

Managing the Local



MODULE 1: WORKSITE CHECKUP

WHAT DOES A WELL-ORGANIZED WORKSITE LOOK LIKE?

The Association is visible in the worksite to members and administration.

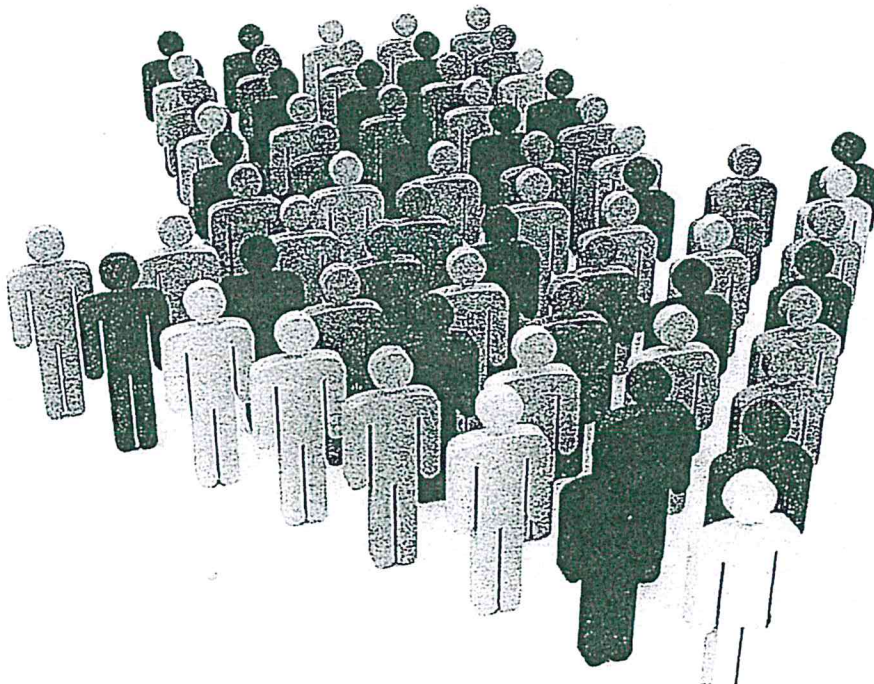
1. Association Representatives or Association Leaders make regular walk-throughs and have relationships with all members and potential members.
2. There is at least one Association Representative in every worksite.
3. Membership meetings happen regularly, are well-attended, and noticed by others.
4. Association Leaders attend every new-employee orientation.
5. There is regular communication through up-to-date bulletin boards, member-to-member communication, fliers, and newsletters.

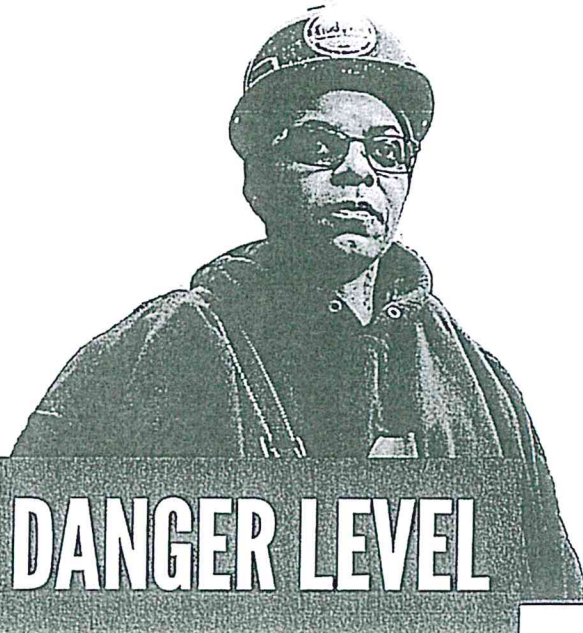
The Association defends and enforces the contract and work standards.

1. Members mobilize and use collective action to solve everyday problems. Grievances are not the primary line of defense.
2. Contracts are widely available and promptly distributed, both electronically and in print.
3. Association Representatives are trained and empowered to resolve issues at the lowest level.
4. Administrators do not act unilaterally or abusively, because they know they will meet resistance.

