

Audio Script: Organizing 310 – Developing Leaders

Welcome to Organizing 310

This course should take you about 45 minutes to complete.

This is an elective course in the Organizing track.

The prerequisite for this course is Organizing 100.

The sections in this course are:

Understanding the Characteristics of a Leader

Identifying Natural Leaders, and

Developing Leadership

Section 1: Understanding the Characteristics of a Leader

[Overview]

Developing leaders is not about assigning tasks, but offering responsibility.

It is different to ask: “*Would you make these 50 phone calls telling people about the meeting?*” when compared to, “*Would you take responsibility for getting 10 people to come to our meeting? You will? Great! To help you contact them and get them to the meeting, here is a list of names and phone numbers of people who said they were interested, 100 leaflets, some posters to put up, and some sign-up sheets you could use to get commitments.*”

Do you see the difference between these two requests? When you simply assign a ‘task,’ the person can become a kind of yo-yo: go do this, then they come back for what’s next; go do that, then they come back for what’s next. They are actually helping *you* with *your* tasks.

On the other hand, when you offer them a carefully defined ‘responsibility,’ that person will take it and run with it, and you can help them meet *their* responsibility.

The challenge is in learning to motivate people to accept the level of responsibility needed to get the job done. And when a person has accepted this obligation, the motivating efforts continue. Keeping others motivated, keeping yourself motivated, and getting the work done all go together. They are based on real accountability, lots of coaching, and continued recognition of success.

[Organizers need to be able to recognize leadership potential in the members they work with so the work of the union can continue. This means realizing that all worksite leaders have different strengths and weaknesses and that all potential leaders can be helpful to the union in different ways.](#)

[A Leader...]

The basic definition of a leader is that a leader has followers.

A broader definition includes some other characteristics of a leader...

A true leader doesn't work in isolation, but rather is always looking to empower others and to develop potential leaders. A leader increases the capacity of others rather than dominating or controlling them.

A leader has the ability to empathize with their coworker's needs, their concerns, and their goals. They truly care about the people they work with and it shows in the way they plan and in the kind of language they use.

A leader is persistent - they can maintain a positive, focused attitude when pursuing a goal, despite obstacles that could distract a person without leadership abilities.

A leader is respected...they may also be popular, they may be well-liked, or even feared, but they *must* be respected.

A leader is an excellent communicator - they know how to listen closely, they run effective meetings, they make successful presentations, and they understand how and when to negotiate.

Public speaking is the number one fear of most Americans, but a leader is comfortable and speaks well in public.

Leaders have acquired a solid understanding of their union's power structure. They listen carefully to the concerns of its most powerful groups, and they know where to turn for the support and resources they need. They are politically astute and comfortable in that arena.

When the situation calls for it, a leader knows how to inject a little humor to relieve tension within a group or to get the group's attention to refocus on the activity.

Another strength that a leader displays in the midst of turmoil and confusion is the ability to be level-headed and remain focused.

Leaders are self-aware enough to know how their own behaviors can impact others and how to channel that impact to best serve the union and the issues at hand.

Leaders are focused on the future - they understand how their worksite fits into the bigger organizational picture, and they organize short-term tasks according to long-term priorities.

[Leadership Tasks and Skills]

~~A leader also teaches. You can recognize a leader first and foremost because they teach.~~ They share their knowledge and encourage others to be at their best. They provide support and give confidence to those around them.

In the work to grow the union, leaders mobilize their co-workers and recruit them to attend worksite meetings, political events, rallies, or to get involved in a worksite Joint Labor Management Committee.

You will frequently find a potential leader facilitating a meeting - whether they are the recognized chair of that meeting or not.

But the one true identifier of all leaders is that they have followers. ~~This relationship is one where all parties benefit.~~

[Union Leadership]

Union leaders consistently act according to labor's core values and vision of social and economic justice, inclusion, human development and hope.

When union leaders incorporate these core values and vision their actions mobilize members.

Section One Review

What is the definition of a leader?

- a) A leader is persistent
- b) A leader acts in isolation
- c) *A leader has followers*
- d) A leader takes over

The answer is C - the one true identifier of all leaders is that they have followers.

It is important for a leader to:

- a) *Recognize and develop potential leaders*
- b) Tell everyone their own story
- c) Be at every meeting and event in their DLC
- d) Be liked by all members

The answer is A - A true leader is always looking to empower others and to develop potential leaders by increasing the capacity of others.

Leaders focus on the day-to-day details of the DLC

- a) True
- b) *False*

The answer is False - leaders focus on the future, they see the big picture, and they recognize the need for different types of leaders in the union.

Section Two: Identifying Natural Leaders

[Identifying a Leader]

Most leaders do not self-identify. They don't wear a sign around their neck saying, "*I'm a leader.*" Leaders are often *not* self-selected and may not recognize their own leadership qualities or potential. They may not necessarily be pro-union at first, but their involvement is key to the support and growth of the union in their department.

