

MOTIVATING & ORGANIZING MEMBERS; TO GET AND KEEP THEIR PARTICIPATION

KEEP TRACK OF 'EM

Keep a complete staff list, and update it regularly. Get everyone's home phone and work phone number. Don't overlook someone who is geographically isolated. Contact the delegate in another shop if a member is transferring to or from there.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH 'EM

Contact fellow employees as often as possible--and especially when they are first hired--to talk union and see if they have any problems. Don't avoid talking to someone you think is hostile; find out why. Hand deliver newsletters and use this as an excuse to chat. Call coworkers, and don't forget to return their calls. Have lunch with people.

Keep members informed on delegate meetings & other developments, and respond to management disinformation quickly and vigorously, but don't do all the talking. Ask for members' opinions & LISTEN! Treat complaints as opportunities to identify and address members' concerns, not as invitations to become angry or defensive. Follow up on members' questions, requests, and suggestions.

IDENTIFY ISSUES TO HELP 'EM WITH

Know the contract and the relevant history of your shop, so that you can help members do something about the issues that concern them.

Use occasional short questionnaires to keep you in touch with what people are concerned about and what they want; or better yet, try to get another potential leader in the shop to do it, and coach them if necessary. Focus on about five people at a time to facilitate quick feedback. Follow up with questions to clarify answers you don't understand. Tabulate your results. Keep the questionnaires and discussions out of management's reach.

Pick issues on which you can get action by using strength in numbers, and choose things that can be done step by step, so as you win a little, you can use that victory to build more support.

Start organizing around contract issues long before the contract expires. You can also organize around legislation or a candidate.

LET 'EM KNOW THEY'RE THE UNION & THEY'VE GOTTA DO IT

Run union programs in a way that shows workers that they are the union. One way is to get lots of signatures on grievances and complaints to government agencies. Another is to invite all members to interview candidates & vote on endorsements. Think of ways to mention every worker you can in union publications. Learn and use the interests and skills of individual members. Most importantly, think of ways the members themselves can help you do more about the problems they've raised. Refuse to do it all yourself.

LET 'EM KNOW WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM

Explain that we have the collective power to improve conditions and solve problems, but what we win and how effective the union is depends on how many people are active. Let the members know about every union victory, large or small.

Point out that activity can also be very personally rewarding. It is a chance to plan, make

important decisions, and do valuable work, together with others as equals, in a democratic and supportive context, while making friends, learning things, developing skills, and earning the recognition of one's peers in the process. It offers a sense of responsibility, purpose, belonging, personal and collective power, and pride.

Provide encouragement and collective support to counteract the causes of inactivity. Among these are: fear of management; fear of losing income; feelings of isolation, powerlessness, inferiority, or hopelessness; confusion about situations; ignorance of one's rights; cynicism due to bad past experiences; individualism; racist, sexist, or elitist attitudes, or the perception of such attitudes toward oneself; family or personal problems, such as illness or lack of transportation or childcare; inability to reconcile activity with other commitments.

ASK 'EM TO PARTICIPATE

Approach members one on one to ask them to come to meetings and events or take some other action. Whatever you want to discuss, tell each person what it's all about, why it's important, why you are involved, why her help is wanted and needed, and how you want her to help. Be as specific as possible.

If a member disagrees or decides not to go along with an action, don't just politely and silently accept inactivity, but be genuinely respectful. Do not berate the member for lack of commitment or warn that she won't be able to expect support of others when she needs it. Instead, find out in detail why she or he is hesitant or unable to participate, and attempt to address those concerns. Keeping in mind the reasons for activity and the causes of inactivity (including fear), offer appropriate encouragement and reminders of collective support. Then, allow the member to think about the issue alone for awhile.

If you've done your best and the answer is still no, ask for involvement in some other way, at a level that is comfortable for the member. This is valuable in itself, and also keeps communication open. Then you can go back and try again another time, encouraging the member to slowly increase her involvement, commitment, and responsibility.

Avoid elitism, and remember at all times that you are dealing with an equal.

FOCUS ON 'EM

Remember: "In a strong union, the organizing campaign is never over." Meet with other leaders in your local to: choose subjects to discuss with workers, share ideas about how best to approach workers, talk about worker's ideas, discuss problems that come up, and consider responses.

Do your part to eliminate things that tend to turn members off, like power politics and intrigues within the organization, inadequate planning, and ineffective meetings.

Keep the union visible with, buttons, hats, t-shirts, posters, etc., using slogans that relate to goals, not just to the union itself.

Combine serious activities with fun ones, for example a rally with a picnic. Set up parties, teams, outings, etc.