

# Organizing For Our Future

United Steelworkers, AFL-CIO-CLC

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# Why Organize Internally?

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Internal organizing is the key to strength and success for local unions in several important areas:

- Membership building
- Contract bargaining
- Grievances and workplace problems
- Lobbying and politics

People join unions because they care about the issues the union is fighting for. If workers see a benefit in belonging to a union they are much more apt to become a member. **The union must be seen as the driving force for democracy, social justice and economic progress in both the workplace and the community, and as the vehicle to make those changes happen.**

One of the most obvious reasons to organize internally is **contract bargaining**. An internal organizing campaign can create bargaining strength by presenting the employer with a unified workforce across the bargaining table. Simply put, the strength of the membership translates into strength at the table. An employer may discount a union whose membership is only 35%. Imagine that same employer facing a bargaining committee whose local membership has become 98% or 100%. Conducting an internal organizing campaign before negotiations begin can raise the threat of workplace actions while it prepares the membership of the local union for executing those actions if needed.

A second reason for organizing internally is to provide help in **settling grievances or workplace problems**. Whether a problem is covered under your contract or not, internal organizing can often speed a solution and make the solution stick. Organizing around an issue is also a key way to get non-members to join. When members mobilize around an issue, if they wear stickers or sign a group letter to publicize a safety issue, non-members see the union in action. Asking non-members to help solve a current problem can also be an effective way to ask them to join the union. Getting current members involved in the work action gives them a chance to be directly involved and see again that their actions matter. Those members who have a good experience organizing around an issue may also be willing to take part in other union activities, including volunteer organizing.

The third reason for an internal organizing campaign is the organizing and mobilization of members for purposes of **lobbying or political activity**. Locals will often need volunteers to phone bank during elections or to hand out leaflets to help defeat or pass a bill that will hurt or help working families. When the organizing committee asks members who might not have been active to volunteer their time for

# Grassroots Activism

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The role of a union leader is not simply to provide services to people. Our role is to lead and motivate people to action. **Involving members in developing and implementing solutions to their problems builds union power.**

There are a number of advantages to involving the membership in the affairs of the local union. A local union with a large percentage of its members actively involved and behind their leadership is much **more effective**. Employers are more likely to bargain fairly if they know the membership is involved and knowledgeable.

The second advantage is that it gives members **real power as a group**, by letting them share in decisions and victories. It is one thing to read in the local union newsletter that the union won an arbitration case, got a health and safety problem resolved, or delivered a decent contract. It is quite another to know that by being an active member who attended a rally or participated in a bargaining session, you affected the outcome.

Third, it **educates members** about the nature of disputes between the union and the employer. Sometimes when the union loses a battle with the employer the members blame the union. If the members are active participants in the struggle, they will have a better understanding of what has occurred.

Last, and perhaps the most important aspect of involving the membership, is that it allows the local union **to take on and solve more problems**. As more people get involved in the union, we have more people available to help and we can be even more active.

**Organizing internally builds the union.** As we get stronger, we will get better collective bargaining agreements. We'll be able to shape legislation around our social and economic agenda and become a real force to be reckoned with in the ever-changing global economy. Whether it is to sign up new members in an open shop or increase participation among current members, organizing internally is vital to the health of the local.

# Getting Organized to Organize

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## Forming An Organizing Committee

The primary function of an organizing committee in an open shop setting is membership recruitment. This committee could also be used for outreach to members during future mobilization drives. In other shops, an organizing committee could be formed in preparation for contract negotiations, to publicize a key issue or to get more members involved in our many struggles.

Your organizing committee should consist of members from each work area. Ideally, it should reflect the workforce in terms of age, race, sex, job classification and work unit. Many times you may have to start with a committee that is less than ideal in numbers and scope. Your first and most important goal should be to expand the membership of the committee so that it accurately reflects the workforce.

**Locate and personally encourage members who appear to have some leadership qualities to join the committee.** Many leadership skills can be taught or more fully developed. Pass on the skills you have to others. You are only a leader if you pass on your knowledge and experience.

