

**EMERGENCY
WORKPLACE
ORGANIZING**

workerorganizing.org

A joint project of Democratic Socialists of America and UE Union

**IN CASE OF
EMERGENCY**



**FIGHT
BACK**

A companion to the Workplace Organizer
Training Series from the Emergency
Workplace Organizing Committee

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A JOINT PROJECT OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA AND UE UNION

WHEN WE FIGHT WE WIN!

**Working class people
everywhere are under attack.**

WORKERS ACROSS THE WORLD HAVE BEEN PUTTING their lives and the health of their families at risk for a year, simply to pay the bills and put food on the table. While essential workers have endured long hours and hazardous conditions to keep our schools, hospitals, grocery stores, and economy open, corporate elites have made record profits without providing higher wages or improved benefits. Our political leaders have failed to enact, let alone propose, the kind of plan that would truly protect the lives and livelihoods of the working class. When workers unite and take collective action, however, we have the power to forge a better future for ourselves and for our families.

Written by the EWOC Training Team 2021

Design and illustration by Stephen Crowe

The Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee (EWOC) was founded by the United Electrical Workers (UE) and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

EWOC uses distributed organizing techniques and a mass volunteer base to provide support and training to non-union workers. We focus on developing workplace issue fights and supporting worker leadership development. Our job as organizers is to build the resources, the networks, and the training workers need to win their demands during the pandemic and beyond.



ueunion.org



dsausa.org

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CALL TO ACTION!

No organizing would be complete without a call to action. There are many ways to take the next step, whether that is participating in an EWOC training, joining the EWOC team, or working with an organizer to start organizing your workplace. Will you join us in building a worker movement that will fight for justice in every workplace?

Volunteer with EWOC:

workerorganizing.org/volunteer/

Talk with an EWOC Organizer about organizing your workplace:

workerorganizing.org/talk-with-an-organizer/

Already have an organizing success story?

We'd love to hear about it! Send your stories to workerorganizing@gmail.com

And if you haven't already, join DSA!

dsausa.org/join

That's where you come in. By organizing your workplace using the best tools and principles experienced workplace organizers have to offer, you can win relief against unsafe working conditions during COVID-19. You will also build the foundations for future victories against bosses, capitalists, and politicians who stand in the way. The EWOC Workplace Organizer Training Series is designed to democratize the skills you and your co-workers will need to do that.

Organizing is based on skills that anyone can learn. Reflecting on your workplace struggles through the EWOC Organizer Training Series, you will acquire the means to become the workplace organizers that will lead and grow the labor movement, demanding safety, dignity, and respect for all workers along the way. We're fed up with being exploited by wealthy CEOs and taken for granted by establishment politicians. We're fed up with being called "essential" then treated as disposable. It's time for a change and we're not stopping until we get it. We have a world to win!

While this handbook provides a summary of key concepts from our training series, **it is not a standalone manual!** If you want to organize your workplace, but don't know how yet, join our training series or contact EWOC at **workerorganizing.org** to receive support from an experienced organizer. **Check the last page for how to sign up!**

-EWOC Training Team

TRAINING OVERVIEW

The EWOC Workplace Organizer Training Series detailed below promote a model of militant rank-and-file organizing that centers workers and prioritizes democratic mass action like demonstrations, pickets, and strikes as a means of forcing concessions from the capitalist class. EWOC organizers learn how to empower fellow workers to lead their own struggles, because working-class power can only be achieved by the workers themselves.

Each training is designed to teach one basic skill that combine to form a systematic workplace practice to empower the democratic majority of workers in a workplace.



