

TOOLS

Starting a Campaign: Questions to Ask

Before you begin a campaign, do your research. There are a lot of factors that can impact our success. Think about what it will take to win recognition and a first contract for our union. Here are some questions to get you started.



OUR EMPLOYER

Details about our employer can impact our ability to get our union recognized or win a first contract. Keep your ear to the ground and map out what you know.

- How long has the company been in business?
- Are there other locations besides this one? Do workers there have a union?
- Who's the owner? What about top executives and board members?
- How would you describe what this company does? Specific products? Services?
- Who are the company's main customers and competitors? Do any of them already have workers who have formed a union?
- Do you know what other companies they do business with: contractors, shippers, suppliers?
- Has the company been growing/hiring more people or the opposite?
- Have you heard about any past organizing campaigns here? This location or others? What happened? How did management respond? Did they hire an outside consultant to stop the workers' organizing drive?
- What's the employer's reputation or track record on safety and environmental issues? Do you know whether community members or employees have ever filed lawsuits against it?
- Is the company active in the community? Does it benefit from the community by getting tax breaks or other subsidies?

Power in Numbers

Winning a strong first contract can be impacted by the company's true financial health as well as how competitive they are in the local economy and the industry. In addition, unionized competitors help us increase the standards for pay and benefits.

THE PEOPLE (THAT'S US!)

In order to form a union, we need to figure out who is eligible to join and what they care about. Mapping out the details will help you imagine what it looks like and figure out where to start. Here are some ideas.

- How many people work here? Does anybody have a good list? How many full-time and part-time workers are there?
- Do we have co-workers who are “temporary” or employed by staffing agencies?
- What are the demographics of the workforce (age, race/ethnicity, gender, language, etc.)?
- How long have most people worked here? Are there a lot of very senior people or recent hires?
- Is there a handbook or some other statement of company policy?
- How much do people make? Have there been regular pay increases? For everyone or just some?
- What are the benefits like? Do we have a copy of the benefit plan summaries? Are there other benefits besides medical and retirement (for example, tuition assistance)?
- How do we usually get questions answered or learn about changes, policies or adjustments to schedules?
- Have any of our co-workers been union members at other jobs?
- How do our co-workers feel about organizing a union? Which people feel the strongest?

Stronger Together

At work, we're divided by jobs, shifts, locations and departments.

When we form a union, we figure out what we have in common and how to bring people together to build power for all working people.

OUR WORKPLACE

Where do people work and whom do they work with? What policies impact what people can do, or not do, in the workplace?

- What are all the job classifications and what departments do they fall under?
- What is the management structure at the workplace?
- How many different buildings/facilities are there at this workplace?
- How many shifts are there? What are the start/quit times?
- When are break times/lunch?
- What break areas, smoking, eating or parking are provided?
- Do people work in one place or move around and interact with others?
- Is there a uniform or dress code?
- What other policies are there? Email, social media, personal calls?

Map It Out

A chart or wall map can be a helpful tool to map out the workplace and figure out how all the pieces, and people, fit together.

OUR COMMUNITY

Our community has a vested interest in our union organizing campaign. Work with others to make that connection and show how our union will make a difference. Start with what you know.

- What are the major issues in our community?
- Who lives here? What are the other big employers in the area? What are the different racial and ethnic groups? Immigrants? Languages spoken?
- What organizations do our co-workers belong to?
- What is the economic condition of the community? Unemployment? Layoffs? Companies/plants closing? Things getting better or worse?
- What unions have members in the area?
- Who are the local elected officials? Will they support our right to organize?
- What other types of organizations have influence in the area (i.e., civil rights groups, universities/student groups, Masons/Eastern Stars, neighborhood organizations, veterans' groups, League of Women Voters, religious groups or coalitions, others)?
- What organizations provide social services to people in our community?
- What local papers do people read? What other local press is there?
- What type of influence does our company have in the community? Where have they donated money? What local events do they sponsor?
- What business associations are in the area (Chamber of Commerce, etc.)? How active are they and do you know anyone there?

Our Community, Ourselves

We are linked to our community through our families, neighbors, churches, schools and the politicians we vote for.

The whole community has a vested interest in making sure there are good, safe jobs here, and that we have voice at work.