**One way to strengthen your local is to develop and recruit leaders.**

Leadership can come from many different areas in the local. Sometimes members not usually considered "activists" could be key organizers.

## Developing a Plan

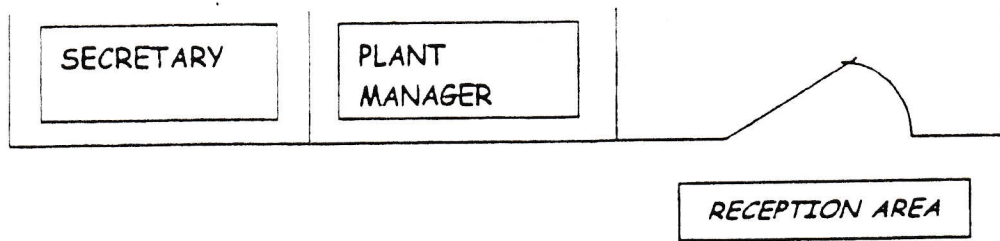
To be effective, the committee needs to have a clear plan that all the committee supports. One way to develop an organizing plan is to understand the past and current organizing activity in the local and assess what resources exist. (See "Internal Organizing Activity Checklist for Locals" in Appendix.) To determine the particular issues that could best mobilize current members or launch a new member campaign, the committee could create and distribute an issues

### Some Leadership Qualities

- Committed
- Confident
- Has followers
- Organized
- Respected
- Has integrity
- Articulate
- Honest
- Humble
- Able to listen
- Has a vision to communicate
- Courageous

# Sample Workplace Map

ELTON SERVICE, INC.  
 FIRST FLOOR  
 1922 ELM STREET

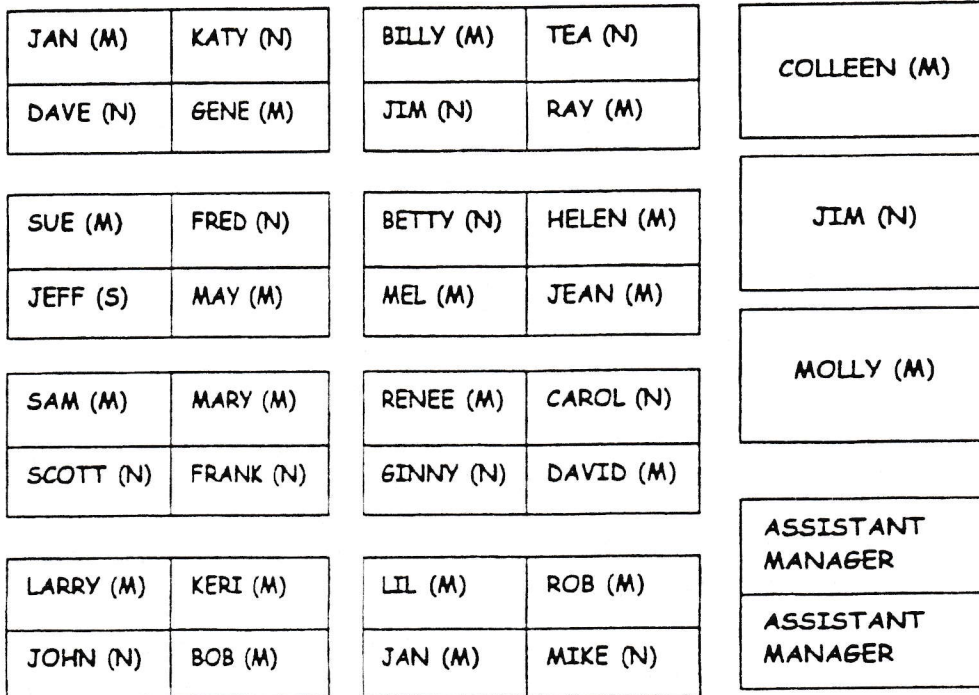


## PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

*M = MEMBER*

*N = NON-MEMBER*

*S = STEWARD*



to get a handle on whom they should talk to first. You might see an area from which you can draw more committee members or you might see that one particular department has a lot of non-members.

Developing and carrying out a well-made plan is key to a successful internal organizing campaign. Having a clear map of who the non-members are, where they work and how to create a committee are also important.