SOLIDARITY BUSTING BINGO CARD

"I just wish you'd come to me first/ Unnecessary conflict!"	New Toaster/ Curtains/ Quick Fix	"This could hurt your career."	"We see you/ We hear you/ We're listening."	"Give us a chance to fix things."
"We're a family!"	The suits show up and start smiling and shaking hands	"We're already working on making a lot of these changes."	Pizza party!	"You don't have to work here if you don't like it."
Promotions/ Better hours/ Pay boost for anyone who goes against the campaign	"If you don't feel safe we'll help you go on un-employment."	Union busting is disgusting, eat the rich until there's justice!	"We don't have room in the budget/I'd be better off just shutting down!"	"We know it's you."
"You're making people uncomfortable."	Delay, delay, delay	"We're all making sacrifices."	"We just want you all to know how much we appreciate how hard you all have been working."	Cookies and cake!
Organizing leads start getting scheduled less	"If we do that then your patients/ customers/ students/etc. will suffer."	"That will take months to accomplish."	Small pay increase!	"Why should I give you a raise when the X make even less? That's just selfish"

INOCULATION AND THE BOSS CAMPAIGN

Fear and doubt are organization killers: if your boss retaliates or makes easy concessions, your co-workers may lose confidence in your campaign or lose a sense of urgency. The best way to prevent this is by preparing your co-workers to expect the boss's playbook of anti-organizing tricks and tactics. You can **inoculate** yourself and your coworkers to the **Boss Campaign** by thinking through how your boss will react to your organizing and preparing yourselves to keep your eyes on the prize when faced with of their reaction. When thinking through how to respond to your boss's reaction, remember that your audience is your other co-workers on the fence, not your boss. By understanding how employers operate, you can combat their efforts to divide and conquer.

? THINKING THROUGH IT

- Based on what you know about your own boss, what kind of concessions, incentives, respect, and favors might the bosses use to persuade workers not to organize?
- Based on what you know about your own boss, what kind of attacks, fearmongering, threats, warnings, and toxic behavior should you expect?
- Considering your audience is your coworkers, how would you respond to concessions from your boss so your co-workers stay organized? How would you respond to retaliation?

1. IDENTIFYING LEADERS

Identify co-workers who will lead democratic majorities in struggle.

2. WORKPLACE MAPPING

Visualize the power you have built, identify obstacles, and select tactics to build active, engaged majorities and take on employers.

3. ORGANIZING CONVERSATIONS

Encourage co-workers to identify their own workplace issues, understand how and why your employer is an obstacle to the conditions that you deserve, and visualize and commit to collective action to win on those issues.

4. ESCALATION AND CAMPAIGN ARCS

Articulate a winning strategy and integrate your communities in struggle.

5. PUBLIC ACTION AND ENGAGING WITH THE BOSS

Confront your bosses and take risky action safely and effectively.

6. INOCULATION AND THE BOSS CAMPAIGN

Plan for intimidation and retaliation from your employer.

