

USW BUILDING POWER

BUILDING our STRUCTURE

DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION AND
ACTION TEAM TO BUILD A STRONGER LOCAL

UNITED STEELWORKERS



UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS



building our structure

On our charts, we most likely included methods of communication that fit each classification (active or passive).

Passive communication can be useful for reminders about upcoming activities and dates, but we shouldn't rely on it entirely. We also know that management almost always reads our bulletin boards and any typed letters that we leave in the plant, so we can use those

passive forms of communication to send the company a message.

In most cases, though, we can expect greater turnout and participation from our local union when we focus on active communication. And the participation of all of our members is one of our biggest strengths when we head into bargaining.



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BUILDING OUR STRUCTURE

The best way to organize our local unions and communicate with members is with a CAT (Communication & Action) Team. The key to the CAT Team is direct contact and person-to-person (active) communication.

The CAT Team should be composed of members of the local who are respected on their shift or in their unit, and are interested in being active in the fight for a fair contract. Under the direction of local leadership, these members will be responsible for sharing updates and maintaining contact with a specific group of about 10 co-workers on their shift or in their department.

Why do we need a Communication & Action Team?

Membership involvement is the most important part of a successful contract campaign, and the first step in getting the membership

involved is setting up a Communication & Action Team.

Every union officer and activist knows the frustration of posting a notice for an event or activity only to have very few people participate. This happens in every local and, in fact, in every organization. Simply posting a notice is not enough because it only attracts activists and those already committed to the particular issue.

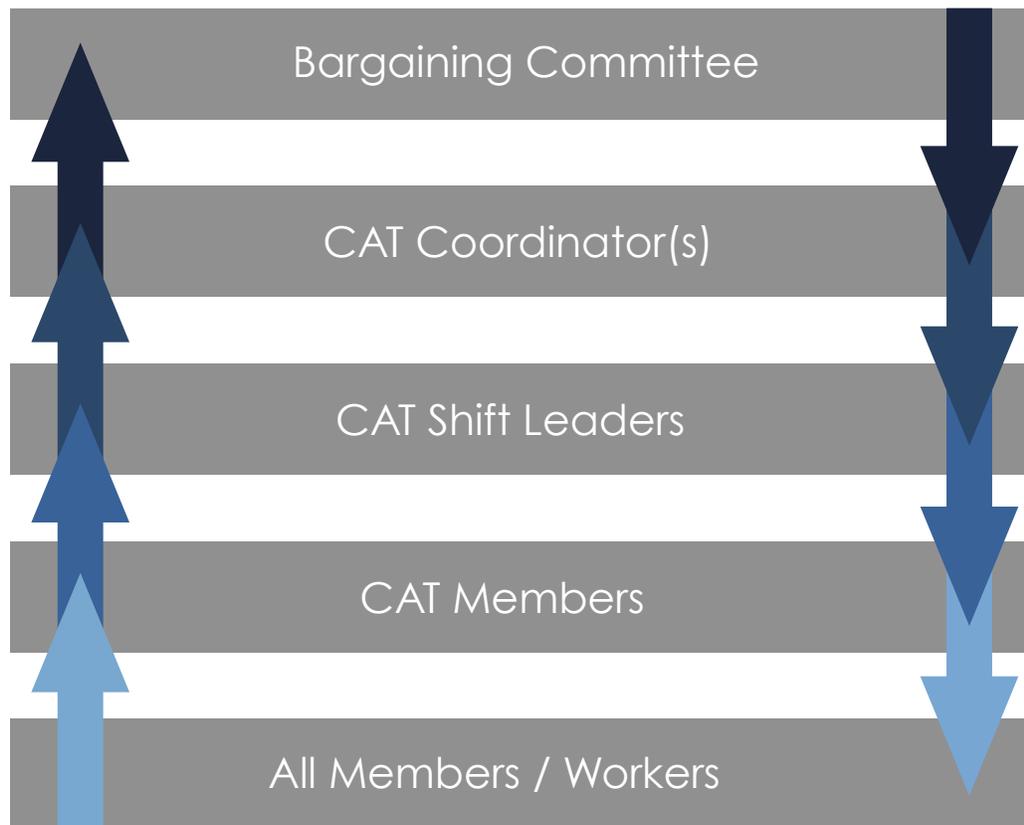
Building visible support of the membership is difficult, but possible. One-on-one contact ensures your ability to directly educate every member on the issues, counter the inevitable rumors, and organize support.

