

TACTIC INFILTRATION

The people destroying the planet don't just have names and addresses, they also have gatherings. When they gather near you, stop in and see what they're up to.

CONTRIBUTED BY

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Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

"REMEMBER: IT'S NOT THE AUDIENCE THERE IN THE ROOM THAT YOU'RE MOST CONCERNED WITH."

Cops and other agents of the state are always infiltrating our get-togethers, both for intelligence gathering and in order to disrupt our work. Given how successful this tactic has proven when used against us, it only makes sense that we would respond in kind — and do it with more style.

Why sneak into a meeting or conference? Maybe simply to see what's going on, or to play a trick of some sort. You might not even know in advance what the trick will be. In 2004, Mike Bonnano and I snuck into the Heritage Foundation luncheon for conservative think tanks just to get acquainted with that world, and on the spur of the moment, seeing Ed Meese sitting next to the podium, I stepped up to the unguarded microphone and proceeded to nominate him for President. His reaction on camera is priceless.

Again and again, the Yes Men have successfully impersonated corporate presenters at conferences and pulled off some very revealing stunts.

A completely different approach is to stage a guerrilla performance in the middle of the keynote speech of an evil lobbyist. That's what health care activists did at a major insurance industry conference in 2009 (see: [STORY: Public Option Annie](#)).

Always make sure that one or more of your team is filming your action. Remember: It's not the audience there in the room that you're most concerned with, but the audience who will see your

POTENTIAL RISKS

Depending on the meeting you're infiltrating, this tactic will expose you to different levels of risk. When planning your infiltration, assess the risks you're undertaking and, if the risks feel worth it, do what you can to mitigate them (see: [PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care](#)). Use the buddy system, roleplay de-escalation scenarios, and have someone on-hand to document any confrontation. Try to maintain your composure and a sense of humour, and don't respond in kind to aggression or insults.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Hacking Apartheid

footage, read the press release, or benefit from the secrets you've liberated from behind closed doors (see: PRINCIPLE: Play to the audience that isn't there).

In many cases, at least for run-of-the-mill conferences, the actual sneaking-in is so easy it's almost an afterthought. Simply walk up to the table near the entrance that's full of name badges, choose one, and say it's yours (and, if asked, say you've forgotten your business cards). Take the conference materials you'll be graciously offered along with the badge, and proceed inside, or, if you like, to your nearest copy shop to make a bunch of other badges with other names for your pals. Alternately, come to the table after the initial registration rush is over, perhaps midday (when only a few tags are left, probably belonging to no-shows), observe the name on a tag, and then run out and print a few business cards (a sheet of pre-perforated cards and a copy shop will do the trick). Return and claim your badge.

Happy infiltrating!

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LEARN MORE

How to Crash a Conference

Yes Lab, Destructibles, 2011

<http://destructibles.org/destructable/how-crash-conference-yes-lab>

- Public Option Annie
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Media-jacking
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Develop an inside-outside strategy
- Do the media's work for them
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Seek common ground
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Hacking
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Action design, Direct action, Humour, Media, Pranks