

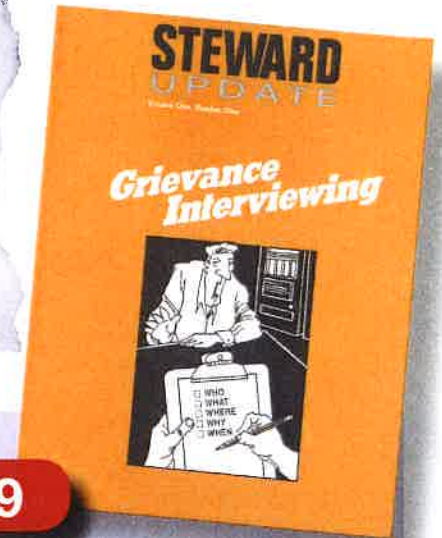
Final Issue



Advice, Information and Techniques from past SU issues

FIRST ISSUE

1989



HOW TO PROBE FOR SETTLEMENTS ON GRIEVANCES

Stewards need to question their management counterpart about what it would take to reach a fair resolution of the issue at hand.

Here are a number of suggested questions that just might get management saying more than “no” to all your grievances.

- Do you understand the problem we are trying to solve with our remedy? How do you see that problem?
- What about our proposed remedy do you have a problem with?
- What are you concerned would happen if you agreed to our proposed remedy?
- If we address the concern you just raised, do you think we can reach agreement on the rest of our remedy?
- Can you explain how you arrived at that position?

HOW TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

You can ensure that the meetings you hold are effective and meaningful, will lead to real action, and are making your members want to keep coming back.

The best meetings have a very clear purpose. Determine why the meeting is important and what you expect to come out of it.

Encourage discussion and ensure that more members have the space to speak.

Strong agendas have clearly defined sections, time limits, speakers and action/decision points.

Follow up. Remind all your members, whether or not they attended, why the meeting was important and what steps came out of it.

EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

It's through effective grievance interviewing and investigation that stewards get the information and facts needed to understand and work out solutions to members' problems.

Good interviewers use the “five Ws”: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, when interviewing to get these facts:

1. Choose the right place and time—a convenient, quiet place.
2. Actively listen—Let the worker vent. Listen much more than talk at first.
3. Direct the interview—Once the worker's feelings are out fill-in and clarify facts you need.
4. Weighing alternatives—Together with the worker probe for solutions.

Assess the meeting. Ask some people their impressions of the meeting and learn from what went well and what didn't.

DO A THOROUGH GRIEVANCE INVESTIGATION—AS FAST AS POSSIBLE

It's important that the investigation happen as quickly as possible, especially if there are independent witnesses who might know any facts, details and issues.

Try to get a detailed, written statement from witnesses. It's important that they read it carefully, make any changes they need to, and then sign and date each sheet of the statement.

Determine what else—like documentary or physical evidence—will help your case. That might include photographs, videos, or audio; a copy of work rules or procedures; any incident reports.

Keep as many of your colleagues in the loop as you can.

PRODUCTIVE POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Provide Information, Not Directives

No one likes being *told* how they should

vote or what to support. They do appreciate information that helps them make up their own mind.

Avoid Arguing

Don't waste time arguing or trying to convince those who disagree—it rarely changes anyone's mind and it can generate tension and divisions. Concentrate on getting supporters involved and bringing those who are undecided to your side.

Stick to Issues, Reasons and Shared Values—Not Labels

Avoid labeling politicians as liars and jerks and making blanket statements. Concentrate on information about the candidates or issues.

Pay Attention to Your Tone

Sometimes when we feel strongly about something we unintentionally come off in ways that put people off, especially when there is much at stake. Don't talk down to people or act like your position is the only legitimate one; don't scold, push too hard or otherwise offend.

End on a Positive Note

Regardless of where others stand, always thank them for their time and end the conversation on a friendly, positive note.

ORGANIZING YOUNGER WORKERS

Younger workers are like any other group of workers; they should be organized around the issues that matter to them. Don't assume! Take the time to ask, listen and build trust.

CHANGE UP YOUR COMMUNICATION.

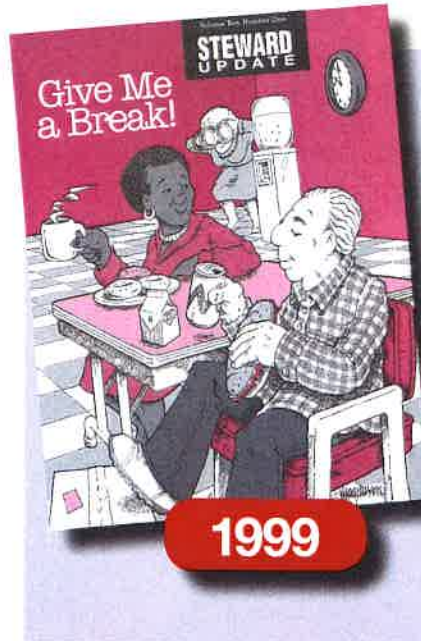
Part of the overall culture change is an expectation of real-time, transparent, two-way communications. Keep members informed by text message, email, social media and in-person conversations.