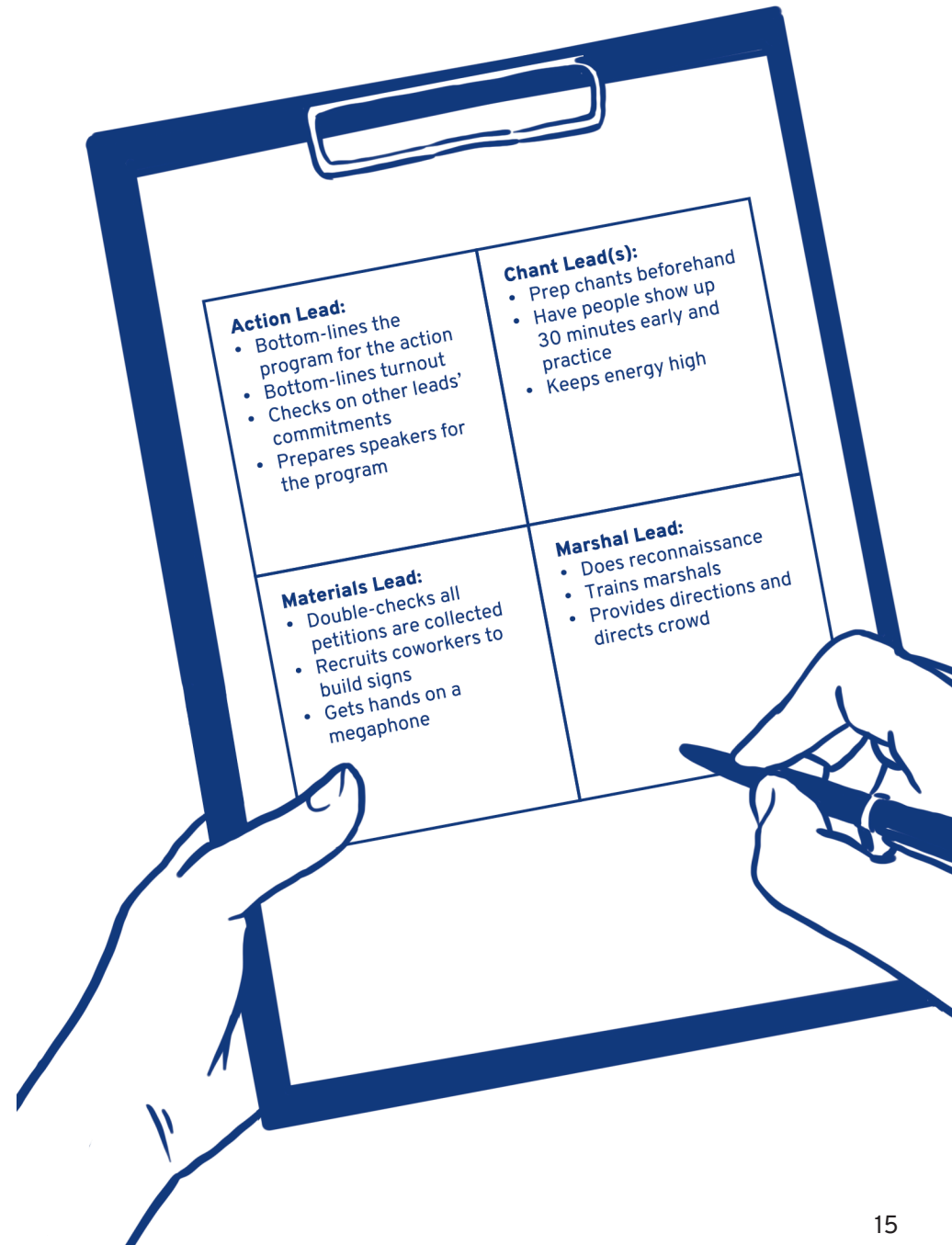
IDENTIFYING LEADERS

Good organizers don't go it alone. Organizing campaigns require strong relationships and **a team of respected workers** who can lead the majority of your co-workers in struggle. In organizing, democracy is power and your campaign will always be stronger if the supermajority of your coworkers feel their voices are represented through it. Bosses know this and will try to divide you however they can – be it race, class, job title, gender, sexuality, etc. In order to ensure strong internal democracy, your leaders should be representative of your coworkers, empathetic to their experiences, and respectful of their decisions.

Although leadership can look very different in different workplaces, leaders must be respected and trusted. Natural leaders are often good listeners, compassionate, and knowledgeable about their coworkers. **Leaders have followers:** coworkers who trust their judgment and listen to them. (There may be multiple worker leaders at any given job.) Finally, we are workers, we are people, and we are not static. Someone who is not a leader can become one and someone who starts as a leader can lose their coworkers' confidence. Democratic leadership is a constant practice.

? THINKING THROUGH IT

- ➔ Think about your coworkers at your current job. Who has the most followers?
- ➔ Who is the most respected? How do you know?
- ➔ Try identifying some of the leaders at your past workplaces too. Do you see any patterns?



