GET STARTED

Internal Organizing Campaign

Does your local union need some re-energizing, have a tough contract fight coming up or just needs more fully engaged members? An internal organizing campaign is a way to set some goals and build some momentum. The result: Your members can make concrete improvements at work and emerge a stronger local ready take on the next challenge.

HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED

You will need a leadership committee for the campaign to be responsible for the plan. This may or may not include formal local leadership. You will need:
- enough people—roughly one activist per 10 workers;
- a group that represents the diversity of the workforce (by shift, classification, gender, ethnicity, etc.);
- people who already are hubs of natural and informal networks; and
- people who believe in the mission of the campaign and can commit to having one-on-one conversations with their co-workers.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

You may or may not have all the people you need. Do an honest assessment of your local to identify what you need.
- Do you have enough stewards/activists and are they the right people?
- Are they in the right places? Or are there areas that are weak?
- Are they committed to do internal organizing or take on the fight at hand?

Assess Your Local

- Create a list of members and nonmembers.
- Map out work areas and identify where you have stewards and activists.
- Identify issues that may be hot for some or all of the members.
- Use this to evaluate your organizational strengths and weaknesses to meet your goals.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?
Set some goals and give yourself a deadline to get there. What would make this internal organizing campaign successful? For example:

- new members;
- turnout to rallies, hearings or meetings;
- winning a bargaining victory or reversing an employer action;
- new activists or new potential stewards in a particular area; and/or
- getting the majority of people to do an action together.

GET STARTED: RECRUIT NEW ACTIVISTS
New activists can help you build a large and diverse committee and inspire local veterans who have been carrying the load. Getting some new people involved at the start also builds buy-in to the plan. Here are some ideas for where to start looking:

- reach out one on one to every member who has been active in some way in the past;
- target key areas where activism has been low and talk to each person there about the plan;
- ask people to help identify others who have strong natural networks;
- ask members to refer others they think would be a good fit.

OUTREACH PLAN
A one-on-one outreach plan is the most effective way to sign up new members and get people into action:

- create a list of every person in your workplace, figure out who talks to whom and have a system to track the results;
- have the committee agree to the goal and deadline;
- agree on what to say and what you will ask people to do, then train;
- start with “easy” people—it’s good practice and builds confidence;
- identify urgent issues to rally around;
- use concrete asks like joining or signing the petition to help you measure success;
- be creative to develop easy asks that get more people engaged;
- meet regularly to share progress and troubleshoot problems; and
- recognize that written materials supplement the outreach plan, they don’t replace it.
WHEN YOU WIN!
Whatever the outcome, members will gain experience and commitment and your local will be stronger:
- claim every victory you can and connect membership growth and activism to each win;
- debrief the campaign with the committee and local leaders—What worked? What failed? What will we do differently next time?;
- organize all the new information you have about people and issues;
- develop a plan to build on your success. What’s the next step for new members and activists?; and
- recognize people for their contributions and hard work throughout the campaign.

Good One-on-One Communication
- start with what you have in common;
- build from what the other person cares about;
- share a vision about how things could change;
- ask people to get involved; and
- connect the action to the vision and the win!