SUPPORT YOUNGER LEADERS.

Identify younger workers who are natural leaders and invite them into the work. Encourage younger people to run for formal leadership positions and mentor them when they win.

TWO WAYS TO HANDLE GRIEVANCES

When the grievance procedure becomes a web of rules and delays, members start to lose faith in the process. That's why it's important to handle grievances less like the fictional TV lawyer Perry Mason and more like the legendary union hell-raiser Mother Jones.



FOSTER UNITY. Focus positive energy on the young people who are already engaged. At all costs, avoid two-tier

DISCIPLINE OVER BREAKS

Discipline resulting from alleged abuse of rest, coffee and meal breaks can be a continuing headache for stewards. A look at how arbitrators have ruled in a variety of cases, however, may make it a little easier to wade through this swamp.

There are some basics to consider in weighing any kind of discipline case:

- Was the rule violated clearly explained to the worker who is accused?
- Was progressive discipline used?
- Did the employer conduct an appropriate investigation?
- Was the rule consistently applied to all employees?

systems that disproportionately affect younger people. Build multi-generational trust by supporting each other in solidarity.

DEALING WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT

With revelations about misconduct hitting the news week after week, many people are concerned about sexual harassment at work.

Here are some guidelines for making a safer workplace:

Recognize: Individuals are harassed if *they (you) perceive* harassment. What one person may brush off as a joke or innocent comment may deeply disturb someone else. If a member says she has been sexually harassed, believe her.

Respond: The union should be an ally, with the steward as their representative willing to listen and offer assistance—problem solving, filing a grievance, or referring to community resources.

Reform: Reform the way the workforce perceives behaviors that belittle, disrespect or otherwise harm your members. If you witness harassment, intervene so the harasser recognizes that their conduct is inappropriate and so that the victim feels supported.

Reflect: All of us have probably offended someone with words or deeds. If you are confronted about something you've said, or failed to say, dig deep and really listen. Regardless of your intentions, if someone feels offended an apology is in order, along with a commitment to change.

LAWYER APPROACH:

A worker has a problem so the steward takes the case for that individual—If the contract isn't violated the steward discourages filing a grievance or taking other action.

The steward, like a lawyer, handles the case alone, relying on cleverness and relationships with management.

If the workers lose the grievance, they blame the steward or "the union," not the employer. If they win they hail the steward as a "hero" until the next problem arises (if that long).

The steward gets angry at the workers for being ungrateful.

The resentment and frustration within the union membership let management take advantage of the lack of unity to get away with even more injustices.

ORGANIZER APPROACH:

The steward emphasizes how the problem, whether a contract violation or not, could affect everyone and with other members evaluates using the grievance procedure and other ways to get a resolution.

The steward involves the grievant in every step of the way, giving the grievant assignments and involving other stewards and co-workers.

Win or lose, if the steward has successfully involved the grievant and co-workers, everyone saw and heard how management acted and understands the result. The steward involves members in developing new plans to build power to challenge the boss face-to-face.

The steward, together with the workers, analyzes what went wrong and right with their plan and learns how to do better the next time.

A strong union membership constantly challenges bad employer decisions, even if some battles are lost. The boss thinks twice before taking a wrong step because he knows the workers will be hot on his trail every time.



BEING A STEWARD IN TOUGH TIMES

1. Know your contract so that the rights of every member are protected.
2. A steward should be continuously vigilant when the boss tries to cut corners.
3. A good steward keeps up the pressure on the employer to treat all workers fairly.
4. A steward must offer leadership to show that the tougher the times, the greater the need to pull together.
5. The battle for the hearts and minds of your members and their communities is one that a steward needs to take part in.

CREATIVE PRESSURE TACTICS

Saul Alinsky, a great community organizer, once said that "tactics that drag on become a drag." Stewards know that tactics used too often can lose their effectiveness and burn members out. That's why wise stewards are always looking for new and creative ways to put pressure on an employer. Here are some ideas that have worked for other unionists.

- **LOOK FOR LOOPHOLES** in existing rules. For example, one employer had a rule against posters in work areas, but allowed calendars, so the union put their poster on a calendar.
- **REACH OUT TO THE PUBLIC.** Give the public something useful with your message on it, such as message-bearing score cards at a baseball game or free bags of popcorn to movie patrons waiting to enter.
- **LAUGH AT THE BOSS.** You could have the workers fill out evaluations of the boss on a mock version of the form the boss uses to evaluate them. Or you could circulate cartoons or jokes that show how silly or petty the boss is being.
- **TAKE THE MORAL HIGH GROUND.** Put your employer on the moral and ethical defensive by having a candle-light vigil for justice outside his or her home.
- **PLAN WORK ACTIONS.** Demonstrate unity by doing things as a group. For example, everyone can wear their baseball caps backwards or their collars turned up or give the boss the silent treatment, or tap pencils at the same time each day.

