

The Intactivist Guidebook

How to Win the Game of Intactivism
and End Circumcision

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Contents

Who This Book Is For	1
Introduction	3
I. Organize	9
II. Recruit	23
III. Message	37
IV. Media	57
V. Skills	71
VI. Need	87
VII. Allies	101
VIII. Opposition	113
IX. Culture	141
X. Endgame	159
Afterward: Intact Movement	169
Appendix	177
Key Concepts	179
Glossary	181
Further Training	186
About the Author	187

Who This Book Is For

This book is for Intactivists, and those who already know circumcision is harmful.

If you don't yet understand the issue of circumcision, watch my documentary *American Circumcision*. It gives a fair overview of all sides of the debate.

Many who've seen the film have written me, asking:

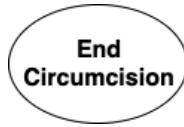
“What can I do to end circumcision?”

This book answers that question.

ORGANIZE

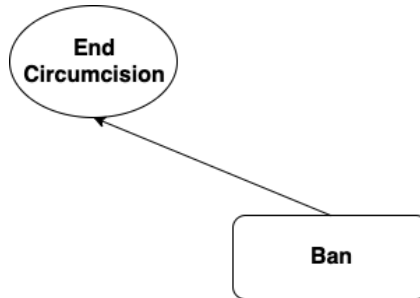
Paths To End Circumcision

Let us suppose the end goal of Intactivism is to **end circumcision**.

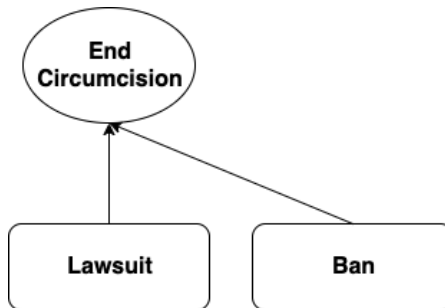


If we work backwards from that goal, what are ways that circumcision could end?

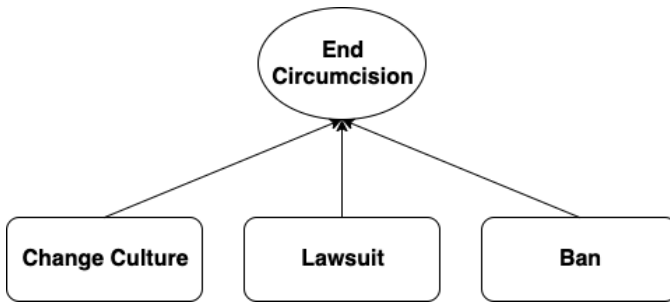
Well, you could ban circumcision.



Many in the movement also believe a big **lawsuit** could end circumcision.



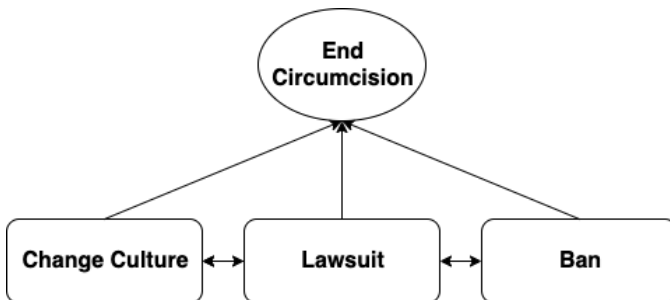
The other possibility is that you could **change culture** so much that circumcision ends, because people don't want to circumcise anymore.



These should be fairly obvious. If you want people to stop doing something you could make it illegal (**ban**), show that it's already illegal (**lawsuit**), or you could make it so that even if it is legal, people just don't want to do it (**change culture**).

All three of those options could lead to an end to circumcision.

Some could lead to the other. For example, the news of a big lawsuit could lead to publicity that causes people to rethink circumcision and changes culture. Or, a change in culture could lead to people deciding to make laws against circumcision and banning it. However, any one of these changes alone could lead to an end to circumcision.



Organize

There are also several dark horse options.

For example, some have tried to convince doctors to stop offering circumcision. If circumcision was allowed, but doctors didn't do it, this would also be a win (since circumcision would not be available).

