call with an organization. This can be done from home or on the road.
10. Dedicate a day, a show or part of a tour to an organization or issue. Lending a band's name to a day of action or donating the proceeds from a show or online sales are all great ways to support an organization or issue. Example: Support anti-war organizations and dedicate a show and proceeds from tickets or merch sales on Veteran's Day.
11. Write a letter of support/opposition, an outreach letter or an Op-ed for a cause or issue campaign. An organization can usually help strategize and fact-check. Check out Damian Kulash of OK Go's Op-Ed piece on Net Neutrality.<sup>4</sup>
12. DJ a party. Often playing a concert that an organization is producing can be frustrating as so many of the production elements to make a great show are not in a musician's control. Those musicians who also DJ can help organizations energize their events by playing recorded music. The production elements needed to DJ are so much lower than what is needed for a live band.
13. Design/Co-design a product to benefit an organization/project. For example design a t-shirt for/with a nonprofit that can then be sold on-line and on tour.
14. Take a trip to learn more about an issue or set of issues. For example, Cape Farewell takes artists on trips to investigate cultural response to climate change, Love Hope Strength hosts musical pilgrimages in support of building cancer centers, and ATC hosts Artist Activism retreats to New Orleans to learn about a range of issues the music community cares about.<sup>5</sup>
15. Write a song for a specific issue or organization. The song "Walk On" by U2 and the song 'Unplayed Piano', by Damien Rice and Lisa Hannigan were both written about

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<sup>3</sup> <http://atctower.net/atc/tiki-index.php?page=research+and+reports>

<sup>4</sup> Read it in its entirety here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/05/opinion/05kulash.html>

<sup>5</sup> More information can be found: <http://www.capefarewell.com/>, <http://www.lovehopestrength.org/> and [http://atctower.net/atc/tiki-read\\_article.php?articleId=358#The\\_Music\\_Community\\_and\\_New\\_Orleans](http://atctower.net/atc/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=358#The_Music_Community_and_New_Orleans)

Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's (imprisoned) Nobel Peace Laureate and Leader of a Nonviolent Revolution for Freedom.<sup>6</sup>

16. Organize fellow artists to do any of the above.
17. Organize a concert to raise funds and/or awareness about an issue. This of course is the most time consuming and complicated recommendation but can be effective when done thoughtfully and strategically. See ATC's suggestions for large-scale events that can lead to true impact based on our Executive Director's experience producing the Tibetan Freedom Concerts.<sup>7</sup>

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Air Traffic Control (ATC) exists to help musicians play an effective, unique and vital role in the promotion of social justice. Musicians and managers established ATC five years ago to assemble an experienced and trusted team of leaders, resources and tools that would help them to create more effective social change collaborations with each other and with social justice organizations. As a result, ATC became an artists' air traffic control—one that develops capacity, efficiency, and coordination to produce stronger and more creative social change partnerships. For more information, please go to [www.atctower.net](http://www.atctower.net).

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<sup>6</sup> More information can be found here <http://www.actionburma.com/> and here <http://www.aungsansuikyi.com/about/bono-speaking-about-aung-san-suu-kyi/>.

<sup>7</sup> See ATC's Blog Live Earth + The Tibetan Freedom Concerts: Music's Ability To Influence here: [http://atctower.net/atc/tiki-read\\_article.php?articleId=588](http://atctower.net/atc/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=588)