## Sample Non-Member Information File

Name	<i>Sally Waters</i>
Classification	<i>Production II</i>
Department	<i>Claims</i>
Supervisor	<i>Marie Cruz</i>
Work Phone	<i>223-3111</i>
Home Phone	<i>333-6175</i>
Home Address	<i>36 Maple Ave., Golden</i>
Seniority Date	<i>3/2/91</i>
Grievances Filed	<i>None</i>
What Is Known About Employee	<i>Mother works in mailroom. Sally belongs to a church bowling league.</i>
Reasons for Non-Membership	<i>Says she is quitting soon.</i>
Contacts Made	<i>Sam Garvey</i>
Dates	<i>2/7/99</i>
Results	<i>Said she would think about it</i>
Rating	<i>3</i>
Follow-Up	<i>See below</i>
Comments	<i>Someone from her church should talk to her and her mother</i>

# Committee Mobilization

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## Committee Training

Any effective internal organizing effort needs a strong training component. Providing the organizers with background on the local union and the International will equip them to explain to people our past accomplishments and struggles. A clear understanding of the economics of the industry and the employer's situation will also enable the committee to answer questions and explain the issues.

You may need to know:

- What has been the bargaining history with the employer?
- What gains have been made? You may want to know the history of wage increases or improvements in the health care plan.
- What was it like before the union and after? You may want to know about forced overtime or the pension plan.
- How has the membership and the leadership changed over the years?

Another part of the preparation for internal organizing is to gather information on the employer. You may need to know:

- Is the company part of a larger corporation? How does it fit in the corporate structure? What is management's history?
- To what extent is the employer unionized in other locations?
- What is the employer's relationship with other unions like?
- What type of resistance can we expect to the internal organizing drive?

You should also investigate aspects of the community in which you are located.

- To what extent are other workers organized in our community?
- Who are the local politicians who might sympathize with the union?
- Are there any friendly journalists in the area in both the print and electronic media? If so, how do we contact them?
- What other potential community groups can we consider as our allies? Are there senior citizens, civil rights groups, religious groups, the local central body, or other support groups we could call upon?
- Who in the membership is already part of these community groups? And are they willing to help? An individual who is a member of both the union and a community group may know the best way to ask for support—and get it.



- **Repeat back what you hear** – Check back to see if you heard it right. "So, what I hear you saying is that the health care plan needs some improvement?"
- **Don't interrupt** – When you interrupt, you don't get to hear a person's real concerns. Be quiet while they speak. Don't complete their sentences.
- **Don't argue** – If somebody makes negative comments try to find common ground. As much as possible, agree that the person has a valid point. Don't make the other person feel defensive. If you do, they'll never change their mind. One effective technique to deal with negative comments is the "Feel - Felt - Found" method. When someone makes a negative comment attempt to turn it around. For example: "I understand how you **Feel** - I **Felt** the same way at one time – then I **Found** out it really works." It's amazing how these three simple words can change someone's opinion on a given subject.
- **Don't evade the tough questions** – If you don't know the answer, don't try to fake it. People respect honesty. If you don't know the answer, admit it and tell them you'll get back to them.
- **Thank them for their time** – Even if they were not supportive, be polite. You may be the first or only union member they've met and you want to leave a good impression. Maybe next time they're approached, they'll be more open to the idea of becoming a member. If they were hostile, your attitude may lessen some of their fire.

There is no substitute for effective one-on-one contact. With training and practice any activist can learn to communicate effectively. A good way for the committee to practice one-on-one communication skills is through role-playing conversations. The committee should make a list of the questions or responses a co-worker might give them. Together they can brainstorm about how to answer them. Then they can role-play and critique the responses as a group. You will find on the next two pages a list of possible questions and answers. It can be referred to as a "what if" list.

This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list, but it will set you on the right path to develop your own "what if" list and answers. Sometimes this is referred to as a "hymn book." Once you develop your own questions and responses and train the committee on those responses, everyone will be responding to the questions in the same way. You'll be "singing from the same hymn book." Your committee members will feel more confident when answering difficult questions and your organizing campaign will have a consistent message.