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Sometimes solutions to difficult problems are simple, if you think creatively. Here are some tips on how to come up with new and creative ways to resolve a problem.

Look at how similar problems have been solved before. Talk to others, look through books and other material, look at the problem from every angle. List all the factors on a wall chart. Try putting things together that normally don't fit. Then, stop thinking about it, clear your mind, and expose yourself to new ideas.

Now it's time to start thinking about the problem again. Get a group together and brainstorm: list every idea anyone can think of—no censoring or evaluation until you have exhausted all ideas. List the ideas on a chart so everyone can see them.

Review each idea, listing the pros and cons. Try different combinations of ideas to create new ones. After evaluating all the ideas on your list, it's time to decide on two or three possible solutions.

Run your ideas by people who were not at the original brainstorming session. Get opinions from people not even involved in the problem. Do a final review of your preliminary solutions and make a decision on which one to execute.

DUTY OF FAIR REPRESENTATION

Unions must represent all equally and fairly. Here are guidelines for how to do that:

First, each steward must keep a careful record of every incident that a member reports, regardless of whether it appears to be a gripe or a real grievance.

Second, you must fully and fairly investigate each reported incident in as thorough a manner as the facts justify.

Third, the union should have a written policy that explains to members why and when it will expend a lot of the union's resources on a grievance.

The policy should spell out your duty to investigate and assist members, but note that representation all the way to arbitration occurs only if an individual member's case is of considerable benefit and in the best interests of the union as a whole.

MEMBER APATHY: LOOK HARDER

It's the number one problem stewards face: getting co-workers involved.

Believe it or not, there is no such thing as member apathy. What is often seen as apathy is usually something else. Here are two common reasons, often mistaken for apathy, why members don't join in actions:

- **Feeling Powerless.** Members refuse to sign a petition on an important workplace issue. Why? Don't they care? More likely it means they don't believe it will make a difference.

TRY THIS: Don't argue. Give examples of how petitions have been the first step in past successful mobilizations. Talk about the next steps you have in mind to build on the petition and eventually win on the issue.

- **Feeling Embarrassed.** Members won't come to a meeting with management to show their support for an important matter even though they agree with the union's goal on the issue. They may fear they won't know what to do so would look dumb, or get put on the spot by management.

TRY THIS: Find another member who can explain in more detail what is involved and how he or she overcame initial fears. The active member can explain how joining actions led to increased confidence and positive relationships with co-workers. It's possible that changing your own approach, expectations and assumptions could yield better results.

Sometimes the way stewards ask members to get involved is the problem. For example:

- **Asking Impersonally.** You put up a notice on the bulletin board or send out an email and hope members will attend.

TRY THIS: Talk face-to-face.

■ **Thinking of it as a Favor.** Stewards hesitate to ask a co-worker to get involved because they think they are begging for a favor.

TRY THIS: Remind yourself that what you are asking members to do benefits them. Ask a member to do something specific. Then explain how, together, you will achieve something important.

■ **Blaming Your Co-Workers.** When union functions get a reputation for low attendance, it's a downward spiral. Stewards complain, fewer members show up, and the reputation is reinforced.

TRY THIS: Talk to other stewards. Come up with specific, realistic attendance goals for each steward. Meet afterward to compare notes. Find out what worked. Don't dwell on the negative.

NEW WAYS TO WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Research shows that workers form their opinions about their union often within the first few days on the job. That makes those days a great opportunity for stewards to welcome them into the union and educate them about what unionism is all about. The way you frame issues in that first conversation with a new worker can make the difference between someone who relates the union to problems, dues and strikes, and someone who sees the union as a group of people working together to improve their working lives.

So when you talk about the union, you're defining what the union is. It's best not to focus solely on problems ("If you get in trouble, contact me") and better to emphasize solutions ("Through negotiations, we've been able to keep a really good vacation schedule").

So, while you could say, "Management tried to rip us off but we threatened to strike and the greedy jerks backed down," you'll build more credibility if you try this instead: "The company pushed real hard for a wage freeze last time, but we wouldn't accept that and they finally saw the light." Workers will learn for themselves who to trust and who not to trust.

AUSTERITY: DRIVING US INTO THE STREETS (HOW WE ARE WINNING)

Whether it's on a national level or a local level with our school district, there's the 1 percent of the rich communities that are overtaking people's rights. People are not given a voice. As a union chair at the local level, we want to give our students a voice and stand up for their rights. A union can be a great place to bring awareness—it's a stronghold where people get informed and make a difference in their community and their country.



