

How to use this guide

Start by going through it page by page - become familiar with the ideas.

Use the guide as a starting point - add to it by

- talking to your organiser
- attending union training
- reading and filing new union information as you receive it
- exchanging ideas with your local network of other union activists

If you are uncertain about anything, contact your organiser or our Member Service Centre.

The guide is divided into 4 main sections. Every page carries a symbol indicating the relevant section you are in. The symbols for each section look like this



Our union



Organising your workplace



Organising yourself



Winning in your workplace

Included are some questions (in italics) for you to think about. **The questions are not meant as a test.** They are solely for your own use — they may give you some ideas to follow up.



Our Union

Unionism is about working together.

This guide suggests how you can build a workplace organisation that will meet the needs and concerns of workers.

Our union office is the other necessary ingredient — it has the expertise and experience to support you.

The underlying message of this guide is that you should seize any opportunity to build your workplace organisation.

Don't try to do all the work yourself — involve your fellow workers.





What is the CPSU?

CPSU is one of the largest and most active unions in Australia. CPSU membership is open to employees in a wide range of industries including:

- Community and public services
- Telecommunications
- Call-centres
- Employment services
- Broadcasting
- Aviation
- IT services
- Science and technology

What the CPSU offers its delegates

CPSU delegates and activists receive information, support and advice to help them fulfil their role. Our team of staff and officials will work with you and your members on:

- Improving your pay and employment conditions
- Negotiating awards and agreements
- Protecting your jobs and your rights
- Encouraging fairness and equity in your workplace
- Promoting a healthy and safe work environment
- Gaining access to training and career development.

Other benefits

CPSU members have access to a wide range of special services and products including:

- Discount shopping
- Health cover
- Post graduate professional development
- Computers
- House, contents and car insurance
- Home loans
- Financial planners
- Entertainment and cinema tickets
- Travel and car hire.

For the latest information on services and products available to members, visit our website at www.cpsu.org or contact our Member Service Centre on **1300 137 636**.

How CPSU works

Our union's structure is based on the election of officials and workplace representatives (such as delegates).

The union's National Management Committee employs organising, support and specialist staff to work with delegates and members.

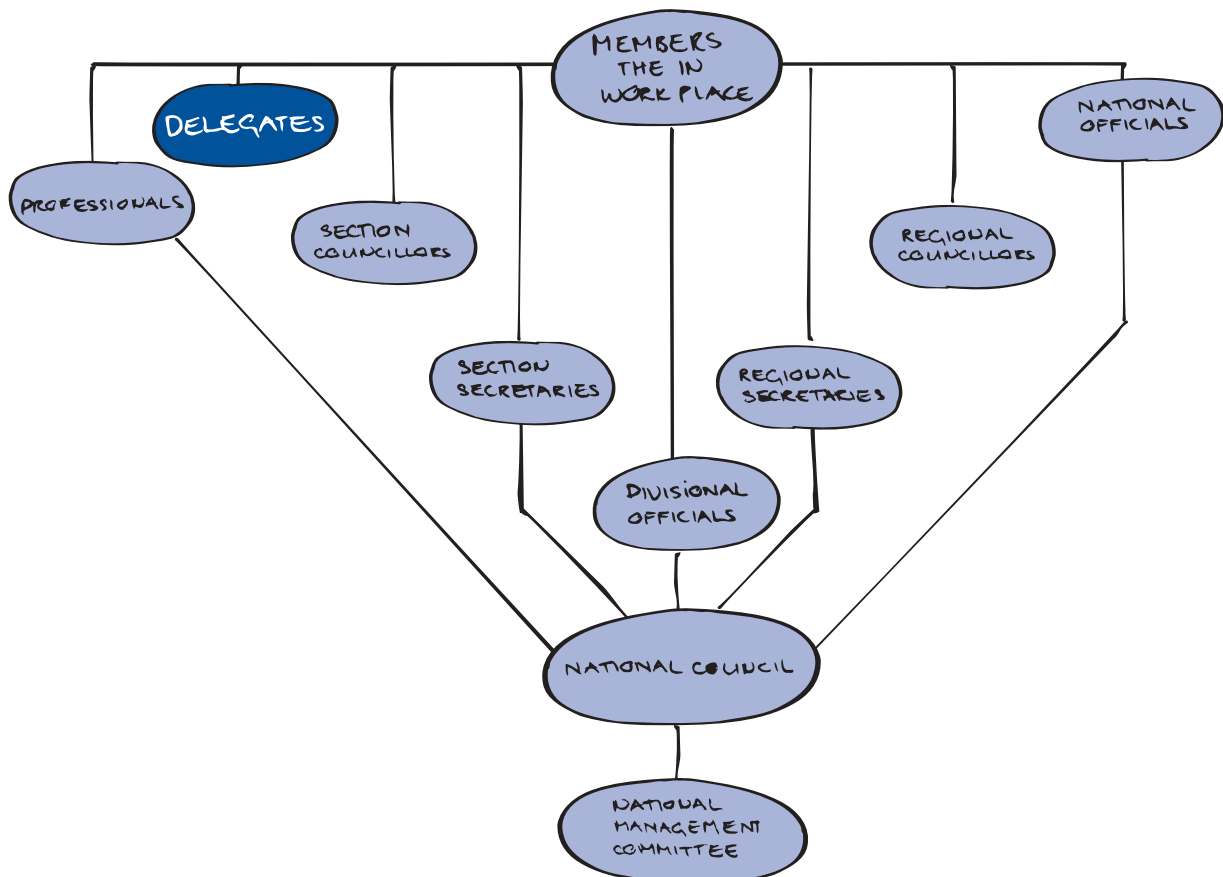
CPSU has offices in state and territory capital cities, and some regional locations.