**Objection**

"I don't need a union. The employer is fair. What has the union gotten for us that we wouldn't have gotten anyway?"

**Possible Answers**

"This is a good place to work now, but the union had a lot to do with it. Before we won the union election, we had no health insurance, no personal days, and no holiday pay. We got those in our first contract. But we need to improve our wages. That's why we need everyone to come together for the next contract negotiations. You can help."

**Objection**

"I'm only going to be working here a short while."

**Possible Answers**

"I said that too, but I'm still here. So are a lot of other people. But while you're here, you're getting the same pay and benefits as the rest of us. I'm sure you'd like to do your part to help pay for the cost of these benefits."

"While you're here, we want you to be one of us. We want you to fit in with the group and be an equal. You'll enjoy it more and we'll enjoy having you."

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"I can't afford to strike, and I don't believe in strikes."

**Possible Answers**

"Strikes are very rare. This union settles 99% of its contracts without a strike."

"Only members of the union can decide whether to strike. If you're not a member, you won't have a say."

# How to Make One-on-One Contacts

The purpose of the one-on-one contact is to talk to our fellow workers about an issue, discuss how the issue affects us as fellow workers, and how we can organize around it.

## Materials

- ❑ **Leaflets and Other Written Materials** – you will need sufficient written materials (and stickers or buttons if they are used) for the number of people you are being asked to contact.
- ❑ **Contactors' Kit** – the kit contains these instructions, a Fact Sheet on the issue and some suggested responses to reactions you may receive ("What If's").

## Be Yourself

- ❑ Most likely, you know best the people you will be contacting.
- ❑ Develop an approach that you feel comfortable with.
- ❑ Use the kind of language you use every day.
- ❑ Know how the issue might affect this or other workers. Always ask the worker how the issue affects them.

## Be Frank

- ❑ No one expects you to be an expert.
- ❑ If you don't know the answer to a question, don't try to bluff.
- ❑ Offer to get back to the person with an answer.

## Make the Contact at the Right Time

- ❑ You can speak with members during lunch breaks, coffee breaks, before or after work or any other convenient non-working time.
- ❑ You can do so in areas like the lunchroom, parking lot, locker room or break area.

## How to Use Leaflets and Petitions

- ❑ When using written material, bring it out at the end of the visit. Otherwise the conversation may stop.
- ❑ Briefly introduce the leaflet or petition and explain why the issue is important, ask them how the issue affects them if you have not yet done so, and discuss how the member's involvement will affect the issue.

# Union Visibility

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While it is important to boost membership through a good membership drive, there are a number of things the union should do on a regular basis to sustain membership over the years. Unless a member has a grievance, he or she may not have any contact with the union. Most people don't come to regular membership meetings. Even though the local's leadership may be doing a great job, many workers will not know about it.

One solution is to create greater visibility for the union in the workplace. The union should have a presence which people can identify with, that goes beyond the adversarial relationship with the boss.

As described below, there are several ways to increase our union's visibility in the workplace.

## New Employee Union Orientation

The most successful local unions in right-to-work states or open shops have one thing in common: new member orientation. Whenever a worker is newly hired, there should be an automatic procedure for approaching that person and welcoming him or her to the union. There must be a new member kit with orientation materials. A member, whether it's a steward, organizing committee person or new employee committee member, should sit down with the individual and explain the history of the union, the contract, and invite the new employee to join the union.

### Case Study 5 – Local 831, District 8

At Goodyear, members of Local 831 have bargained the right to provide a comprehensive orientation to new hires. Even before they go to work, new employees are escorted into the union hall. Orientation Committee members use slides and written materials to provide a history of the local union, its democratic process, and how to use the health insurance and grievance procedure. At the end of the presentation, each employee is asked to join the union. Out of 600 new employees that have gone through the orientation, only 2 did not immediately sign up. Later on that day, even those two returned to sign their cards. The orientation committee makes certain that when each employee becomes a member they are welcomed by the local leadership. As a result of their efforts, Local 831 has 99% membership.

