



# STEWARDS CORNER

Monthly Newsletter for Union Stewards

## Organizing on the Job

You are not alone! We constantly hear that Local Union leaders are concerned that members don't get more involved. Yes, attendance at Local meetings is often not what we hope. And yes, local meetings are important; they are where we conduct important Union business. But, to grow our Locals, we need to meet our members where they are, in the workplace and in the midst of their busy lives. We can build our Union when we focus time and energy on what our members care about and engage them in the Union in ways they are best able to contribute.

There's no simple formula or 'hack' for union-building. It requires listening, making lists, taking notes, following up, and asking for help. It requires internal organizing. These elements are crucial to engaging members effectively. If done well, your hard work will pay off when your members step up in small and large ways... and... maybe even attend a Local Union meeting.

### WHAT MATTERS TO MEMBERS?

Do you know what's important to the members you work with? Sometimes, you can't not know when there's a hot button issue; members are constantly telling you. Other times, you have to spend some time with members. You will pick up their concerns over a couple of interactions. **Asking questions, listening, making lists,** and **taking notes** are essential tools in these conversations.

If you want to learn what's going on and build relationships with members, spend less time telling people and more time asking questions about what they like and dislike about work... and listen. What is happening in their lives?..and listen. You get the idea. As a union, we should give people the opportunity to feel heard.

Lists and notes help you remember important details and remind you what you need to follow up on. Many local leaders find carrying a pocket notepad helpful. Or if you're a digital sort of person, there are apps on your phone like Evernote that can help. The follow-up is key. It's easy to let things slip between work, Union, and family responsibilities, but that's the last thing you want to happen. You are building relationships, and not following up can destroy all the work you are putting in.

### USE THE 'PSA' MODEL TO ASK FOR HELP.

Do you need help organizing a bucket drop for a member who's recovering from a car accident? Or maybe you need to get everyone on your shift to wear Union t-shirts for solidarity

action(s) in support of bargaining? Or need someone to help with the local newsletter? You need to ask; people don't know what you need unless you ask— A good, effective 'ask' has three parts: a **problem**, a **solution**, and an **action**.

It starts with a problem that the Local Union needs to solve:

- a. *Did you hear about the car accident Joe Hill was in last week? He's home from the hospital now, but he's going to be off work for a while.*
- b. *Just giving you an FYI on bargaining – the company is dragging its feet on wages and health care.*
- c. *I've been working on putting together a newsletter, but I don't know how to do the layout.*

The second part is the solution to the problem:

- a. *We want to do a bucket drop outside the gates on shift changes tomorrow. Joe will be out for a while, and we want to help his family through this rough patch.*
- b. *We need to wear out red Union tee shirts tomorrow. Everyone should wear one to show management that these conversations are occurring, and we don't like what's happening in bargaining.*
- c. *To make it happen, I need to find someone who knows how to do layout and design.*

The third part is the action to fix the problem:

- a. *Can you help us? You're in a pretty good spot to handle the B gates at the evening shift change, and you know a lot of people on the incoming crew because you just transferred from it.*
- b. *Will you wear your shirt tomorrow? Also, if you see the people in the hematology lab, can you pass this message on to them? That's right across the HR department, and it'll send a strong message if they're decked out in union shirts.*
- c. *I saw the work you did for your daughter's basketball league. You are really good with design. If I give you all the content, can you help design a two-page newsletter?*

The PSA model is based on hope: it starts with a problem and gives people an opportunity to help solve it. Hope is contagious, and it's one of the best feelings to build a strong and effective Union.

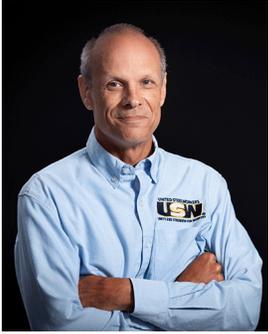


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Take the time to check out our free USW courses on-line at: [education.usw.org](http://education.usw.org)



## Union Leaders and Stewards: What You Need to Know About a Union Approach to Safety and Health



Steve Sallman  
USW Director of  
Safety, Health, and  
Environment

The union has twin goals of a union safety and health program; to improve working conditions and build the union. These goals are equally important. In fact, you cannot do either one well unless you do both.

It's important to understand that management and the union have different safety and health goals. Management may care about safety in its own right, but may be more concerned with, regulatory compliance, production, workers' compensation costs and public image. Building the union is never one

of management's goals.

Safety and health issues are not just technical, although technical knowledge is sometimes helpful, strategy and organization are much more important.

Every local union needs a Union-only Safety and Health Committee and a Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee (LMSHC). It's a good idea to have a LMSHC, with representatives from both the union and management. They can identify health and safety issues and determine actions to deal with them as well as a good way to resolve ongoing problems. The union-only committee can be made up of union members on the LMSHC and can also include union leaders and activists. The union side of the labor-management committee should meet by themselves as often as they meet with management. Separate meetings are important to set union priorities and do strategic planning. Can you imagine what would happen if your bargaining committee met only with the company at contract time, and never by itself?

Never, ever, allow the company to appoint your safety and health representatives, to veto the union's choices, to be the only ones to set the meetings' agenda, or to dismiss your reps from their union positions.

Safety programs that focus on worker behavior tell our members that they are the problem. We believe that our members and their union are the solution. Hazards are the problem!

All work-related injuries and illnesses are the result of exposure to hazards - there are no exceptions. To work safely, hazards must be eliminated or reduced, and barriers to safety (e.g. production pressures, excessive job demands, fatigue, poor training, inadequate tools, etc.) must be removed. The best way to find hazards is for union safety and health reps to talk with workers about his or her job, and how to make it safer and easier.

Union reps, should think of themselves as organizers, promoting safety and health in a way that builds the membership's loyalty and commitment. That means involving members whenever possible, and communicating with them effectively, both in written form and in-person. Enlisting members in pushing for improvements is a good way to bring the membership together to create a safer workplace and a stronger union.

Celebrate our wins. It is important for the union to celebrate our wins, every time we succeed in addressing a safety issue or concern that it's satisfactory for us and that we wanted done, our members should know about it, that way we make them aware and they know their union is working for them and it promotes solidarity.

## TEACHING TUESDAYS

- ▶ 2/8/22: **FMLA part 2 (11 AM EST) (8 PM EST)**
- ▶ 2/15/22: **Black Labor History (11 AM EST) (8 PM EST)**
- ▶ 2/22/22: **Mass Incarceration (11 AM EST) (8 PM EST)**
- ▶ 3/1/22: **Investigating Grievances (11 AM EST) (8 PM EST)**
- ▶ 3/8/22: **FMLA & ADA (11 AM EST) (8 PM EST)**
- ▶ 3/15/22: **Women's Labor History (11 AM EST) (8 PM EST)**

Check out our online education classes by registering via the links below or scanning the QR code.

- All classes are held at **11 AM (EST)** and **8 PM (EST)**.
- Click on the time slot that you can attend to register for the classes you want to take.
- **All classes' times are in Eastern Standard Time**
- Steward Training Classes are on the 1st Tuesday of every month.
- All Classes are being held via Zoom.
- Classes are 1-hour 30-minute sessions.

Scan the QR code to get more information  
<http://usw.to/teachingtuesdays>