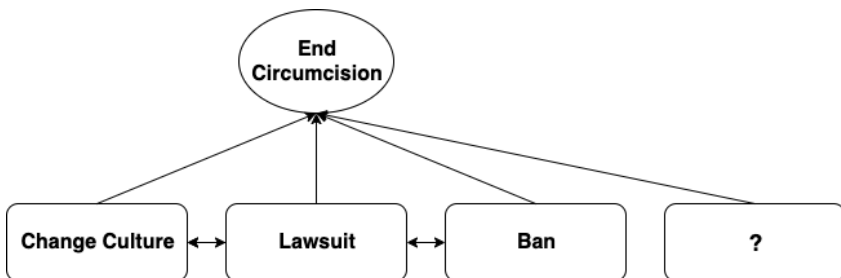
However, even in places where circumcision is not practiced, all it takes is a few persistent doctors willing to do it for this strategy to fail. In addition, it seems unlikely doctors will end a practice that is making them money.

Others have postulated that being able to heal the physical effects of circumcision through regenerative medicine would be a solution to the problem.

While this is desirable – and would likely change public perception of the issue by showing that many men do not want to be circumcised and that there is a considerable difference between having a foreskin and being circumcised – it would not end circumcision except by changing culture, which we already have listed as a potential win condition.

Many of the strategies people think might end circumcision – mass protests, lots of media, etc. – are just ways of accomplishing the conditions we've already listed (**changing culture, lawsuit, ban**).

That said, it is possible there is a way to end circumcision we are not aware of, so I'm going to include a fourth category for dark horse options – i.e. possibilities we have not considered.



What Would It Take To Win?

So, if we continue to work backwards, what would it take to accomplish those win conditions?

First, a **lawsuit**.

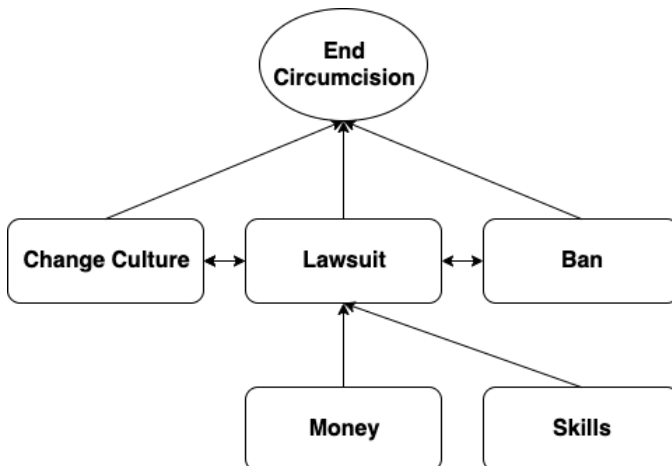
What does it take to execute a big lawsuit?

Well, you need lawyers – highly skilled ones.

You can bet that if you sue doctors or medical institutions, they will have the best lawyers they can get, paid for by medical insurance. If you lose, you might have to pay their legal fees, which will be at least six figures.

So in addition to lawyers, you're going to need lots of money. Plus, you've got to pay your lawyers, which cost even more money.

You may also need additional skilled people. You might need to hire legal researchers to determine which state or jurisdiction is the right place to file your lawsuit. You might need additional researchers to find the right plaintiff or case. Once you have a case, you'll have to research the particulars of it. You might need to find and pay expert witnesses, etc.



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I'm going to summarize these needs as people with **skills** and **money**.

Next, what would it take to **ban circumcision**?

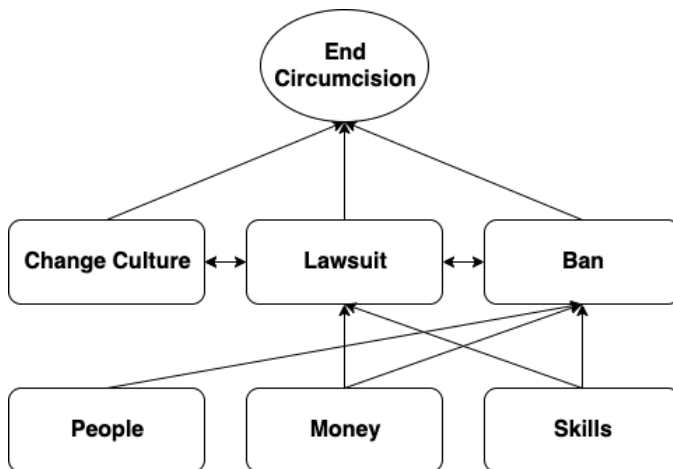
To ban circumcision, you would have to pass a law.