Members own their union.

1. Members feel that their Association is strong and resolves problems.
2. Association Representatives provide members immediate access to resources to resolve their problems.
3. Members participate in Association-wide programs and campaigns.
4. Members are proud they belong to the Association.
5. Social events are well attended.





Labors Local 79

QUIZ: ASSESS YOUR DANGER LEVEL

Take this self-assessment to get a snapshot of how your union's current practices stack up and where you're vulnerable.

Like the stress test, this quiz works best as a conversation-starter. Hand it out in a meeting or steward training. Once everyone has filled it out and tallied up the scores, open the floor for discussion. The idea is to take an honest look at your union's strengths and weaknesses and identify some practical ways to improve.

Answer each question honestly, selecting not the answer you *wish* were true but the one that's closest to reality. Rank-and-file members can answer each question as it applies to their own worksites. Union leaders might want to consider an average worksite, or repeat the quiz to evaluate different worksites separately.

Then score yourself with the key.

1. What usually happens when a member approaches a steward with an individual grievance?

- A. No grievance is filed.
- B. A grievance is filed. The member waits six months to find out whether he won or lost.
- C. A grievance is filed. The member is given regular updates on how the grievance is going.
- D. A grievance is filed. The member works with the steward and attends grievance meetings.

Points: _____

2. What happens when a workplace problem arises that affects many people?

- A. Members are too afraid or unaware of their rights to file a grievance, much less take collective action.
- B. Members call for help, but the union representative doesn't act.

- C. Members call for help, and the union representative files a grievance.
- D. Members call for help, and the union representative works with them to make an action plan.

Points: _____

3. What is the average member's impression of a union meeting?

- A. "I have no idea when meetings happen or what they're about. I don't know anyone who goes."
- B. "Meetings are pointless. They read the minutes from last time, and the same five people talk."
- C. "Meetings are good for stewards to attend, but not for regular members like me."
- D. "I've attended useful union meetings on topics I cared about, or to help decide important questions."

Points: _____

4. New hires first learn about the union...

- A. When they notice money being taken out of their paycheck, or the employer badmouths the union.
- B. When they receive a newsletter in the mail.
- C. When a steward eventually meets with them.
- D. During orientation, when the union meets with all new hires right away.

Points: _____

5. Union stewards are...

- A. What's a steward?
- B. A small number of people who've had the role forever and are seen as ineffective.
- C. Competent but distant from most members. They can get the job done if you can get their attention.
- D. Numerous and active. They are always making the rounds and seeking out co-workers' concerns.

Points: _____

ADD UP YOUR SCORE

Key: A = 0 points, B = 1 point, C = 2 points, D = 3 points
Total: _____

0 to 10 points: Red Zone

You're at risk for a big drop in membership. If your union is going to survive, it's urgent to clean house. Look back at each question where you marked A or B; those are immediate areas to improve your union's practices. (D is the goal.) Which one can you start with?

11 to 20 points: Yellow Zone

Take heart—you're not starting from scratch, but you do have room for improvement. If you marked any As or Bs, those are danger areas to focus on first. If not, look at the Cs. For each one you can turn into a D, you will fortify your union against a possible employer attack.

21 points or more: Green Zone

You're doing well! Still, management never lets up—organizing is an ongoing project. Keep lifting up a vision that inspires members to fight. Anywhere you marked an answer other than D, that's an area where your union could improve.

6. When it's time to bargain...

- A. Proposals and progress are kept secret.
- B. We get regular updates on progress, but we play no role.
- C. A few members participate in some contract activities, such as an issue survey.
- D. Members help make the strategy and many participate in a series of actions building to a peak, such as a strike deadline.

Points: _____

7. After the union's most recent contract was settled, how did the average member feel about it?

- A. "We lost a lot. The employer walked all over us. Our union is useless."
- B. "It's a mixed bag. I wish our union fought harder for us."
- C. "We came out pretty well. I trust our bargainers did their best."
- D. "We got the best contract we could, because we made a smart plan and fought for it together."

