

Solving Worksite Problems Through Organizing

SkillBrief

- *What is the problem? Is it an issue that people care about?*

The issue needs to be important enough that people will take some action on it; it needs to be winnable, at least in part.

- *What is the solution? How do you want this problem resolved?*

You will need to define the problem and have a clear, winnable demand. Know what compromises you can make and what your bottom line is.

- *Who can solve the problem? Who is your target?*

Who has final decision-making power? Is there more than one person involved? Can you get directly to that person?

- *Who is on your side? Who are your potential allies?*

- Which workers are affected by this issue? Other departments, other shifts, other classifications?
- Who else in the worksite does this issue affect? Are there people outside of the worksite that would care about this issue?

- *What is your plan? What is your strategy?*

- What can you do to bring this problem to management's attention?
- What can you do that will involve the people affected?
- What can you do that will put enough pressure on management to make them solve the problem?
- What if they say 'no;' how can you put more pressure on them? How can you escalate your campaign?
- What is your timetable? When will things happen?

- *What will you do? What are your tactics?*

- Tactics should be things people are willing to do, they should be fun, they should be something that can include a lot of people and that have different roles for different people. Your tactics should start out 'small,' something that is familiar and comfortable to members, and they should build in a level of commitment, difficulty and impact.

For example:

- Signing petitions and delivering them as a group
 - Meeting with management as a group
 - Filing group grievances
 - Having a button or sticker day
 - Informal picket
 - Contacting allies in the community such as church groups, community groups, politicians, etc., and asking them to write letters, appear at a rally or lead a prayer vigil
 - Unity breaks
 - Actions
 - Rallies
 - Requesting lots of information the union is entitled to
 - Wearing armbands
 - Going to OSHA as a group to file a complaint
- *How will people know what's going on? How will you communicate with them so they can get involved?*

One-on-one or in small groups is the best way to communicate with people. It gives them a chance to ask questions, to talk about ideas they have. To do this, you need to have a communication system in place. For example:

- Do you know your worksite, where everyone works, what shift, who is a member and who's not?
 - Do you know the best way to contact your members? Do you have their home phone number and their email?
 - Does each department and each shift know who their steward is?
 - Do stewards and/or committee members have a system for keeping members updated? Possibilities include meetings at lunch, meetings in members' homes or a one-on-one system.
 - Is there a local or worksite newsletter? How is it distributed? When you pass out information do you use it as an 'excuse' to talk with members or just leave it for them?
 - Is union information regularly posted on bulletin boards?
 - Do you know who is best approached by whom in your work area?
 - How quickly can you reach all of your members?
- *How are things going? Is it time to evaluate?*

All plans need evaluations. Sometimes it's just a quick end-of-the-day 'how did the meeting go,' 'did we reach our goal in getting the petition signed in X department.' Sometimes it's more lengthy and in-depth. You won't know if you are on target or if the plan is working if you don't evaluate what's happening from time to time.