#### Tips:

- ☐ Get new hires to sign union cards as soon as possible.
- ☐ Bring union orientation to the union hall.
- ☐ Think ahead about new ways to serve the rank and file.

# Community Outreach

Many of our members participate in charitable events, but may not attend local union meetings or rallies. When the local members create or co-sponsor an event, they foster friendships among the members, create good will in the community and make the union more visible.

Different types of activities a local union can sponsor include health fairs, food banks, arts and crafts fairs, walk-a-thons, toy drives and other fundraisers for worthy causes.

It is a good idea to survey your members to find out what community programs they are already involved in. Then contact those individuals in your local who can form the link to community organizations.

It's important to remember that to build the union we need to be visible. The union needs to be seen as providing a positive contribution to the workplace and the community. The union is one of the last bastions of social consciousness. We just don't do a very good job of advertising it.

## **Case Study 6 – Locals 15320 and 13214, District 11**

Locals 15320 and 13214 have bargained the right to provide a union orientation to new employees and to be part of the hiring committee as well. But even with the assistance the new employee orientation program provides, local members take it upon themselves to encourage new hires to join. Because they are in the mines together 16 hours a day, peer pressure is great. The Grievance Committee encourages the remaining few to join.

Their 100% membership did not happen overnight. It took time to build the expectation that everyone should be in the union. It also takes everyone thinking of themselves as an organizer to maintain 100% membership.

### **Tips:**

- Involve union members in the orientation process.
- Develop an expectation of 100% membership.
- Make sure union members encourage non-members to join.



# Issues Survey Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone number \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your job? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you worked here? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What things about where you work would you like to change if you could?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What issues do you think are most important? (Pick the top five)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pay                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Health insurance            | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sick Leave                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Annual leave                | <input type="checkbox"/> Parental leave    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Promotions                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Job security                | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job appraisals                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Improved working conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairer treatment  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To have a say in what happens at work |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                           |  |  |

6. What do you think the union should do to work on these issues?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. How can you help us work on these issues (e.g., making telephone calls, writing letters, serving on committees, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Please provide your mailing address so that we can keep you informed.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Checklist for Organizing Around Issues

## 1. Identifying and generating interest in your issue

### A. Ways to identify issues:

- Written survey to members and non-members
- One-on-one meetings
- Workplace meetings during lunch or break to solicit issues
- Home visits

### B. Steward/officer discussion sessions:

- Discuss problems in particular departments; job classifications; work groups, etc.
- Identify areas where union support is weak
- Have stewards survey workers on their attitudes towards the union
- Have stewards survey workers on ways they could contribute to the local

### C. Special meetings for people affected by particular issues:

- Invite people **personally** to attend the meeting (in addition to leaflet or phone call)
- Develop plan of action at this meeting
- Follow up with reports to the people who attended the meeting, or those who wanted to attend

## 2. Direct action to involve the membership

### A. Signing and delivering petitions and letters

- To management
- To state agencies, OSHA, etc.

### B. Wear buttons, T-shirts, cap

- Pick slogan that portrays issue in a way that would gain public support
- Demonstrations before or after work
- Lunchtime meetings or rallies
- Picnic, social events, etc. to involve the families
- Have members develop and design posters, banners, and leaflets



# Appendices

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- 1. Internal Organizing Activity Checklist for Locals**
- 2. Checklist for Organizing Around Issues**
- 3. Issues Survey Questionnaire**
- 4. Unit Profile**
- 5. Internal Organizing Campaign Assignment Sheet**
- 6. Organizing Committee Report Form**