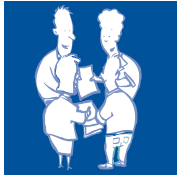
Our union's structure is designed to encourage participation. How well it works depends on the level of involvement of you and your members.

This means taking an interest in issues, having an opinion, encouraging others to become involved, setting an agenda for your workplace, and representing members' views at union forums and with management.

To work out your role as a workplace representative you can

- Talk to your organiser or official
- Call the Member Service Centre
1300 137 636
- Visit the website: www.cpsu.org

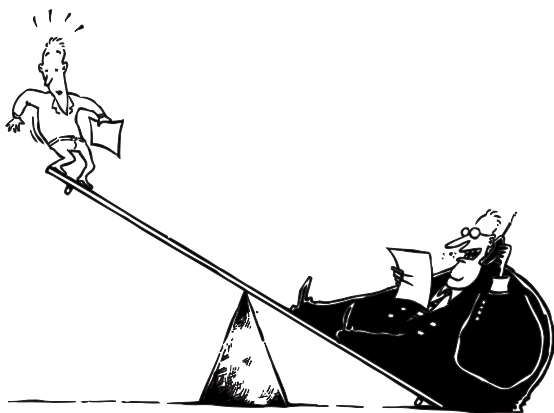




Organising your workplace

Workers achieve most when union membership is strong.

Many employers and governments want each worker to sign an individual contract - this is a recipe for unfairness and a weak, divided workforce.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WE FAIL TO RECRUIT AND ORGANISE?

- you will lose credibility with your employer and co-workers
- workers will be less willing to take up their problems
- your ability to negotiate will be weakened

OUR UNION

- will lose influence with governments over such issues as health and safety laws, training and education, employment
- will be less able to provide services to members (eg legal, workers compensation)
- will have less weight when appearing in industrial tribunals

Workers and our union must always present well-argued cases to employers and governments — but with the added support of an organised workforce our case will be rock solid.

Workplace organising and recruitment are **your number one responsibility**. We need a strong and organised membership

- to build a better work life for the people in your workplace, and
- to enable our union to improve workers' standards generally.

WORKING TOGETHER GETS RESULTS

People work together in clubs, schools, families, churches, communities because it gets results.

So working together (organising) at work makes sense.

As a famous international union leader once said

"We need the argument of our strength as well as the strength of our argument."





When talking to workers, remember what our union movement has achieved through working together. Here are some ideas to start with. See if you can add more!

- long service leave
- paid public holidays
- maternity/paternity leave
- annual leave
- improved health and safety at work
- compensation and rehabilitation for work injuries
- superannuation
- equal pay principles
- fair treatment in dismissal and retrenchment situations
- minimum award conditions for all workers
- protection against discrimination, harassment and other unfair practices.

Workplace organising should be built from

- the issues and concerns of the workers themselves
- effective use of our union’s experience and resources.

Planning for workplace organisation

Even if all workers are in our union, ask yourself, “How many are active? Are we organised? Do we know what workers want? How will we find out?”

Start by assessing the present position in your workplace.

ASSESSING YOUR WORKPLACE

- what proportion of workers are members?
- how active and interested are they?

- are non-members a particular group (eg do they work in the same area? Are they in the same age group? Are they...?)
- are there any obvious workplace issues around which you might organise?
- ask yourself, “What other factors might affect the level of membership and organisation in our workplace?”

2 KEYS TO SUCCESS

- have a plan
- always talk 1-to-1 to workers whether they are potential members or potential activists

Start your planning by making a map.