Points: _____

8. If a new steward called the union office for a member list, what would be the response?

- A. "What list?"
- B. "We have a seniority list provided by the company."
- C. "We keep track of who is a member and who is not."
- D. "We keep track of membership status, contact information, and participation in union events."

Points: _____

9. A member tells a steward that she wants to get more involved. What's the most likely response?

- A. She is ignored or told that there's nothing going on.
- B. She is told to come to the next union meeting in three months.
- C. She is invited to a union social event next Thursday.
- D. She is asked to do something important, like hand out a bargaining survey.

Points: _____

10. What is the most common pitch union activists make about why everyone should be a union member?

- A. There is no pitch.
- B. "You can get a discount on movie tickets, and the union is your insurance on the job. It costs less than a cup of coffee."
- C. "The union is the reason you have this pay scale and benefits. It's unfair not to pay your share."
- D. "Management knows whether the union is strong or not. We need you to join so we can show our unity and act together."

Points: _____

JUMP-START A WEAK UNION FROM BELOW

What if you're caught in a union that's not doing a good job?

What if your union is mostly invisible, or only reaches out when there's a crisis, or doesn't fight for good contracts, or is too cozy with the boss? Perhaps when some rep comes around asking you to recommit, you and your co-workers are saying, "Really? Why should we?"

You might even be tempted to stop paying dues yourself, as a form of protest. Don't do it. In your heart you know workers need a union to have any shot at building power on the job.

But you also know your union needs dramatic changes. Here are some ideas on how to start making them:

- **Spend time with co-workers you trust and whose values you share.** Ask them: What kind of union would you like to be a part of? Be very practical—for example: "Would you like to hear more from officers about what's happening in bargaining?" Offer examples, but mostly listen.

- **Brainstorm goals collectively, and reach out to others who might be receptive.** Use that to build a network. You might even develop a statement that expresses your "Vision for the Union."

- **Take action.** The best way to show the value of what a union can be is by getting members involved in solving problems in their own worksites. You don't need to wait for permission—just start talking among yourselves about what the problem is, what solutions you'd propose, and how you're going to work together to bring it to the boss.

- **Reflect on your organizing as a group, and brainstorm next steps.** Is it time to run a slate for stewards or for higher offices?

Warning: This bottom-up approach to problem-solving on the job might fly in the face of your union's way of doing things. Some of your co-workers and officers might be dismissive of your efforts, or even hostile. Stay steady, be patient, and keep going.

LOCAL UNION SELF-ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Contact with Members

- 1) Does our local have an accurate, up-to-date database of all members? YES NO
- 2) What information is included in the database and what information should be added?

- 3) Does our local have the members' personal (non-employer) email addresses? YES NO
- 4) Do our members benefit from the local newsletter? YES NO N/A
- 5) Does our local effectively use social media? If so, which forms? YES NO
- 6) How often does our local hold general membership meetings? How well are they attended?

Member Involvement

- 1) How many of our bargaining unit members are agency fee payers? _____
- 2) What percentage of our members has participated in union-sponsored events (membership meetings, rallies, social activities, community or political action, etc.) this year? _____
- 3) What events and meetings does our local currently organize for our members?

- 4) What are our local's most attended events/activities?

- 5) What are our local's least attended events/activities?

- 6) What committees does our local have (*e.g.*, grievance, public relations, membership, PAC, negotiations, etc.)?

New Members

- 1) Does our local have a new member welcome event? YES NO
- 2) Does our local have a new member coordinator/committee? YES NO
- 3) Does our local supply information to new members? YES NO
- 4) Does our local provide ongoing activities for newer members? YES NO

Union Officers

- 1) Does the local constitution clearly define current officer responsibilities? YES NO
- 2) Does the local provide a handbook for union officers? YES NO
- 3) Do union officers meet regularly with rank-and-file members? YES NO
- 4) Do union officers receive a stipend? YES NO

Union Reps

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1) Do union reps have clearly defined responsibilities? | YES | NO |
| 2) Does our local offer trainings for union reps? | YES | NO |
| 3) Does the local provide a handbook for union reps? | YES | NO |
| 4) Do union reps meet regularly with rank-and-file members? | YES | NO |
| 5) Do union reps receive a stipend? | YES | NO |