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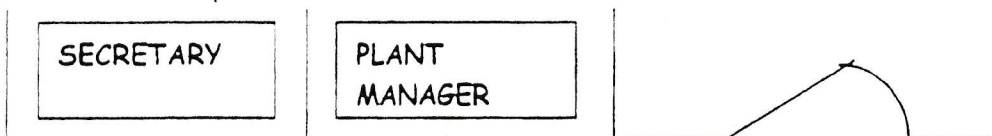
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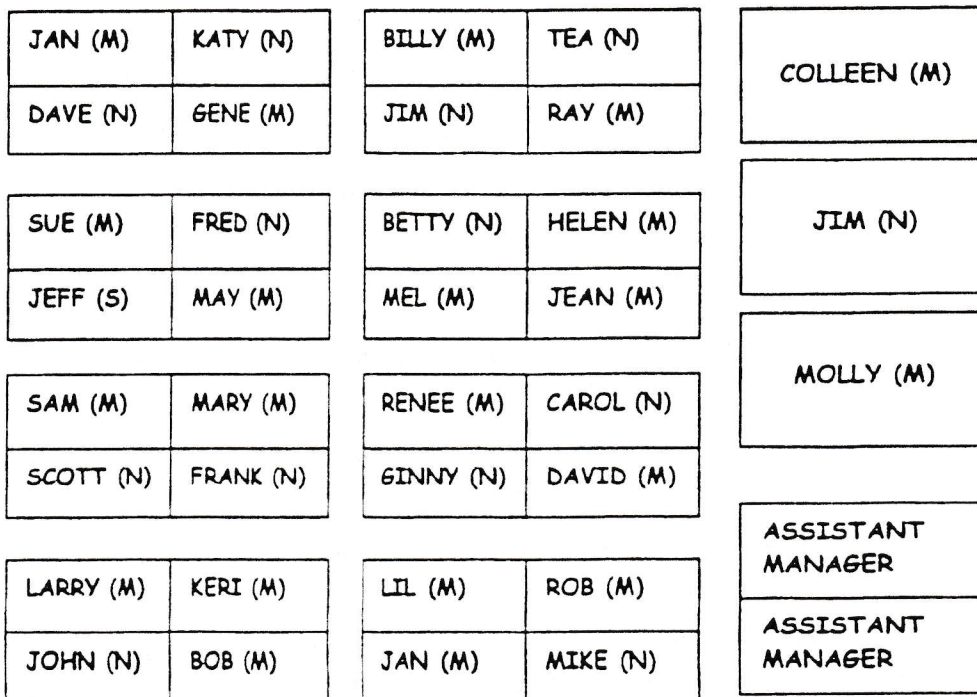
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RECEPTION AREA

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## Forming An Organizing Committee

The primary function of an organizing committee in an open shop setting is membership recruitment. This committee could also be used for outreach to members during future mobilization drives. In other shops, an organizing committee could be formed in preparation for contract negotiations, to publicize a key issue or to get more members involved in our many struggles.

Your organizing committee should consist of members from each work area. Ideally, it should reflect the workforce in terms of age, race, sex, job classification and work unit. Many times you may have to start with a committee that is less than ideal in numbers and scope. Your first and most important goal should be to expand the membership of the committee so that it accurately reflects the workforce.

**Locate and personally encourage members who appear to have some leadership qualities to join the committee.** Many leadership skills can be taught or more fully developed. Pass on the skills you have to others. You are only a leader if you pass on your knowledge and experience.

**One way to strengthen your local is to develop and recruit leaders.** Leadership can come from many different areas in the local. Sometimes members not usually considered "activists" could be key organizers.

## Developing a Plan

To be effective, the committee needs to have a clear plan that all the committee supports. One way to develop an organizing plan is to understand the past and current organizing activity in the local and assess what resources exist. (See "Internal Organizing Activity Checklist for Locals" in Appendix.) To determine the particular issues that could best mobilize current members or launch a new member campaign, the committee could create and distribute an issues

### Some Leadership Qualities

- Committed
- Confident
- Has followers
- Organized
- Respected
- Has integrity
- Articulate
- Honest
- Humble
- Able to listen
- Has a vision to communicate
- Courageous



# Grassroots Activism

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The role of a union leader is not simply to provide services to people. Our role is to lead and motivate people to action. **Involving members in developing and implementing solutions to their problems builds union power.**

There are a number of advantages to involving the membership in the affairs of the local union. A local union with a large percentage of its members actively involved and behind their leadership is much **more effective**. Employers are more likely to bargain fairly if they know the membership is involved and knowledgeable.

The second advantage is that it gives members **real power as a group**, by letting them share in decisions and victories. It is one thing to read in the local union newsletter that the union won an arbitration case, got a health and safety problem resolved, or delivered a decent contract. It is quite another to know that by being an active member who attended a rally or participated in a bargaining session, you affected the outcome.

