

Rousing Justice: ‘Tips and Tools’ for Effective Organizing →

Organizing is the primary way in which our voices as workers can grow and become stronger. This is why workers need to organize politically as we all know the labour movement has contributed to a more just society; but it is continually being hammered against. Because those in power will not rest, we must not either!

The political climate plays a HUGE part in how the labour movement moves forward, so it is important to get involved and fight for what you think is right. Incorporating organizing into your everyday life can make all the difference in issues you care about:

- Don't think people should be working AND living in poverty? *Develop a petition and gather signatures!*
- Don't like the new SEA legislation? *Write a letter to your MLA!*

When we recognize a problem, we need to get out there, join our brothers and sisters, and demonstrate how it should be fixed. Getting involved makes a difference. You will find allies, make friends and build a team to engage in these issues with. We must ensure that those in power are held in check and are held accountable, but that means getting involved.

Organizing is more than getting the non-unionized to sign cards. We use organizing every day when we are trying to achieve a common goal or vision. Whether we are building the union in the workplace or creating social change in our communities, we can only be successful through collective action and by joining forces with our allies. This toolkit will assist you by providing some strategies and skills for everyday organizing, (with the help of Si Kahn¹, a notable community organizer).

We hope these tips will help you on your way to making positive changes! But we want you to keep in mind that organizing is forever fluid and can be adapted to different situations. Try out these tips but aim to be accepting of new approaches – experimenting is central to organizing – just be sure to be conscious of what works for you!

¹ http://www.alternet.org/story/145924/20_principles_for_successful_community_organizing

12 Tips to get you started!

1. Many people are motivated primarily by self-interest. As an effective organizer, it is important to try to figure out people's *COMMON* self-interest. This initiative cannot be overstated as common self-interest builds trust and captures the attention of the people you are aiming to organize ("if everyone else is so concerned about _____, maybe I should look into this...") Common interest acts as the glue that binds social justice movements and campaigns.

2. When thinking about your strategy in communication, begin by visualizing that moment just before victory. Imagine each person as an opportunity to become an amazing leader and activist! Then, working backwards from your vision, do your best to figure out the steps that will lead to that moment.

3. While knocking on doors may be a thrill to some, others may feel uncomfortable. If this is the case for you, start by talking with people you're comfortable around – the more you talk about issues you're concerned about, the more comfortable you'll be when approaching new people. We suggest role playing with your friends/family!

4. Keep in mind three important words – Go, Listen, Build. Go to where the people are that you want to organize – listen to what they have to say – build on their concerns with links to your campaign.

5. Teamwork is essential. In any good organizing campaign, there are many people involved – not only does it make organizing more fun, it allows for different perspectives and ideas. Even better, it lessens the workload! Ensure that *everyone* who is interested in helping out is given the opportunity to take on a role in organizing - this is especially useful if you have a newcomer to activism - give them something to do but make it easy, such as working the 'sign in table' at a meeting.

6. You need to trust in human beings and our ability to find a *COMMON* connection – even through our differences, a commonality can somehow be reached. To do that, leave your stereotypes at the door – this is relevant in all forms of communication.

7. There's a rumour that suggests protests and marches were only useful in the 1960s - that today, we need to find less confrontational methods to make our voices heard. Do not believe this - direct action has been proven to be an amazing form of attention seeking as well as solidarity building, especially for new activists. If you are not comfortable with these methods, remember there are no risks in attending meetings, being heard, engaging in letter-writing. Any action beats remaining silent.

8. Ensure that you and those around you during a campaign are aware and understand the risks – there's a very real possibility that something may go wrong. Ask a staff person within your local union to canvas the risks and/or negotiate the return to work. Ask them to assist so that everyone understands the potential risks and consequences before making the decision to act. Being genuine with people is important both for yourself and those you work with.

9. A huge asset in organizing is being able to trigger a deep thought process. Aim to structure your questions in a way that allows people to think deeply about your question. Asking your questions like this not only pushes people to think critically, but may also cause people to think in unexpected ways. Try not to ask 'yes or no' questions - if the person does not know the answer, give them time – this approach also allows for a follow-up conversation and therefore greater potential involvement.

10. You know what *really* helps? Laughter. Laughter is proven to be healing and beneficial – it can also provide hope. Be optimistic in the face of hardship, and help others feel that way. Body language is a huge tool in displaying both negativity and positivity. People are more likely to maintain a relationship with the campaign and you if you present yourself with a welcoming and cheerful demeanor.

11. Humanize the organizing goals – people can better relate to and build trust with the use of personal stories – relate your goals to the community around you.

12. Face-to-face communication matters. Even in the Internet/Information age, personal relationships still count, especially when you're asking people to do something. Face-to-face contact is still proven to be the best way to form relationships and communities – go door knocking, it's more fun than you'd think!!