Some unionists are leaders who emerge on their own and nothing can stop them.

Some have it inside, but it may take coaxing, mentoring and instruction to get it out. Organizers need to learn to look for and recognize lots of different kinds of leaders.

An organizer's job is to find those situations that match the existing skills in their members and to help develop skills and confidence by putting those members in challenging situations.

A leader could be the person at a worksite meeting that has the most questions and

is outspoken. This kind of leader does not quite know that they are a leader and the organizer can mentor them to start with something small and keep growing. They might discover that they become a leader in spite of themselves!

A leader might be someone that everyone goes to in their department when they need help with their work, or the leader might be the person who organizes the potlucks in the department. As an organizer you can develop relationships with members in your worksite and discover these hidden potential leaders.

Who is a leader? When several people identify one person as someone we should talk to, or when several people speak favorably of another person, that person is probably a leader.

Who might not be a leader? Just because someone is bold or loud does not make them a leader. It may mean they are an activist, and we need activists, too.

Frequently the bold activist is concerned with only their own agenda and goals and will not be able to lead a group around union goals.

Mentoring a potential leader will help them to see the bigger picture, push them to take one more step and make them think about their own potential.

In summary, there is an existing leadership structure in every work place.

Our job is to uncover it and recruit the natural leaders to get more involved in Local 1000.

[Identify a Leader]

A leader is frequently an agent for change and an example of what is possible. Leaders produce results and increase member engagement.

Leaders have different styles. Sometimes we relate more to people who are similar to ourselves - their style, gender, race, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation. Organizers need to recognize leadership that looks and acts differently from themselves. This includes recognizing and developing leaders who reflect the membership.

This selection process can't be left to chance, it must be a deliberate effort to represent all of the membership.

[Actions of a Leader]

Potential leaders make things happen - from creating worksite committees to making worksite meetings happen each month.

They might be increasing membership in the worksite or moving the union's COPE program. Each action indicates that they have leadership skills.

The ability to influence people and involve their co-workers in making things happen demonstrates the strength of that leader.

Leaders also influence events - they make sure worksite meetings are orderly and professional and they are a driving force in recruitment and turnout.

~~A leader is frequently an agent for change and an example of what is possible. They produce results and increase member engagement in all aspects of the union. Leaders have different styles. Sometimes we relate more to the style, gender, race, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation that is similar to our own. Organizers need to recognize leadership that looks and acts differently from themselves. This includes recognizing and developing leaders who reflect the membership. This can't be left to chance, it must be deliberate.~~

[An Activist Can Be a Leader]

An activist *can* be a leader - but they usually work alone to create some kind of change that they believe in.

An organizer, on the other hand, is someone who is looking to get as many other people involved as possible in activism.

This may mean that an organizer is doing things that don't seem to be of value in making immediate change, but which ultimately are vital in building the movement. For example, an organizer will spend extra time helping someone else learn how to produce a flier even when they can do it faster and better on their own.

All union leaders are union activists, but they may have different skills, abilities or potential. Organizers need to be able to match abilities with roles and

responsibilities. Just because someone is a good union steward does not necessarily mean they can organize a rally. Our job is to get to know our members and support the development of worksite leaders so they can be successful in building our union.

[Testing Leaders]

If you believe someone is a potential leader it's a good idea to test them before giving them a leadership role. This allows you to see if they are truly a leader and if they can and will follow through.

Discuss a task with the person and explain it clearly, before they agree to do it. When they understand the task obtain their commitment for the date, time and location.

This 'test task' you give your potential leader should be measurable - how will you and the leader know if they completed the task and if they were successful?

The person should have some experience with the task, but it should allow them to stretch just a bit.

They should be able to practice the task and there should be a back-up person to support them if a problem should arise.

This task should be something that moves campaigns and excites the volunteer - something that makes them want to do more.

[Examples of Responsibilities to Test Potential Leaders]

Here are some examples of small assignments that will test the skills of potential leaders:

- Ask the potential leader to create a seating chart for their department
- Ask them to pass out copies of [the 'Union Update' updates](#) to departments different from their own
- Ask them to recruit one non-member in their work area to become a member, or
- Ask them for a phone list for their department

If they are able to deliver on one small task, you can then ask for something more challenging next time to continue developing their skills.

[Debrief Questions]

[Always give a potential leader support for making the effort to do the task. Point out at least one thing that they are doing well and give them one or two ideas to help them do better](#) next time.

[Your next step as you work to develop this leader is to schedule the next time you will talk. Make an appointment to come by their worksite and pick up the questionnaires, surveys, or other materials that they are working on.](#)

Following an assignment, ask your potential leader these questions to get a better idea of their success and their feelings about their effort.