What does it take to pass a law?

To pass a law, you need a majority of votes. Depending on where you are, that could mean a majority of votes from the citizens or their representatives.

If you want to convince citizens, you'll need a lot of **people**. If you want to convince representatives, you'll need lobbyists, who are people with a particular set of **skills**, and **money** to pay them or contribute to politicians.

However, even if you have **skills** and **money**, elected officials are not likely to champion a cause they believe the majority of their constituents don't support. Even if you have **skilled** people and **money**, you'll still need a lot of **people**.



If you want to win a vote, you have to convince people to go vote for candidates who support your cause, or directly vote for the law you want them to pass. Either way – a ban will require **skills**, **money**, and **people**.

Last, what would it take to **change culture**?

Changing the culture requires persuading people.

This has been the primary focus of activists.

To reach people, you'll need **people**, obviously. There is no way to change culture without changing lots of people. You could do this one by one or on an individual basis. However, you will never reach a majority of people without a way to reach lots of people at once.

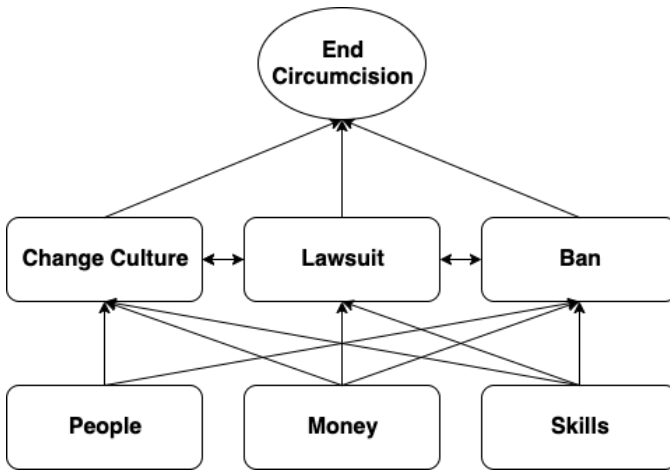
The best way to reach lots of people is media. That could mean books, movies, billboards, live events, mass protests, etc. However, all of these things require **skills** to pull off. You can't produce a film without filmmakers. You can't write scientific literature without researchers. You can't organize a protest without an organizer.

All of those things may also require **money** or resources of some kind. Even if you do not spend money on a project, you are spending people's time. The people persuading the public have to eat and pay rent. Either they are donating their time and effectively spending their own money on the cause, or someone else is covering their expenses.

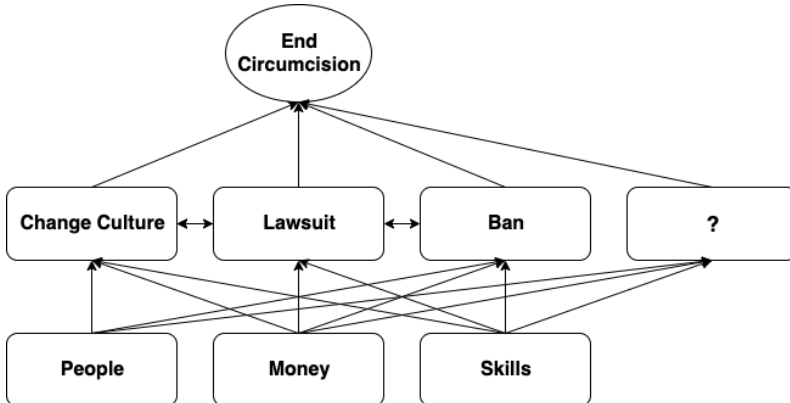
Note that regardless of the strategy you have for changing public perception, at some point it will require a lot of **people**, people with **skills**, and **money** to buy those skilled people what they need, pay them, or pay for the media needed to reach masses of people.