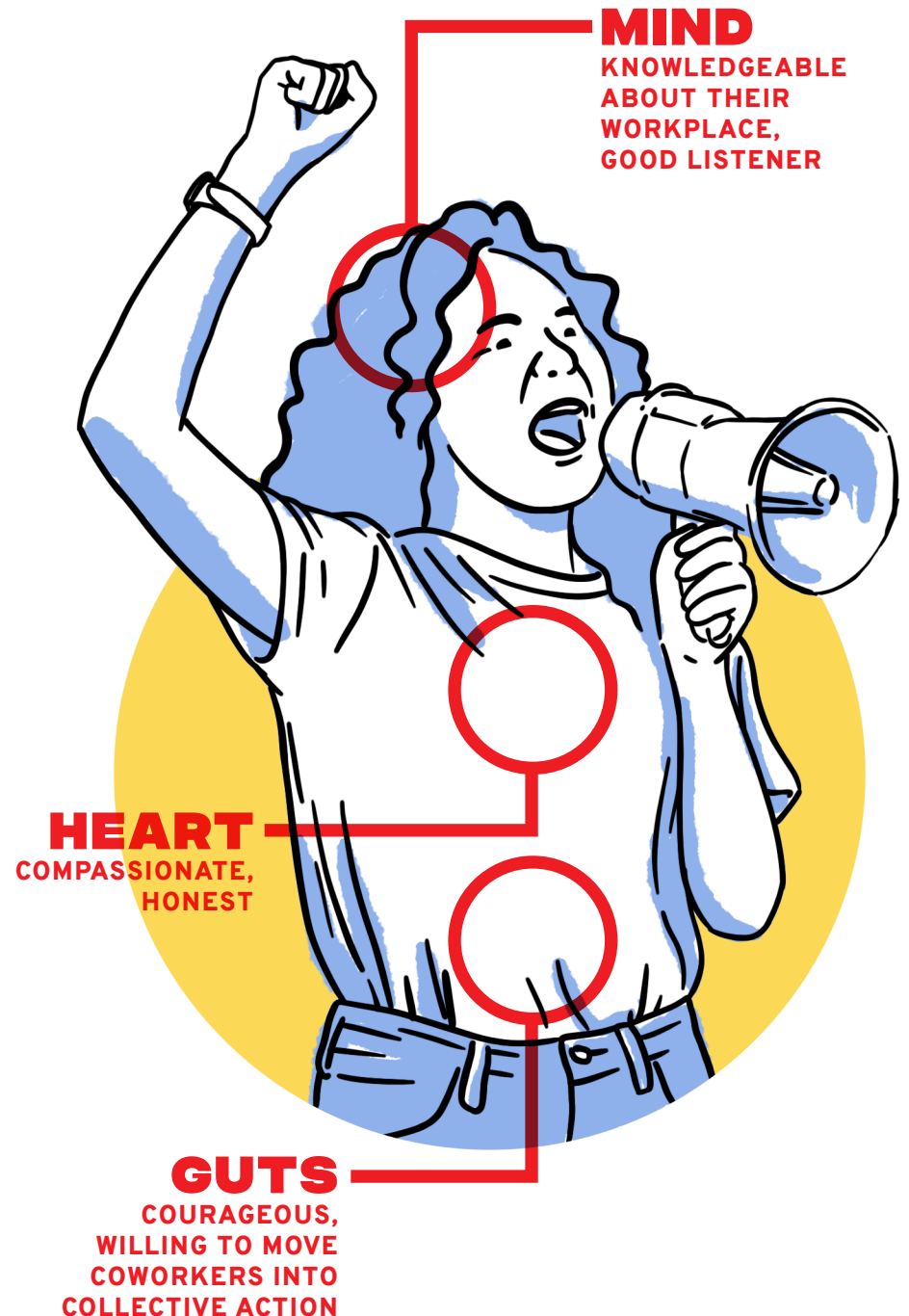
PUBLIC ACTION AND ENGAGING THE BOSS

Ideally, every secret campaign will eventually reveal itself through some kind of **public action**. To maximize your chances to win, public actions should involve clear roles and responsibilities, contingency plans, and logistical details. Successful public action will show your boss that you are organized, strong, and determined to win.

However, we need to remember that engaging with the boss is a scary prospect for the vast majority of workers. People will need to prepare themselves and their coworkers for the anxiety of confronting someone with direct power over them. Make sure to debrief with everyone who has to directly confront the boss during an action and help them process the experience so they come out feeling powerful.

? THINKING THROUGH IT

- ➔ Imagine confronting an authority figure who has direct say over your living conditions (wages, benefits, employment). What would be going through your head while you are demanding they make a change?
- ➔ What would you and your coworkers do if they responded positively/negatively? How would you exit that situation with strength?
- ➔ Think about a protest/direct action/rally/etc you have been a part of. What were roles you noticed people taking on that would have required preparation?