Local Capacity

- 1) What is the annual local dues amount? _____
- 2) Do you maintain a reserve fund? If so, how much money is this fund? _____
- 3) How many union days are provided in the contract? _____
- 4) Does the local president have release time? If so, how much? _____
- 5) Do other union leaders have any release time? If so, how much? _____

Connections to NYSUT, Community Groups and Labor Groups

- 1) Which of the following does our local send members to:
NYSUT conferences/trainings, NYSUT RA, AFT and/or NEA conventions, NYSUT E.D. meetings, LIPC, TALI, VOTE-COPE/PAC meetings, LI Federation of Labor, Health & Safety Workshops, other _____
- 2) Do representatives of our local attend school board meetings? YES NO
- 3) Does our local have a public relations person/spokesperson? YES NO
- 4) Does our local have coalitions with any of the following: labor unions, religious groups, businesses, PTAs, senior citizen groups, retiree chapters, other? YES NO
- 5) Does our local collaborate regularly with other unions in the district? YES NO
- 6) In what community service projects/events does our local participate?

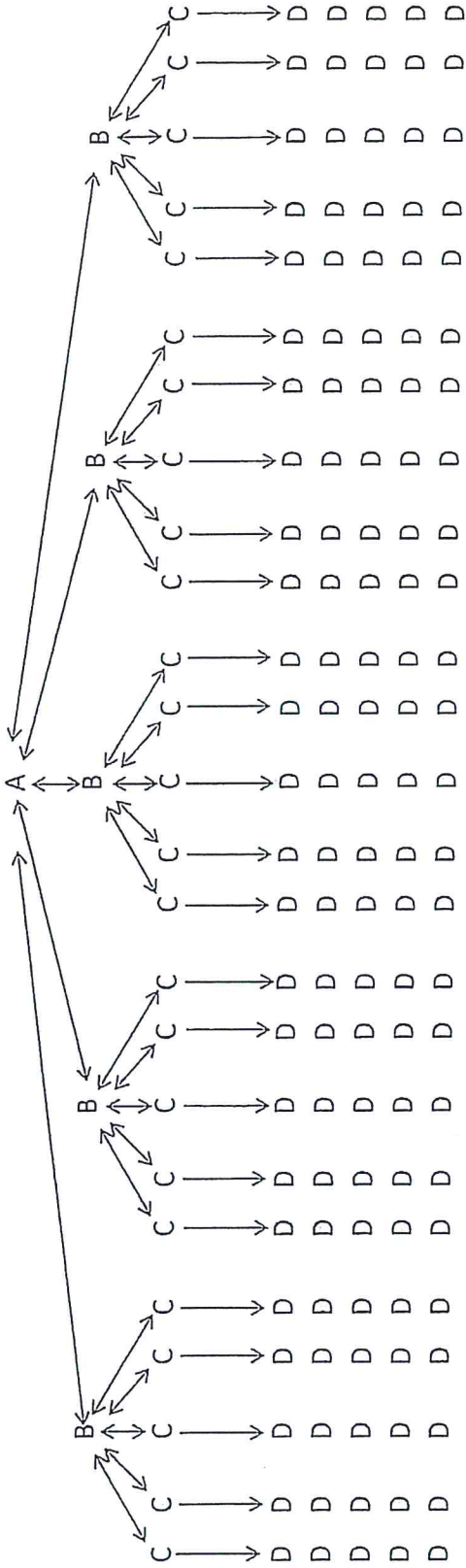
Political Action

- 1) Does our local endorse political candidates? YES NO
- 2) Does our local distribute political information to members? YES NO
- 3) Do our members utilize NYSUT's Member Action Center (MAC) to make phone calls, send emails or write to legislators in support of NYSUT's legislative positions? YES NO
- 4) Is our local active in school board elections and budget votes? YES NO
- 5) Do our members phone bank for elections? YES NO
- 6) What percentage of our members is registered to vote? _____
- 7) What percentage of our registered members voted in 2010? _____ In 2012? _____
- 8) What percentage of our members contributes to VOTE-COPE? _____
- 9) What is our average per-member VOTE-COPE contribution? _____