Third, it **educates members** about the nature of disputes between the union and the employer. Sometimes when the union loses a battle with the employer the members blame the union. If the members are active participants in the struggle, they will have a better understanding of what has occurred.

Last, and perhaps the most important aspect of involving the membership, is that it allows the local union **to take on and solve more problems**. As more people get involved in the union, we have more people available to help and we can be even more active.

**Organizing internally builds the union.** As we get stronger, we will get better collective bargaining agreements. We'll be able to shape legislation around our social and economic agenda and become a real force to be reckoned with in the ever-changing global economy. Whether it is to sign up new members in an open shop or increase participation among current members, organizing internally is vital to the health of the local.

# Why Organize Internally?

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Internal organizing is the key to strength and success for local unions in several important areas:

- Membership building
- Contract bargaining
- Grievances and workplace problems
- Lobbying and politics

People join unions because they care about the issues the union is fighting for. If workers see a benefit in belonging to a union they are much more apt to become a member. **The union must be seen as the driving force for democracy, social justice and economic progress in both the workplace and the community, and as the vehicle to make those changes happen.**

One of the most obvious reasons to organize internally is **contract bargaining**. An internal organizing campaign can create bargaining strength by presenting the employer with a unified workforce across the bargaining table. Simply put, the strength of the membership translates into strength at the table. An employer may discount a union whose membership is only 35%. Imagine that same employer facing a bargaining committee whose local membership has become 98% or 100%. Conducting an internal organizing campaign before negotiations begin can raise the threat of workplace actions while it prepares the membership of the local union for executing those actions if needed.

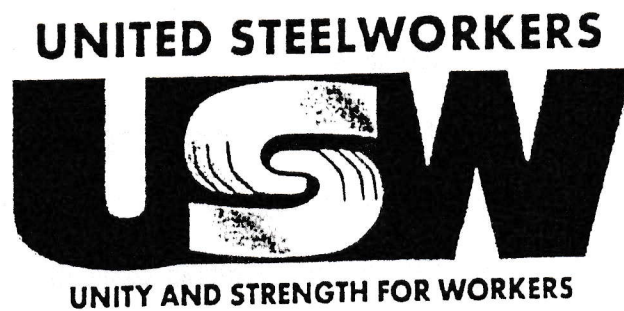
A second reason for organizing internally is to provide help in **settling grievances or workplace problems**. Whether a problem is covered under your contract or not, internal organizing can often speed a solution and make the solution stick. Organizing around an issue is also a key way to get non-members to join. When members mobilize around an issue, if they wear stickers or sign a group letter to publicize a safety issue, non-members see the union in action. Asking non-members to help solve a current problem can also be an effective way to ask them to join the union. Getting current members involved in the work action gives them a chance to be directly involved and see again that their actions matter. Those members who have a good experience organizing around an issue may also be willing to take part in other union activities, including volunteer organizing.

The third reason for an internal organizing campaign is the organizing and mobilization of members for purposes of **lobbying or political activity**. Locals will often need volunteers to phone bank during elections or to hand out leaflets to help defeat or pass a bill that will hurt or help working families. When the organizing committee asks members who might not have been active to volunteer their time for

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# Organizing For Our Future

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<http://www.usw.org> (Web Site)

# Appendices

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- 2. Checklist for Organizing Around Issues**
- 3. Issues Survey Questionnaire**
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# Checklist for Organizing Around Issues

## 1. Identifying and generating interest in your issue

### A. Ways to identify issues:

- Written survey to members and non-members
- One-on-one meetings
- Workplace meetings during lunch or break to solicit issues
- Home visits

### B. Steward/officer discussion sessions:

- Discuss problems in particular departments; job classifications; work groups, etc.
- Identify areas where union support is weak
- Have stewards survey workers on their attitudes towards the union
- Have stewards survey workers on ways they could contribute to the local

### C. Special meetings for people affected by particular issues:

- Invite people **personally** to attend the meeting (in addition to leaflet or phone call)
- Develop plan of action at this meeting
- Follow up with reports to the people who attended the meeting, or those who wanted to attend

## 2. Direct action to involve the membership

### A. Signing and delivering petitions and letters

- To management
- To state agencies, OSHA, etc.

