

IGNITE TOOL: Keeping It Going: How to Not Give Up When It Gets Hard

Starting something is exciting. Keeping it going? That's the hard part. Whether it's a STEAM club, a community project, or an advocacy campaign, this toolkit will help you push through challenges, stay motivated, and build something that lasts.

Why Projects Lose Momentum (And How to Prevent It)

Problem 1: People stop showing up

Solution:

- Make meetings fun and valuable
- Give people specific roles so they feel needed
- Send reminders a day before meetings
- Ask members what they want to work on

Problem 2: You run out of money or materials

Solution:

- Apply for grants continuously (check Empower Funding List)
- Ask local businesses to donate materials
- Start a fundraiser or community drive
- Use free or recycled materials creatively

Problem 3: You feel burned out

Solution:

- Share leadership so you don't have to do everything yourself
- Take breaks when you need them
- Remember why you started this in the first place
- Celebrate small wins along the way

Problem 4: Adults or school administration create roadblocks

Solution:

- Stay respectful and professional
- Ask what their concerns are and address them
- Find champions who will advocate for you
- Be flexible and willing to compromise

Building a Strong Team That Sticks Around

Create Clear Roles:

When everyone has a job, people stay engaged.

- President/Lead Organizer
- Communications Lead (social media, emails)
- Project Manager (keeps track of tasks)
- Fundraising Coordinator
- Event Planner
- New Member Welcomer

Make It Social:

- Start meetings with a quick icebreaker or game
- Celebrate birthdays or achievements
- Do team bonding activities outside of project work
- Create inside jokes and traditions

Recognize Contributions:

- Shout out team members on social media
- Give 'awards' for achievements (even silly ones)
- Thank people publicly and specifically
- Create certificates or recognition for college apps

Staying Motivated When You Feel Like Quitting

Remember Your 'Why'

Why did I start this project:

Who benefits if I keep going:

What would I regret if I quit now:

Track Your Wins

Keep a 'wins journal' where you write down every success, no matter how small:

- 'Today we got 3 new members'
- 'The principal said yes to our proposal'
- 'We finished our first prototype'
- Look back at this when you're discouraged

Find Inspiration

- Follow other student advocates on social media
- Read success stories of young people who created change
- Talk to mentors who've done similar projects
- Remember: everyone struggles, you're not alone

Planning for the Long Term

Create Sustainability:

What happens when you graduate or move on?

- Train younger students to take over leadership
- Document everything (guides, processes, contacts)
- Build relationships with school staff who'll keep it going
- Create a transition plan before you leave

Set New Goals:

Once you hit your first goal, set a new one to keep momentum:

Our original goal:

Our next goal:

Our dream goal (if we could do anything):

When It's Okay to Pivot or Stop

Sometimes the best decision is to change direction or end a project. That's not failure—it's smart.

Consider pivoting if:

- You're learning something important isn't working
- You've found a better approach
- Student interests have shifted
- You have a new opportunity that's more impactful

It's okay to stop if:

- You've achieved what you set out to do
- The project isn't serving students anymore
- It's affecting your health, grades, or well-being
- You've given it your best effort and it's not sustainable

Your Resilience Toolkit

When things get tough, come back to these questions:

- Have I asked for help from my team?
- Am I trying to do too much myself?
- What's one small thing I can do today to move forward?
- Who can I talk to for advice or encouragement?
- What's working well that I should keep doing?
- Is there something I need to let go of or delegate?
- Am I celebrating progress or only focusing on problems?

Final Reminder

Every successful STEAM program, club, or project had moments where the founder wanted to quit. The difference between projects that fail and projects that succeed isn't perfection but persistence. You've got this!

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