7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE STEWARDS AND OTHER UNION ACTIVISTS

1. Actively listen and let speakers know they are heard

If members don't feel heard, even if a steward is listening, everything becomes much more difficult. Show people that you are listening by making eye contact, nodding when appropriate, repeating back some of what you heard and asking good questions.

2. Communicate clearly and assertively

Aggressive communication is so strong, forceful and perhaps disrespectful that the receiver of the message feels attacked. Passive or timid communication lacks clarity and passion, so the receiver doesn't understand or doubts the sender expects to be taken seriously.

Assertive communication has three parts:

1. A clear statement of an issue or situation.
2. An expression of what the communicator thinks and feels about it.
3. A clear statement of what the communicator wants from the receiver.

3. Control your emotions

This may mean waiting to communicate until you have calmed your anger. It also means preparing for difficult situations so when they happen you have a plan to help stay on track.

4. Be self-reflective

Be aware of how your actions affect others. Before blaming anyone when things go wrong think about what you did that

might have contributed to the situation and learn for next time.

5. Be more perceptive

Read body language, speech inflections and other non-verbal clues about how people are feeling. Look for signs of confusion or disinterest, of being offended or feeling disrespected and respond appropriately.

6. Be more culturally aware

People are products of all their experiences and those experiences may be very different from others. Leaders should educate themselves about structural bias, à la "isms" (racism, sexism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, etc.). Including when they are unintentional or unconscious. Learn about other cultures and encourage members from different backgrounds to work together.

7. Model behaviors you want from others

Set a good example of wanted behaviors by demonstrating all the practices described above.

UCS to cease operations effective August 30, 2019

For the past five years, the Worker Institute at Cornell University's ILR School operated Union Communication Services (UCS), which publishes this magazine. Accordingly, we now announce with sadness that the operations of UCS as it currently exists will close down at the end of August of this year. This will be the final issue. Please go to www.unionist.com for the complete statement.

A Global Union Family

America's meatpacking industry has long been a community of immigrants, brought together by a shared desire to build a better life and achieve the American dream. The UFCW is proud of that heritage and we celebrate the diversity and strength in our plants. Our members come from all over the world and speak more than 30 languages in our plants. We're proud to represent all of them.

Rhonda Treviño, a steward and member of UFCW Local 540, knows that well. In her 23 years as a member and 10 years as a steward at the Cargill plant in Friona, Texas, she's worked with and advocated for people from all over the world.

"I'm proud to work with all the members of my union family," said Treviño. "And I'm proud to represent them all if they have any problems at work."

As we have seen this month, our workplaces can be targeted because of this diversity. Workplace raids disrupt the lives of all working families – not just immigrants – and throw communities, families and workplaces into confusion and disarray. Our stewards can often help members through these situations.

We stand by all our members in these plants. That means we all have the same rights under our contract and under the law to be treated with respect and dignity and have a safe workplace with the good working conditions they have earned and deserve.

Any time one of our members needs help with their work authorization documents or immigration status, the union steward can be there to represent them through the process with the employer. Your basic Weingarten rights apply, like any other meeting that could lead to termination. It's critical to stand up for your fellow coworkers and urge your employer to follow the contract and the law to allow



"I'm proud to work with all the members of my union family, and I'm proud to represent them all if they have any problems at work."

Rhonda Treviño, a steward at the Cargill plant in Friona, Texas.

our members time to fix any immigration problems before taking action.

If there is an enforcement action at your plant, you should stay calm. All workers have rights, even during a raid – and that includes the right to remain silent and the right to an attorney. Union stewards should carefully document everything that happens in writing to ensure that everybody's rights continue to be protected.

The UFCW International and United Latinos of the UFCW both have resources to help you and your local provide our members with the representation they need. These resources include tips on raid preparedness and know-your-rights cards and much more.

Always remember that the UFCW International and your local union are here to assist you with these issues, and many people on our staff have specific training to help members with immigration issues.

As our country's largest private sector union, we welcome all new immigrants

both as members of our union and the hardworking communities we serve. That's why we have the Union Citizenship Action Plan, which helps our members complete the process to become citizens. Through workshops across the country, we've helped thousands of members become citizens, including Treviño's husband, who was born in Mexico.

"It gives our family a whole new level of confidence knowing that he has his citizenship," said Treviño, "and we're looking forward to voting as a family in the next election."

SPECIAL NOTE: *This is the final issue of the UFCW Steward Update in this format. The UFCW is working hard to find new ways to bring you the information you need to help you succeed as a steward. We will be in touch with your local about new resources as soon as we have them. As always, you can keep in touch and find a wealth of information on our website: www.ufcw.org.*