Other

- 1) Does our local have a plan to encourage and develop new leaders? YES NO
- 2) Does our local encourage and train members to become actively involved? YES NO
- 3) Does our local utilize goal-setting on annual basis? YES NO
- 4) Does our local establish a local calendar of events to share with the membership? Y N
- 5) Is our local proactive or reactive in its regular operation? PROACTIVE REACTIVE

Union One to One Conversation Structure

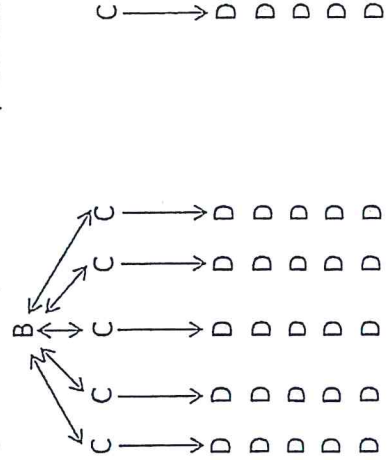


Member A talks to five members "B"
 Members B talk to five members "C"
 Members C talk to members "D"

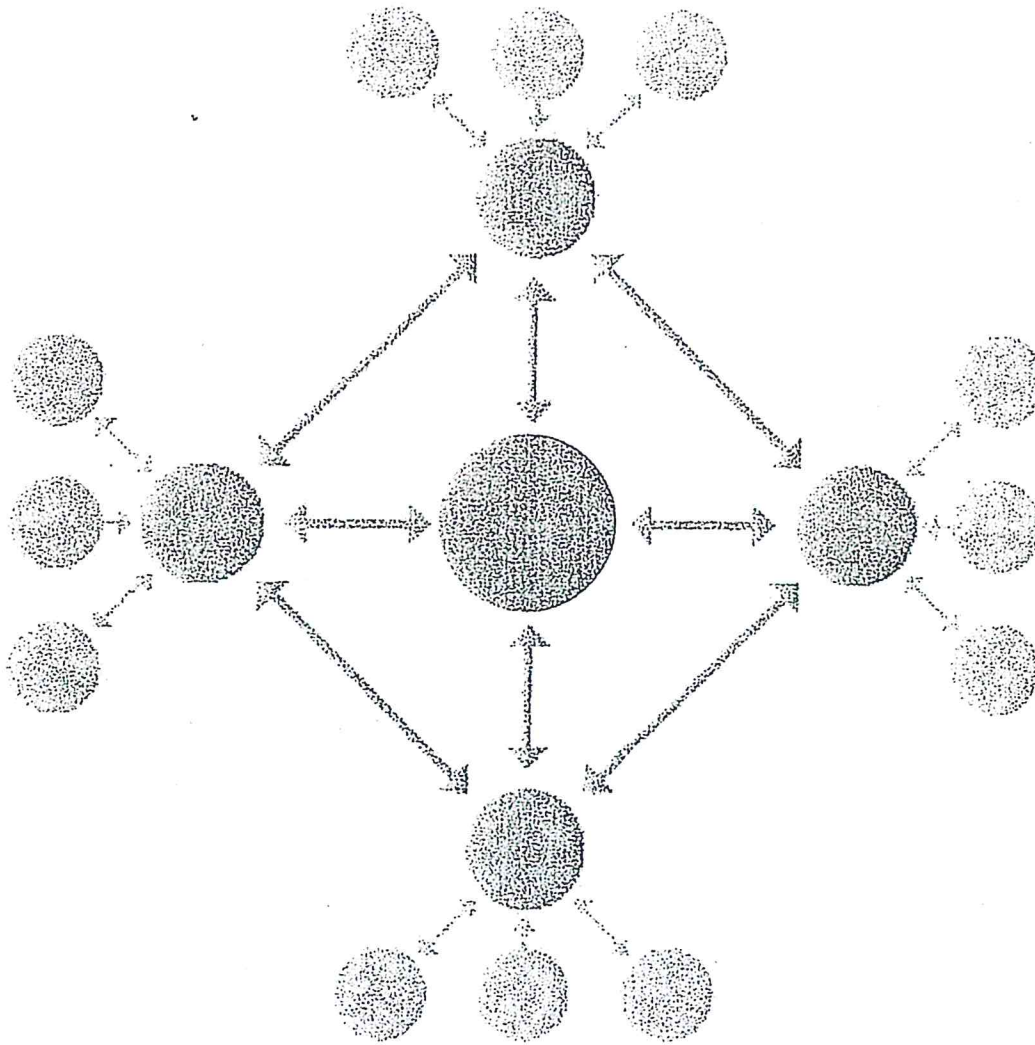
After Member C has talked to all 5 D members then Member C reports back to Member B
 After Member B has talked to all 5 C members then Member B reports back Member A

