

Internal Ground Rules for Bargaining Committees

Discipline and unity within the bargaining (Meet and Confer/JLMC) committee are key factors in effective and successful negotiations. One of the most important (and difficult) elements in negotiations is to work through differences and to maintain unity and trust among the team members. It is also important that management perceives our team as cohesive and strong, and is unable to prey upon what they perceive as weaknesses or disagreements within the committee.

The following ground rules have been designed to keep us strong and united:

1. Be on time for all meetings.
2. Enter and leave the negotiations room together.
3. Keep a poker face at the table.
4. Don't engage in separate side conversations with management at the table.
5. Pay attention and take notes.
6. The Union has only one voice. Unless planned beforehand, only one person should speak at a time. Never disagree or contradict each other at the table. If there is disagreement, send a note to request a caucus.
7. Never make a proposal or respond to a management proposal or counter proposal before discussing it with the full committee in a caucus. Do not give personal opinions unless you know they reflect the opinion of the committee.
8. Don't exaggerate or lie. If management learns the true facts, your credibility and that of the whole team will be impaired.
9. Jointly plan a report to the membership after each session with a uniform message so the membership hears the same message.
10. Don't discuss negotiations with management away from the table. Committee members should direct such inquiries to the bargaining table. Remember, when you speak you are representing the whole committee and the Union!