



EXTERNAL ORGANIZING: HOW TO ORGANIZE A UNION IN YOUR WORKPLACE

- Get together with your co-workers who may share a common interest in organizing a union.
- Talk to a union organizer in order to strategize and to learn the next steps.
- Talk to your co-workers to build support for the union.
- Show that support through an election or a card-check once you have a strong majority.

If you and your coworkers are interested in organizing together, IUE-CWA will help you build majority support during your campaign. But experience shows us that for workers to create a viable union that truly represents their wishes, it's best they lead the campaign and organize themselves. IUE-CWA will provide you with support and guidance after you and your co-workers take the first steps to forming your union.

Here's a brief summary of where to start.

Talk to your co-workers. This is the first step. Do many of you share the same concerns? Determine your top five or so issues. Is there a common theme such as lack of respect and dignity; no input with management; unfair, arbitrary treatment or favoritism. Are wages and benefits lower at your workplace than what workers are getting in similar jobs in your industry? Write them up on a list.

When talking among yourself about a union, be sure to talk only while you are on breaks, away from work areas, or off company property. Organizing a union is legal and a protected right under the law, but you need to avoid tipping off management as long as possible. If your employer finds out, especially when you are in the beginning stages of identifying key workplace issues and building union support, your road to success will be much more difficult.



Building a committee. After determining support for a union exists around key workplace issues, build a committee of co-workers that is representative of your workplace. Building a strong inside organizing committee is critical to building the majority support that you will need to establish your union.

- Ideally, the number of workers on your committee should be at least 10 percent of the workforce. During this stage, IUE-CWA will give you tips on building majority union support.

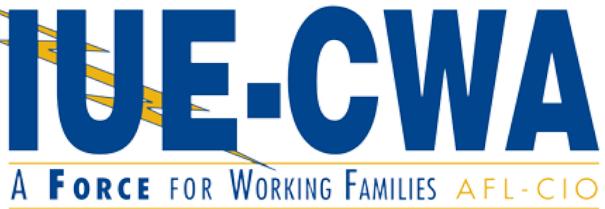
Build majority support. After building your committee and identifying key issues, you need to talk openly with your co-workers, discussing issues, and building union support. This begins the “public” phase of your campaign. Through one-on-one discussions with workers in your workplace, evaluate the support that exists for a union around your key issues. Remember, that even though this is the “public” part of your campaign, restrict your discussions about a union to breaks in non-working locations (lunchrooms, bathrooms), or away from company property.

- An excellent way to build support for your union is to get workers to sign a public petition supporting the union that states your key issues and goals. But hold off on going “public” with your petition until you have a majority of workers’ signatures.

Most employers will launch their campaigns against your union at this stage, if they are not tipped off earlier. When they learn of your campaign, they try to increase fear and conflict in the workplace (see examples below) and blame it on the “union” as if it is some outside organization. Remember, you are the union.

How you choose to go union. How you and your co-workers decide whether you want a union depends on where you work.

- At most private employers, workers make the choice through elections overseen by the National Labor Relations Board. You get your union if a majority of the workers voting in the election vote for the union.
- At some IUE-CWA employers, workers make the choice through a process called majority sign up. This is a much shorter way to get a union because the procedure is agreed to in advance between IUE-CWA and the employer. And these employers agree to remain neutral.
- In the public sector, how you choose a union depends where you live. Some states and localities permit workers to make the choice through majority sign up. Others require a traditional union election, where majority vote decides the question.



The employer's campaign. In most cases, employers will use a variety of tactics to prevent you from organizing a union, many designed to create conflict, divide union supporters, and create an atmosphere of fear. Here are just some of the most widely used (and many illegal) tactics:

- Predicting layoffs or plant/office closings if you vote for union representation;
- Scaring employees with warnings of strikes or violence;
- Intimidating union supporters with unspoken threats of firings and or disciplinary action;
- Labeling the union that you and your co-workers are attempting to organize as an “outside” organization or “third party” that will come in and make decisions for you and your co-workers. Making inaccurate and misleading statements about the union or union dues;
- Asking for another chance to improve working conditions;
- What employers don’t want to talk about during their anti-union campaign are your concerns – those key workplace issues that you and your organizing committee identified as reasons why you want a union.

Strong majority support for a union is the best defense to successfully withstanding the employer's campaign.