Minivan or other technology can be used to replace the reporting back from C to B and B to A.

This model reaches 156 members and provides feedback in a very short turnaround. It can be expanded or reduced by adding more at any level but keep the ratio as close as 1:7 as possible.



A PROVEN STRUCTURE FOR EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS



Can you envision how your local roles and responsibilities could fit into this 'snowflake' structure?

CAUSES OF APATHY

Workers are not born apathetic. Apathy is the product of real problems and feelings we may have such as:

- Fear of management
- Economic insecurity, fear of losing job
- Feeling isolated, powerless or hopeless about making positive change
- Confusion, don't know what's happening
- Lack of Knowledge, don't know your rights
- Feeling cynical because of bad experiences in the past
- Feeling individualistic, "I don't need anybody else"
- Feeling inferior or divided due to racism, sexism, misogyny, or professionalism
- Family or personal problems, illness, lack of transportation or childcare
- Other objections, my parents, my partner or my church object



If we blame people for their apathy, they just become defensive or even more apathetic.

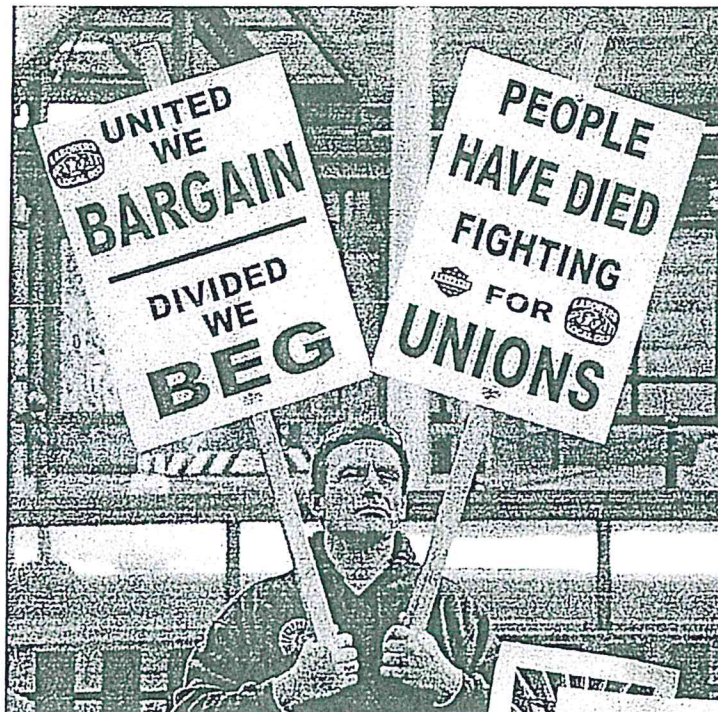
But if we understand why a particular member feels apathetic, we may be able to help them overcome the problem that's holding them back. Our own

reasons for activity may give us some positive ideas to counteract apathy.

REASONS FOR ACTIVITY

Union activity can give us something special that we don't get on the day-to-day routine of most jobs.

- Collective power to improve conditions
- A way to solve problems
- A chance to participate in planning and decision-making
- Respect and self-esteem
- A chance to work with people in an equal, democratic and supportive way
- Responsibility and challenge to make a better world
- A chance for education, exposure to new ideas and people
- Friendship and a feeling of belonging
- A sense of purpose, being part of a cause bigger than any one of us.



As individuals, active union people can either help overcome membership apathy, or make it worse.

Here's a few points to keep in mind:

1. Don't.....blame the membership for the problem of apathy.

It only makes the problem worse. The membership will pick up on your negative attitude and stay away from the union.