- How is it going?
- How many folks have you talked to since we last spoke?

- How are people reacting to the conversation you are having with them?
- How many said they would help?
- Do you think that most of those people were sincere? And, why did they agree to your request?
- Why did other people disagree?
- How do you think we can find out if the people who agreed followed through?
- Did you learn anything interesting from the people you spoke with?
- What is something that is working for you that I can share with others who are doing this?
- What are you having a hard time with?
- Who will you talk with next, and how and where will you find them?
- And, are there other stewards or particular member leaders that need to be talked with about this same issue?

Section Two Review

Most people with leadership potential:

- a) Are outspoken in meetings
- b) Have a history of being the one in charge
- c) *Do not realize that they have leadership qualities*
- d) Want to be noticed

The answer is C - Leaders are often not self-selected and may not recognize their own leadership qualities or potential.

Potential leaders are recognizable by their ability to: [Choose all answers that apply]

- a) *Influence people*
- b) *Influence events*
- c) Recognize errors
- d) Recognize strangers

The answers are A and B - The ability to influence people and events demonstrates the influence of a leader. A leader is an agent for change and an example of what is possible.

If you believe someone is a potential leader, you should...

- a) Ask them to run for DLC president
- b) *Ask them to do a small task to test their ability to follow through*
- c) Ask them to chair the next meeting
- d) Ask them to be in charge of the rally

The answer is B - If you believe someone is a potential leader it's a good idea to

test them before giving them a leadership role. This allows you to see if they are truly a leader and if they can and will follow through.

Section Three: Developing Leadership

To begin to understand how to you can develop a potential leader, think back to the steps you took to get where you are. If you can remember what helped you, you will be better able to be a mentor to those potential leaders around you.

~~To begin to understand how to develop a potential leader, think back on the steps you took to get where you are.~~

Did you go to school, take courses or training? Did you work with an outside organization, or did you volunteer with a group that you care about?

Did you get help from a supervisor or co-worker who mentored you?

A leader has to develop the skills to lead. People develop those skills and the confidence to lead by being put in challenging situations. It is the organizer's job to find those small situations for the potential leaders; a place to start - and then step in to help them grow.

One way to develop a leader is to be a mentor - mentors give advice, but don't dictate how to do everything; and they let the developing leaders make their own decisions.

~~One way to develop a leader is to be a mentor - mentors make them think, give advice, but didn't dictate; and let them make their own decisions~~ Mentors frequently see qualities in a potential leader that they might not see in themselves.

A good mentor provides lots of opportunities for the person to observe the mentor, in other words the mentor models good leadership behavior.

They also look at mistakes as learning opportunities and help the leader realize the power of mistakes as well.

Mentors are *there* - they are available; and they recognize the importance of making time to simply talk things over.

For more information on mentoring, take the Leadership Academy course Governance 120: DLC Leadership

It is the organizer's job to find challenging situations for a potential leader, to help them start small, and to work with their different learning styles. As their mentor, recognize their potential and help them build on it.

To develop an individual leader, get their input and ideas on what union work they would like to do and make assignments based on their current skills and their availability. Follow through with this and mentor current and potential leaders to develop necessary skills as well as to facilitate opportunities for members to support and teach each other.

Section Three Review

One way to develop a leader is to: [Choose all that apply]

a) Give them a challenging situation

b) Be a mentor

c) *Model leadership behavior*

d) *Ask what they are interested in*

The answer is all of the above - Developing a leader can be done in a wide variety of ways - match your development activities with your skills and the potential leader's skills and interests.

Remembering how you were mentored will:

a) *Make you more outspoken in meetings*

b) *Help you mentor others*

c) *Recognize strengths and weaknesses*

d) *Help you be liked by all members*

The answer is B - To begin to understand how you can develop a potential leader, think back on the steps you took to get where you are. If you can remember what helped you, you will be better able to mentor those potential leaders around you.

An effective mentor:

a) *Knows all of the members*

b) *Attends every DLC event*

c) *Lets the developing leader make their own decisions*

d) *Wants to be noticed*

The answer is C - mentors give advice, but didn't dictate; and let the developing leaders make their own decisions.

~~One way to develop a leader is to: [Choose all answers that apply]~~

~~a) Give them a challenging situation~~

~~b) Be a mentor~~

~~c) Model leadership behavior~~

~~d) Ask what they are interested in~~

~~The answer is all of the above -- Developing a leader can be done in a wide variety of ways -- match your development activities with your skills and the potential leader's skills and interests.~~

~~Need more review questions~~

End of Course

This completes Organizing 310.

Your next step is to take and pass the Final Exam to finish this course.

This is an elective course. If you would like to earn a Certificate of Completion in the Organizing track you will need to take the required courses: Organizing 100, 110, 120, and 200.