

# STEWARD'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## UNION:

I WILL BUILD THE UNION  
WITH EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

## POWER:

I WILL HELP PEOPLE LEARN  
TO EMPOWER THEMSELVES,  
PERSONALLY AND  
COLLECTIVELY.



# WORK ACTIONS AND UNION BUILDING

## WHAT IS AN ACTION?

It's an activity related to an issue that gets the membership involved. It is usually part of a larger strategy to address an issue felt widely by a number of people.

## WHY WOULD WE DO WORKPLACE ACTIONS?

It empowers people by giving them the opportunity to do something about their problem. It builds solidarity and strengthens the Union. It can be effective. It builds leadership in others. It is usually more fun!

## WHY, THEN, DON'T WE ACTIONS MORE OFTEN?

We are conditioned to "fixing" peoples' problems for them. Unions are recognizing the need to change our way of thinking about that and about the way we conduct the business of the Union on a daily basis.

It also feels like more work initially. For example, for a health and safety action that affects many people, the steward first meet with the affected employees to develop a strategy. Combined strategies could include a march to the office of the Health and Safety representative. It could also include a "group" grievance where everyone affected presents testimony. All this takes more time to prepare.

Organizing events requires communication with all involved. There may be more time spent initially, but the payoffs are great and well worth it.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PAYOFFS?

Involving more people in the Union means that there will be more people to carry on the work of the Union. Perhaps some of these people would be willing to serve as a steward themselves one day, or be willing to assist the steward in other job actions.

Seeing the results of actions is a very energizing and positive feeling. It becomes our agenda instead of the boss' agenda. Building enthusiasm into others will help you maintain it in all your steward activities.

A stronger Union means a greater ability to accomplish the changes we are trying to make whether it is in the workplace or at the bargaining table. Anytime we have greater visibility and show management that we are strong and willing to stand together and take collective action when needed, the more we are taken seriously.

# Checklist for Choosing an Issue

A good issue is one that matches most of these criteria.

The issue should:

1. **Result in a Real Improvement in Peoples' Lives**  
If you can see and feel the improvements, then you know you have won.
2. **Give the Members a Sense of Their Own Power**  
We should approach issues in a way that people develop "ownership" of the issue and come away from the action with a sense that the victory was won by them. This builds confidence and loyalty to the Union.
3. **Alter the Relations of Power**  
Building a strong Local Union with involved members creates a new center of power that is beneficial to those members and contributes to a strong statewide organization.
4. **Be Worthwhile**  
Members should feel they are fighting for something about which they feel good and is worth the effort.
5. **Be Winnable**  
It is essential that we take on "winnable" issues. The members must be able to see from the start there is a good chance of winning, or at least we have a good strategy for winning. Ask who else has won on this issue and how and get advice from people with experience. Don't become patron saints for lost causes.
6. **Be Widely Felt**  
Many members must feel strongly about the issue. It is not enough that a few people feel very strongly about the issue.
7. **Be Deeply Felt**  
People must not only agree, but feel strongly enough to do something about it. It is not enough that many people agree, but do not feel strongly.
8. **Be Easy to Understand**
9. **Have a Clear Target**  
The target is the person who can give you what you want.
10. **Have a Clear Time Frame that Works for You**  
Your strategy should have a timeframe.
11. **Be Non-Divisive**  
Avoid issues that divide the membership. Also watch out for issues that might divide us from the clients or the public.
12. **Build Leadership**  
There should be many roles for members to play.
13. **Have a Pocketbook Angle**  
Issues involving money usually are more widely or deeply felt.
14. **Be Consistent With the Union's Values**  
The issues we invest the Union's time and energy on should be ones that reflect our values.

Adapted from: Organizing for Social Change, Midwest Academy

# TACTICS FOR JOB ACTIONS

"Tactics means doing what you can with what you have."

*Saul Alinsky*

"We will either find a way or make one."

*Hannibal*

## **Solidarity Actions**

- Button Days
- Color Days
- Balloon Days
- Mass Bargaining Committees
- Lunch Time Meetings
- Rallies
- Petitions
- Support Pledges

## **Guerrilla Theater Actions**

- Proxy Lobbying
- Votes of No Confidence
- Funeral Processions
- Organize Trials
- Human Billboards
- Unlimited

## **Political Actions**

- Lobbying (Mass, Individual, Team)
- Election Involvement
- Post Card Campaigns to Elected Officials
- Letter Writing Campaign
- Petition Drives to Elected Officials
- Phone-call Campaigns
- Newspaper/Media Advertisements

## **Confrontational Actions**

- Informational Picketing (Worksite, Key Events, Elected Officials Homes)
- Leafleting
- Phone Jam Campaigns
- Strike Votes

## **Coalition Actions**

- Client/Client-family Involvement
- Community Organizations Involvement
- Citizen Involvement
- Letters to the Editor

## **Direct Actions**

- Work to Rule
- Strike
- Unstrike
- Inside Game Tactics
- Sit-Down Strike

# MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGNS

## 1. **Identify the desired outcome**

*What do you want to accomplish? What is your main objective? This should be realistic and truly reflect what the group wants to do. The people affected must be able to develop the plan. Local leadership can help but the work and the ideas should come from the group.*

## 2. **Develop a Message**

*Develop a message that reflects the objective. A theme or message is something that should resonate well with people. It is a good idea to perfect a campaign theme and be sure people who are involved know the message and what it means.*

*This must be a positive message. You also want to consider if this is something that will be used externally (with the public).*

## 3. **Select Tactics**

*Brainstorm ideas. What activities are you going to do that will get members involved in the strategy? What will be an easy activity for people to do? Make it fun. Remember the rules of brainstorming: no idea is a bad one. After people are allowed to offer ideas, select the best one(s). You are limited only by your imagination.*

*Escalate tactics. Start with something small and easy for people to do. If the first tactic does not work, have a second "plan" in place with additional tactics. Do this until you believe you can be successful.*

## 4. **Prepare a Calendar**

*Establish a timeline. This is a critical part of planning. People need times certain to know when they need to complete a project.*

## 5. **Determine who is responsible for what**

*Be clear about specific assignments. Indicate what needs to be done and the date it needs to be done by. Identify who is responsible for each task. Spread the work around among the group and try to get each person to take responsibility for something.*