2. Do..... blame the management for membership apathy.

Remember – management is hard at work to encourage apathy among the membership.

3. Don't.....take a management attitude towards the membership.

If the membership feels you are looking down on them, apathy will increase.

4. Do..... treat the membership as equals and with respect.

Remember – we get involved and stay involved because union activity gives us things management denies us at work: challenge, creativity, equality, and respect.

5. Don't.... expect people to break the habit of apathy overnight.

If we expect people to go from little or no union involvement to a high degree of commitment and involvement in one giant step, we'll be setting ourselves up for failure and disappointment.

6. Do..... increase the membership's involvement step by step.

It takes time to develop the habit of union involvement. Our job is to find a level of involvement that people can handle and then to slowly increase their commitment and activity.

7. Don't.... think the problem of worker apathy can't be solved.

That's what management wants us to think.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR UNION ACTIVISTS

Which of the following would you be willing to participate in?

<i>JOB</i>	<i>TIME REQUIRED</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> New Employees Welcome Committee - meet with new hires, give packet, employees discuss union, serve as a "buddy"	1-4 hours per new
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefit/Insurance Expert - learn about insurance programs and answer employee questions	1 hour per week
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Committee -	
<input type="checkbox"/> Write articles	1-2 hours per month
<input type="checkbox"/> Design or locate art work	1-2 hours per month
<input type="checkbox"/> Layout and editing	2-3 hours per month
<input type="checkbox"/> Distribute newsletter	½ hour per month
<input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin Board Committee -	
<input type="checkbox"/> Update items, solicit art work, posters, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Recreation Committee -	
<input type="checkbox"/> Organize softball or bowling league	4 hours start up time, plus participation
<input type="checkbox"/> Bring refreshments to social events	1 hour per event
<input type="checkbox"/> Workers Compensation Committee -	
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend training on discrimination laws	4 hour program
<input type="checkbox"/> Answer questions for employees concerned about race, sex, age, nationality, handicapped, or religious discrimination	1 hour per week
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Action Committee -	
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in union-related coalitions, such as CLUW, APRI, Rural Coalition, LCLAA, etc.	4 hour program
<input type="checkbox"/> Help at booth at state fair and other community events	1 hour per week
<input type="checkbox"/> Become community counselor	10 hours initial training, then 2 hours per month

- Political and Legislative Action -
 - Follow particular bill, keep in contact with legislator, keep local informed 1 hour per week on project
 - Attend a legislative hearing 4 hours per year
 - Attend breakfast meeting with legislature 2 hours per meeting
- Administrative Roles -
 - Help keep updated list of members and non-members, with addresses, phone numbers 1 hour per month

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Describe the volunteer need:

A. Why would someone want to volunteer in this capacity?

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

B. Why wouldn't someone want to (or be able to) volunteer in this capacity?

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

C. Are there creative ways to make this job more attractive to volunteers?

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

D. What incentives can be provided to volunteers?

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

E. Who or what groups of volunteers would be most interested in volunteering in this capacity?

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

F. What recruitment methods could be used to appeal to this (these) volunteer(s)?

1. _____ 4. _____

2. _____ 5. _____

3. _____ 6. _____

G. Who should recruit the volunteers? List names or titles.

1. _____ 3. _____

2. _____ 4. _____

MEMBER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Members of our local union are interested in sponsoring various community services. We know that many of our members are already active in the community and may have ideas about how we can work together with other organizations.

*Please take a few minutes to answer these questions. By answering them you are *not* committed to any action. We are just gathering information.

1. To which community organizations do you belong? (PTA, historical, society, church, ethnic club, women's rights group, etc.)

ORGANIZATIONS

2. Are you a volunteer for any community organization? Please describe briefly:

3. Do you have any special interests that you would want to share with or teach to other members of our local or to the community? (For example, sign language, CPR, photography, self-defense, etc.)

4. Are there special topics that you'd be interested in hearing about at a local meeting? (Alcoholism, financial planning, choosing child care, etc.)

5. Do you have any ideas about ways our local can work with community organizations you are involved with?

(Please print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (Work) _____ (Cell) _____