So whatever leads to the end of circumcision, it will require **people**, **skills**, and **money**.

Organize



Even dark horse options will require these things. Convincing doctors will require doctors or people who can reach doctors (people with **skills**) and likely require **money**. Regenerative medicine will require researchers (**skills**) and funding (**money**).

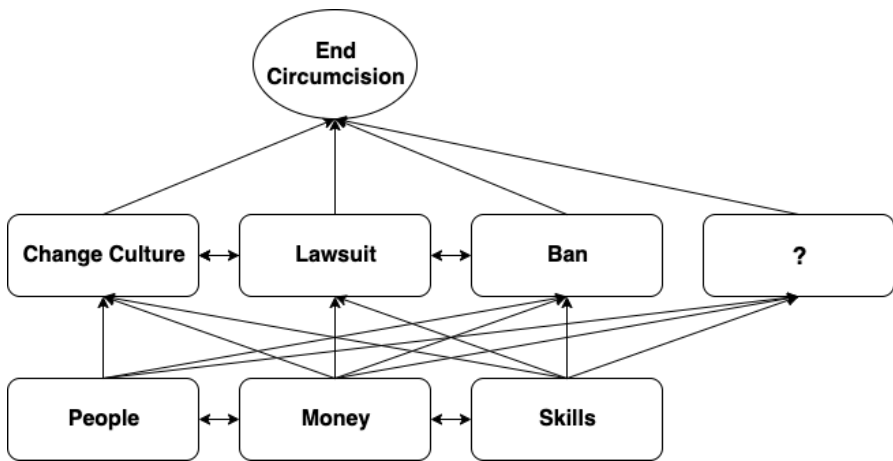


That means, if you want to end circumcision, you need to amass three things: **people**, **skills**, and **money**. Let's call those **resources**.

Just like our three ways to end circumcision could lead to each other, these three resources can lead to each other.

For example, if you have millions of **people**, and you can convince each of them to donate a few dollars, you'd also have millions of dollars (**money**). If you have millions of dollars, you can hire people with **skills** to come work for you. If you have people with **skills**, they can recruit **people**.

Regardless of the strategy you think will lead to ending circumcision, I think we can all agree: It would be easier if you had lots of **people**, **skilled** people, and a pile of **money**.

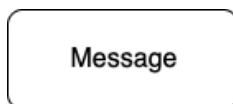


So what will lead to **people**, **skills**, and **money**?

Before we answer that, let's back up and look at what the Intactivist movement is currently doing.

The Current Intactivist Strategy

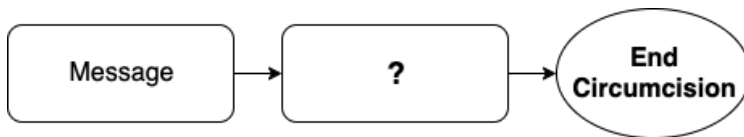
The current dominant strategy of the Intactivist movement is to "share the message."



Organize

“Share the message” takes a lot of forms – memes, protests, academic literature, media, billboards, etc. – but each form basically boils down to some variation of the strategy “we tell people our message.”

There is an idea in the Intactivist movement, whether unconscious or not, that if we just tell people the message enough – loudly enough, forcefully enough, on a big enough platform – that circumcision will end, and things like a ban or change in culture will naturally flow from people accepting the message.