### B. Wear buttons, T-shirts, cap

- Pick slogan that portrays issue in a way that would gain public support
- Demonstrations before or after work
- Lunchtime meetings or rallies
- Picnic, social events, etc. to involve the families
- Have members develop and design posters, banners, and leaflets

# Issues Survey Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone number \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your job? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you worked here? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What things about where you work would you like to change if you could?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What issues do you think are most important? (Pick the top five)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pay                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Health insurance            | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sick Leave                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Annual leave                | <input type="checkbox"/> Parental leave    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Promotions                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Job security                | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job appraisals                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Improved working conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairer treatment  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To have a say in what happens at work |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                           |  |  |

6. What do you think the union should do to work on these issues?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. How can you help us work on these issues (e.g., making telephone calls, writing letters, serving on committees, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Please provide your mailing address so that we can keep you informed.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





# Community Outreach

Many of our members participate in charitable events, but may not attend local union meetings or rallies. When the local members create or co-sponsor an event, they foster friendships among the members, create good will in the community and make the union more visible.

Different types of activities a local union can sponsor include health fairs, food banks, arts and crafts fairs, walk-a-thons, toy drives and other fundraisers for worthy causes.

It is a good idea to survey your members to find out what community programs they are already involved in. Then contact those individuals in your local who can form the link to community organizations.

It's important to remember that to build the union we need to be visible. The union needs to be seen as providing a positive contribution to the workplace and the community. The union is one of the last bastions of social consciousness. We just don't do a very good job of advertising it.

## **Case Study 6 – Locals 15320 and 13214, District 11**

Locals 15320 and 13214 have bargained the right to provide a union orientation to new employees and to be part of the hiring committee as well. But even with the assistance the new employee orientation program provides, local members take it upon themselves to encourage new hires to join. Because they are in the mines together 16 hours a day, peer pressure is great. The Grievance Committee encourages the remaining few to join.

Their 100% membership did not happen overnight. It took time to build the expectation that everyone should be in the union. It also takes everyone thinking of themselves as an organizer to maintain 100% membership.

### **Tips:**

- Involve union members in the orientation process.
- Develop an expectation of 100% membership.
- Make sure union members encourage non-members to join.

# Union Visibility

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While it is important to boost membership through a good membership drive, there are a number of things the union should do on a regular basis to sustain membership over the years. Unless a member has a grievance, he or she may not have any contact with the union. Most people don't come to regular membership meetings. Even though the local's leadership may be doing a great job, many workers will not know about it.

One solution is to create greater visibility for the union in the workplace. The union should have a presence which people can identify with, that goes beyond the adversarial relationship with the boss.

As described below, there are several ways to increase our union's visibility in the workplace.

## New Employee Union Orientation

The most successful local unions in right-to-work states or open shops have one thing in common: new member orientation. Whenever a worker is newly hired, there should be an automatic procedure for approaching that person and welcoming him or her to the union. There must be a new member kit with orientation materials. A member, whether it's a steward, organizing committee person or new employee committee member, should sit down with the individual and explain the history of the union, the contract, and invite the new employee to join the union.

### Case Study 5 – Local 831, District 8

At Goodyear, members of Local 831 have bargained the right to provide a comprehensive orientation to new hires. Even before they go to work, new employees are escorted into the union hall. Orientation Committee members use slides and written materials to provide a history of the local union, its democratic process, and how to use the health insurance and grievance procedure. At the end of the presentation, each employee is asked to join the union. Out of 600 new employees that have gone through the orientation, only 2 did not immediately sign up. Later on that day, even those two returned to sign their cards. The orientation committee makes certain that when each employee becomes a member they are welcomed by the local leadership. As a result of their efforts, Local 831 has 99% membership.

#### Tips:

- Get new hires to sign union cards as soon as possible.
- Bring union orientation to the union hall.
- Think ahead about new ways to serve the rank and file.