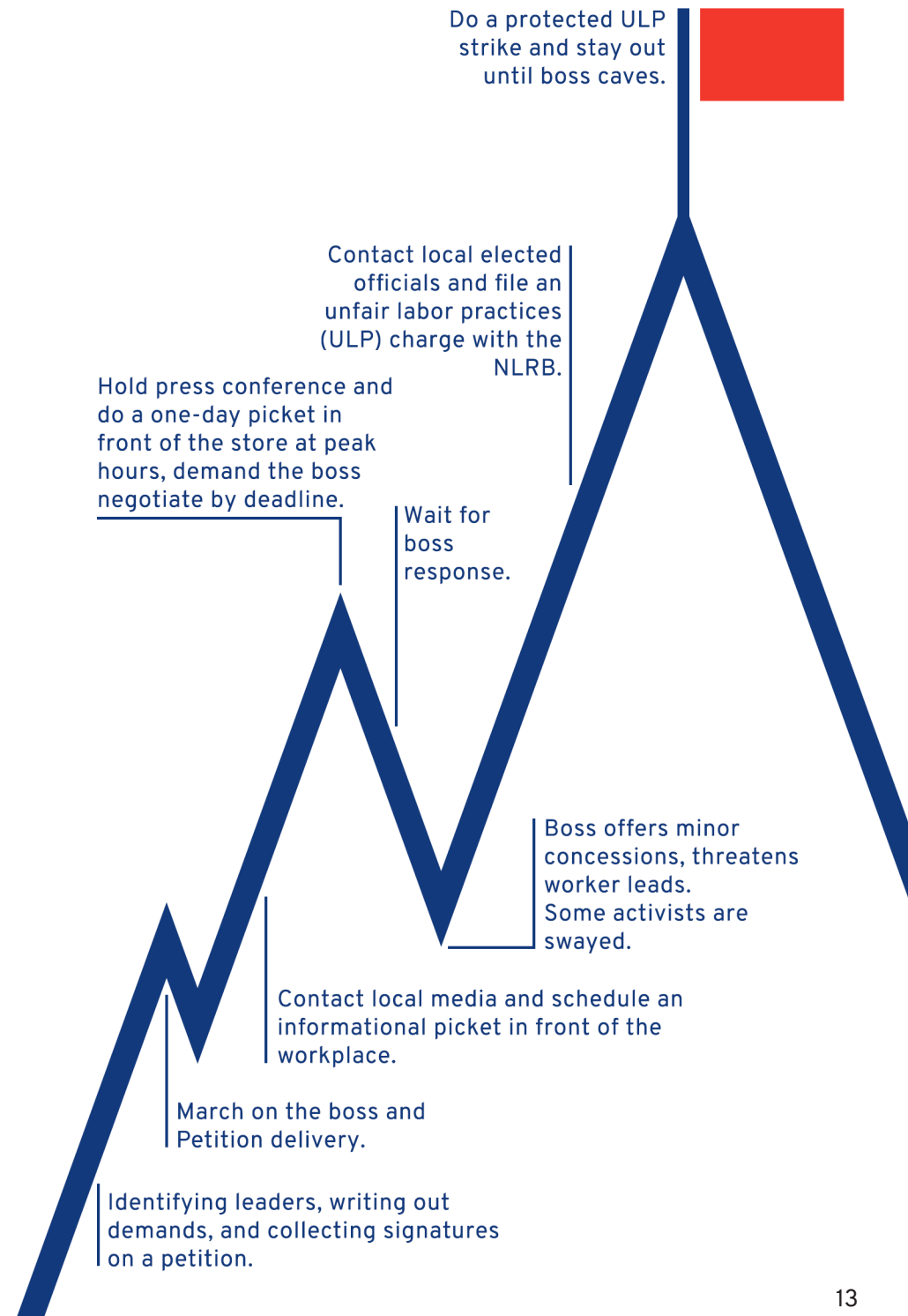
MAPPING AND ASSESSMENTS

We need systems! Organizing isn't an ad hoc series of conversations; being able to visualize workplace relationships is integral to successful worker strategy. Keeping an updated list of your coworkers, your outreach to them, their different social groups, and their current attitude towards your campaign, i.e. their **assessment level**, is an excellent way to ensure you're doing systematic and effective organizing.