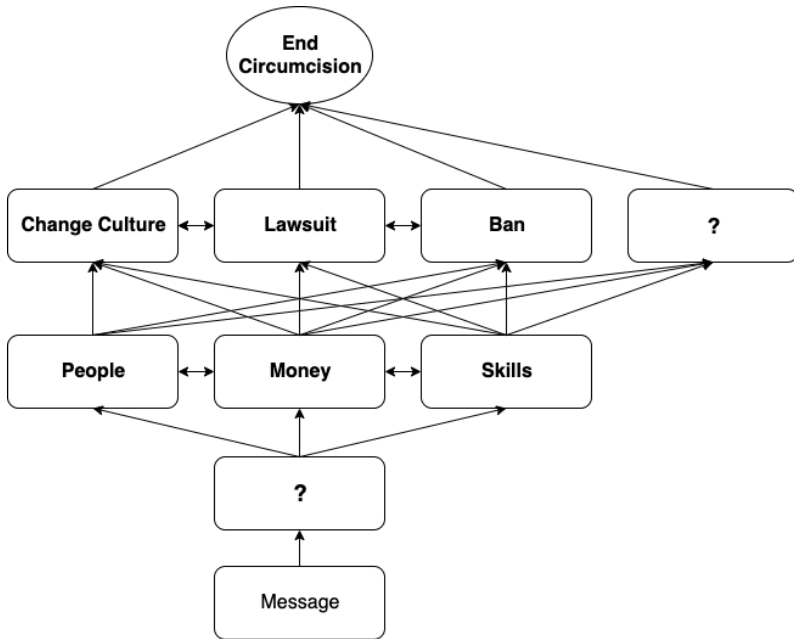
However, this is working from the bottom up. There is no guarantee that sharing the message will lead to change. There are many causes which the majority of the public supports that have not changed. There are also issues that have changed despite the public never being directly consulted or voting on them.

The idea that sharing the message will lead to change comes from the belief that the cause of Intactivism is so just, and circumcision such an obvious and appalling evil, that when people hear the message they will naturally change.

Experience shows the opposite. Many people retreat into denial and defensiveness when confronted with new information about circumcision. Historical just-causes were almost always met with resistance, despite most modern people now seeing them as obvious truths.

That said, sharing the message is important. You cannot get **resources (people, skills, money)** without first sharing a message that convinces someone to give you those resources. Yet the message alone does not lead to ending circumcision.

If sharing the message alone won't lead to an end to circumcision, what is the missing step?



The Missing Step

Suppose you are at an Intactivist protest. Someone approaches you and says they agree with you and are against circumcision. Everyone cheers and thanks them for their support.

Then what?

Well, in the current “share the message” strategy, that’s it. You shared the message; they agree; mission accomplished. They fade back into the crowd *and are never seen again*.

Did that interaction lead to more **people**, **skills**, or **money**?

Organize

If not, you are not any closer to the goal of ending circumcision.

The only resource you could argue you've increased is people. However, if that person isn't seen again and you have no way to contact them, they have not contributed to the goal of more people, since they are still functionally a stranger.

Compare that to the way a business functions.

If you land on a business's website, they ask for your email address. They may even offer you a free gift if you sign up for their email list, or they may try to get you to buy something and become a customer. If you do, they will re-target you with more emails and ads to convince you to buy even more of what they are selling.

A business is just trying to get **money**. Activists are trying to get **people, money, and skills**. That means they need to be three times as smart as any business, if not more.

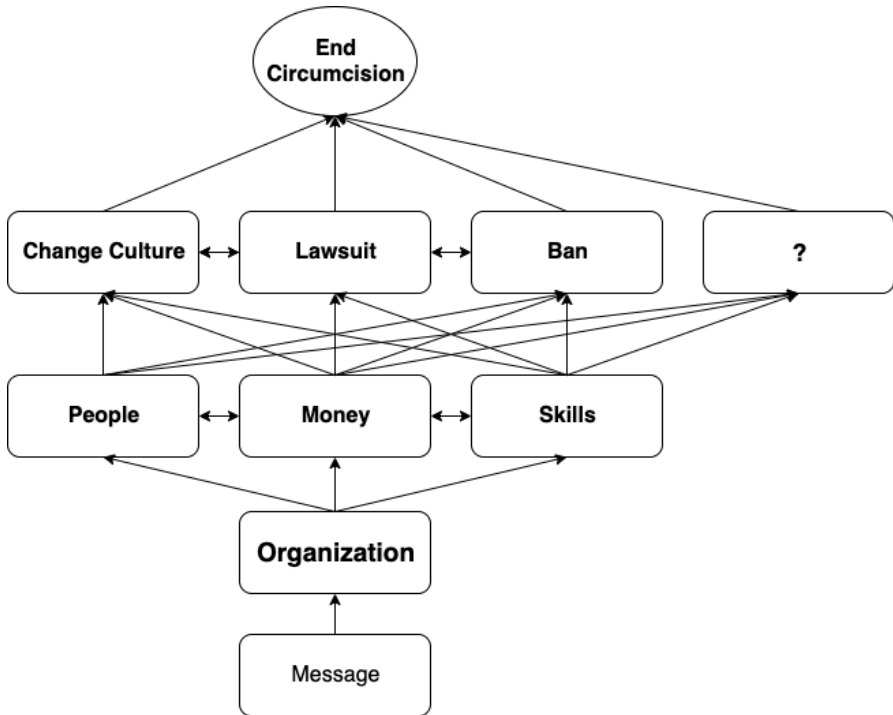
What would happen if that activist interaction functioned like a business?