Personal contact is the most effective way of getting members involved. It is one thing to see a meeting notice on a board and another when a friend comes to you saying, "I am going to the meeting, and we need you at the meeting, too."

What is the role of the Communication & Action Team?

The CAT is more than just a group that explains issues and informs the membership about activities. It is also the link between the local union leadership, the negotiating committee, and the membership. It creates two-way communication from the membership to the local union leadership and the bargaining committee.

This two-way communication allows the membership to fully participate in determining our key issues, developing ideas, and suggesting activities for the campaign. Being involved in the process will also lead to more active participation by the membership.



This CAT structure becomes the "eyes, ears and voice" of the local. The two-way communication can identify problems and concerns within the membership, identify weak members that need reassuring, and identify rumors, employer activity, and when your employer violates the law.

Beyond the contract campaign, building a Communication & Action Team and involving the membership will create a stronger and more active local to deal with future problems and contracts.

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What is the structure of a Communication & Action Team?

Every workplace is different, and every local union is different, so no two CAT Teams will look exactly alike or work exactly the same. CAT Teams are set up differently depending on a whole variety of factors, including the size and layout of the facility, shift schedules, and other networks that are already in place within the local union. What really matters is that we have a structure that allows us to quickly reach all of our members with effective, face-to-face communication.

Many CAT Teams organize their structure around these positions:

The **Local Union Officers** and **Bargaining Committee** develop the campaign plan. They provide direction and delegate responsibility to the other members of the CAT Team.

And while the Bargaining Committee is busy doing its main job — *negotiating* — the CAT Team and all of its members can keep the local union informed and listen for feedback that can be reported to the negotiators.

CAT Coordinators make sure that the CAT structure is in place and functioning throughout the local. The CAT Coordinator is the key to successfully involving members in the contract campaign. He or she is not on the bargaining committee, but reports directly to the officers and negotiators. The CAT Coordinator can pass messages from the committee to members, or from members to the committee.

CAT Shift Leaders are responsible for coordinating all of the activity on their particular shift: Making sure that CAT Organizers have the necessary materials

and are ready to do their jobs, and that everyone gets the union's messages. In large locals, you may need multiple shift leaders.

CAT Members are a direct link between the rank and file and the bargaining committee. They are responsible for communicating one-on-one with a small group of workers in their area or on their shift. They pass out materials, educate members, and mobilize everyone to participate in actions. Maybe most important, they listen for questions and suggestions that should be addressed by the leadership.

It is important that Communication & Action Team Members represent the entire local membership: young/old, female/male, and so on. If members of the bargaining unit speak more than one language, make sure your CAT Organizers can communicate with everyone.

Filling out the CAT chart can help us understand the basic structure and how it could work best in our own workplace.



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MEMBER COMMUNICATION SURVEY

Dear Member:

To keep everyone informed on important issues and be sure we can work together as a strong local union, we want to make sure we have accurate contact information for all of our members. Your contact information will NOT be shared with our employer or with anyone outside of our local union.

The local union will only use your contact information to provide news and share information.

Thank you for participating.

Name: _____

Department: _____ Shift: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

Do you prefer to be contacted at home or on a cell phone? _____

Personal Email Address: _____

BUILDING OUR STRUCTURE

ESTABLISHING A COMMUNICATION AND ACTION TEAM



Timeframe	Tasks	Due Date	Assigned to	Completed?
February	Map out the membership. Figure out how to structure your Communication and Action Team to cover all the bargaining unit members			
	Identify one person that will be your CAT Coordinator			
	Identify members that you can recruit to be on your CAT			
	Recruit your CAT Coordinator			
	Recruit CAT members			
March	Review membership contact information list			
	CAT Communications: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a conversation about stronger unions benefit everyone in the community 2. Follow up to see whether people have any question about Janus 			
April	Member communication survey: Have CAT members ask individuals in the bargaining units to update their contact information			