A standard assessment scale is 1=Leader, 2=Activist, 3=Undecided, 4=Leaning Against, 5=Anti-Leader, 0=Unassessed. Remember to keep that information private from your bosses and never forget that workplace assessments are only a helpful shorthand – your coworkers are human beings who can change their minds!

? THINKING THROUGH IT

- ➔ What are the different social groups at your current workplace? How were the cliques organized? Who were the leaders of each clique?
- ➔ How would you go about building a list of your coworkers in your workplace? Does your company make one accessible to everyone? If not, who would you go to in order to help you build that list?
- ➔ What are some creative ideas for how to get a list of your coworkers names (and ideally contact info)?



ESCALATION AND CAMPAIGN ARCS

Campaigns arcs are **dynamic, flexible, and active**. The arc of a campaign is not set in stone – it depends entirely on your goals. But one thing is for sure: the time will come when you need to **escalate the pressure** on your employer in order to move your campaign closer to your goals. You need to know when to take it to the next level, and when to be patient, when to jump on an unexpected opportunity, and when to stay the course.

Every organizing campaign is built to win demands that workers formulate together to affect issues that are either deeply felt, broadly felt, or both. Forcing employers to meet those demands and respect you and your coworkers leads to real improvements in pay, working conditions, and workplace safety. To win, you need to know who the key decision-makers are, what they care about, and how to compel them to say ‘yes’ and meet your demands by putting escalating pressure on them. Pressure comes from two sources: strength in numbers and public scrutiny.



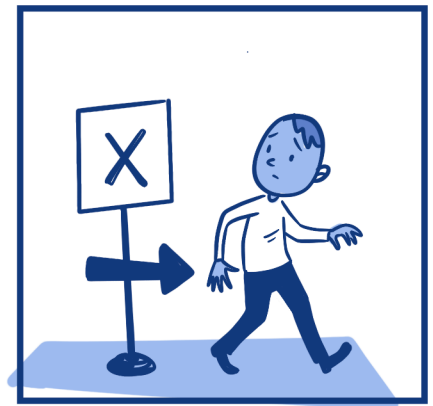
1. LEADER



2. ACTIVIST



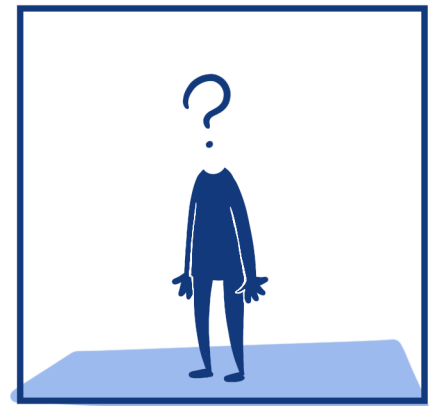
3. UNDECIDED



4. LEANING AGAINST



5. ANTI LEADER



0. UNASSESSED

? THINKING THROUGH IT

- What issues are most deeply and broadly felt at your job? How do you know?
- Think through your job/community. Who has decision-making power over an issue you care about?
- What do these decision-makers care about, tangible or intangible? How could you and your team get in the way of what they want?

ORGANIZING CONVERSATIONS

Although it's good to build relationships through casual conversations, structured organizing conversations ensure that your outreach is effective. Though no two conversations are alike, a good organizing conversation has six essential parts:

1. **Introduction:** Who you are, what your concerns are.
2. **Get the issues:** What does your coworker care about?
3. **Agitation:** Why is this unfair?
4. **Plan to Win:** Why collective action? What's the plan?
5. **Inoculation:** Prepare for your boss's response.
6. **Call the Question:** Ask them to take action.

Organizing conversations should be organic, allowing you to listen and respond to the other person in a way that feels natural. This means that sometimes you won't move through the full structure of the organizing conversation; however, learning what your colleagues care about is always important. One way to practice natural conversations is to roleplay!

? THINKING THROUGH IT

- ➔ Who is someone on your team, a friend, or comrade that you can practice organizing conversations with? Will you ask them to role-play with you?
- ➔ Did you feel like you listened more than you talked during the conversation? Why/why not?
- ➔ How often did you find yourself making a statement when you could have asked a question? Why?