Suppose you are at an Intactivist protest again. Someone approaches you and says they agree with you and are against circumcision. You thank them and then say:

“We do a lot of events like this. I'd love to tell you about our next one. Is there an email address or phone number we could reach you at?”

Now that person is not a stranger but a person you can reach. You could contact them and ask them to show up at future events, bringing more **people**. You could ask them to contribute **money**. You could find out what they are good at and ask them to contribute **skills**.

Now, you are actually closer to ending circumcision, because you're building an **organization**.



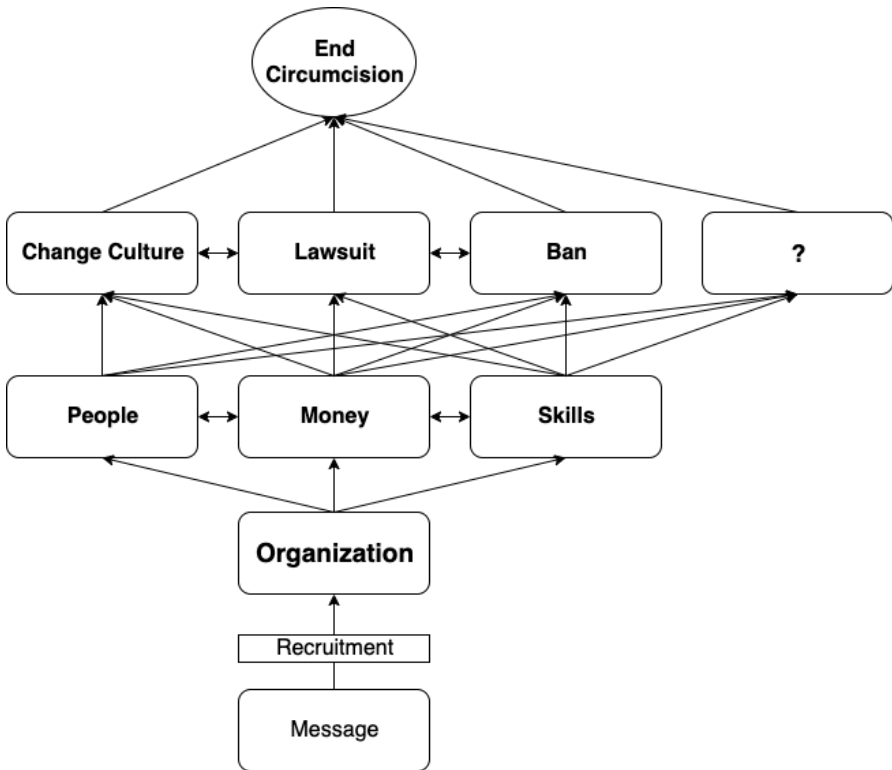
An **organization** is anything that allowed you to connect with and mobilize **resources** (**people, money, skills**).

In business, you need marketing (“share the message”), but you also need a sales funnel. A sales funnel is the process by which you turn someone from a lead to a customer.

Because activists share their message, they have done a good job of creating leads, but there is no formal process of turning those leads into **resources** (**people, money, skills**).

In activism, the process of turning leads into **resources** is known as **recruitment**.

Organize



This can be made easier or harder depending on how organized you are. For example, you could add people to an email list. You could take down phone numbers by hand. You could have a website where they sign up, and you could run targeted ads for the site. You could form a legal organization and sell memberships.

Whatever you do, ***you must organize.***

Thank you for reading the first chapter of *The Intactivist Guidebook*.

For the full book, please visit my website:

<https://brendonmarotta.com/the-intactivist-guidebook/>

