

Ten Steps to a Union Voice

Things don't improve until you and your co-workers get involved on the job. Here are some ways you can work together to get union representation. Your right to freely choose a representative is guaranteed by the National Labor Relations Act. All you really need is the will of you and your co-workers.

Step 1: Discuss Issues With Your Co-Workers

First, initiate confidential discussions with your co-workers as you embark on the road to building the union and to make things better on the job. By having these private discussions, you can figure out whether or not there are other workers who might be interested in organizing.

Step 2: Make the Call

Second, call the UAW Union in your area. There may be a particular Local Union that specializes in organizing UAW local unions in your city. Try the <http://www.uaw.org/> to see who is in your area.

Step 3: Set Up a Meeting

A UAW representative needs to meet with members of your small group. There, you can ask questions on what it takes to build a union. When you and your co-workers agree that the UAW Union is the best union to organize with, you use this initial meeting to develop a basic plan to organize your workplace.

Step 4: Build the Union. Create a *Strong, United Organizing Committee*

Your UAW organizer will help you and your co-workers craft an organizing plan. Your organizing committee needs to be composed of key leaders from each Department, shift, site or craft. You will also want to make sure that your committee reflects the diversity within your workplace. Diversity on your committee will ensure that the effort reflects the interests of everyone on the job, not the interests of a few.

Step 5: Draw a Picture of the Workplace

It's important to "map out" what the workplace looks like and who works where. Lists and charts are developed so that your organizing committee can assess the sentiments of the whole group and identify work areas where the committee might concentrate its efforts.

Step 6: Information is Power

As the organizing committee forms and undertakes some basic assignments, such as identifying who works with whom, other committee members will help the UAW organizer make sense of the information including:

- **Workers**

Names, titles, positions, departments or sections, shifts, status (full or part-time), addresses, extensions, pagers, e-mail addresses or fax numbers.

- **Worksite**

Departments, sections, staffing requirements, other unions, supervisory personnel, organizational chart, etc.

- **Employer**

All pertinent information, including address, other sites, including work sites, product lines or services, customers, labor relations history, competitors, financial information, parent company or subsidiaries, strategic partnerships or impending mergers or acquisitions, corporate attorneys, consultants, vendors or suppliers.

- **Community**

List of community organizations, leaders, interest groups, employer partners, etc.

Step 7: Issue Identification

The organizing committee begins to identify the issues that workers care about. These might include having a voice on the job, better wages, safer working conditions, discrimination, improved health care or pension, etc. Once the committee identifies who cares about which issues, it will work with the UAW organizer to develop a game plan to call attention to these issues. Usually, the organizer develops informational literature that helps focus the organizing campaign on issues that relate to the workers wants and needs.

Step 8: Training & Sign Up

As the organizing committee grows and develops, the UAW organizer will want to train committee members on what to expect and how to reach out to their co-workers. One of the most important aspects of the organizing campaign is when committee members ask co-workers to sign Authorization Cards. The goal of this project is to secure overwhelming support and a solid majority of cards before proceeding on to the election phase of the campaign.

Step 9: The Union Election

The signed cards are used to petition the federal labor board or authority to schedule an election. Before the date is set, the labor board will determine which workers are eligible to vote in the union election. During this time, the organizing committee must maintain focus on workplace issues and continue signing up workers. Once an election date is set, the organizing drive heats up. Workers continue to recruit union supporters as election day approaches. Winning requires that the organizing committee and its supporters stand up to the employer campaign that is always focused on destroying confidence and unity. When the union wins, the employer must recognize the union and bargain a contract.

Step 10: Negotiate!

The organizing campaign continues as workers press for a first contract. The contract should address the needs and wants of the workers, from fair wages and job security to better health care or pension. The contract is negotiated by worker representatives and their union representatives and forms the basis for more improvements in the years to come.