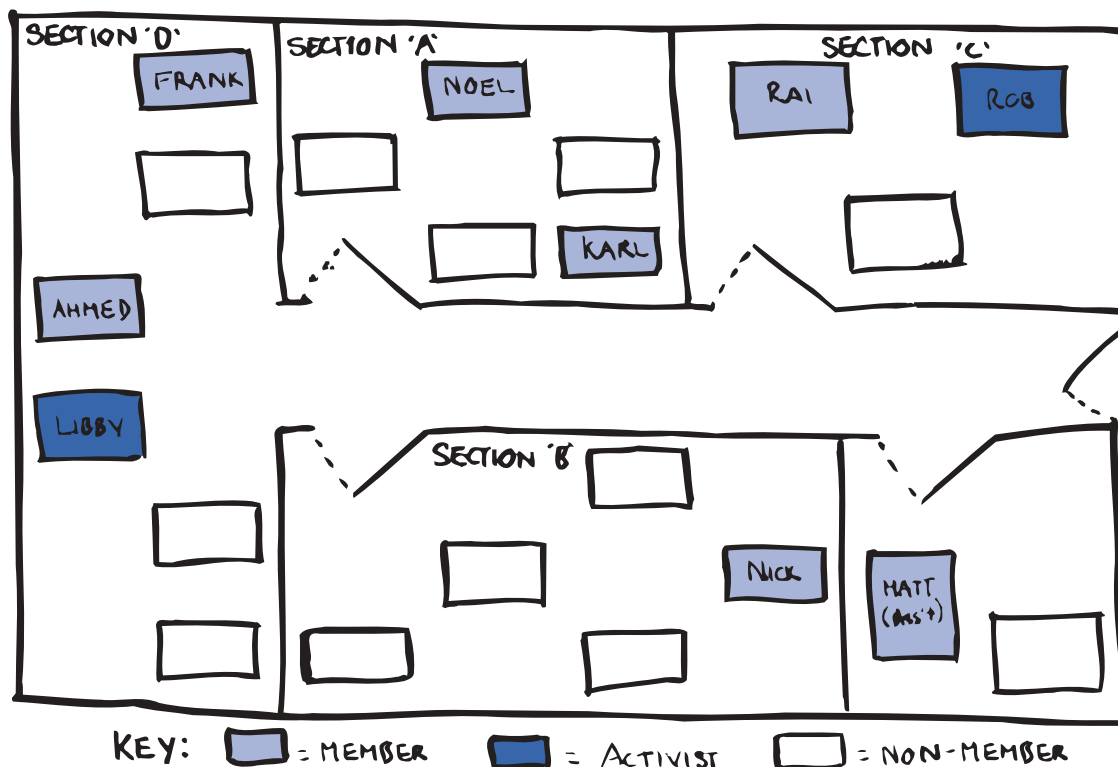
Simply draw a plan, showing each work area. Then you can identify where you have members/activists, and where you most need them.

Now add what you know about each person, for example*

- member or not
- are they for/against/apathetic towards workplace organisation
- their age group
- first language
- are they leaders (at work or outside).

In a large workplace you may need more than one map.

*NOTE: if you collect personal information, particularly about non-members, you must gain their prior consent and the information you hold should be available to them. If you have any queries, talk to your Organiser or the Member Service Centre, or check the website: www.cpsu.org/privacy.



Keep your map up-to-date. Add information as you get it. Build up a good, accurate picture of your workplace.

Make sure your membership record is up-to-date. Ask other workers for their help if necessary and check your list with your organiser or our Member Service Centre.

Look at your map. Ask

- “where are we strong already? Where are our weaknesses?”
- “who might be the best people to approach first?”
- “who might be able to help by influencing others” and so on.

From here you can work out your strategy for building membership, activity, and organisation.

There is another way of mapping. You can draw up a list of workers in the form of a table showing the same information. Remember to note people with the skills to assist you in building the union in your workplace.

BUT BEWARE

You should not be creating a ‘dossier’ on your workmates.

Keep all information confidential and secure and never use anything personal, such as people’s private lives or their family or domestic affairs.

You also need to be aware that the privacy legislation applies to your activities.

JOB/SECTION or FLOOR	NUMBER OF WORKERS	NUMBER OF MEMBERS	EMPLOY STATUS	CONTACT/ACTIVIST	ISSUES
A	5F 2M	2	2 FULL 5 PART	Roula	Treatment by supervisor
B					
C					
D					



People are different — so talk to workmates 1-to-1

Everyone in your workplace is different. So approach them as individuals, on a 1-to-1 basis.

Talking to people 1-to-1 you

- treat them as an individual
- appear less threatening
- can respond to their views
- can assess their potential

Use your map to select your targets. It may help to start with people you know, but keep in mind those areas where you most need activists.

PLANNING TO TALK TO A WORKER? ASK YOURSELF

- what work do they do?
- if a new employee, where did they work before? Have they ever been a unionist?
- why aren't they in our union? Have they ever been asked to join?
- are their workmates members? Are they friendly with members?

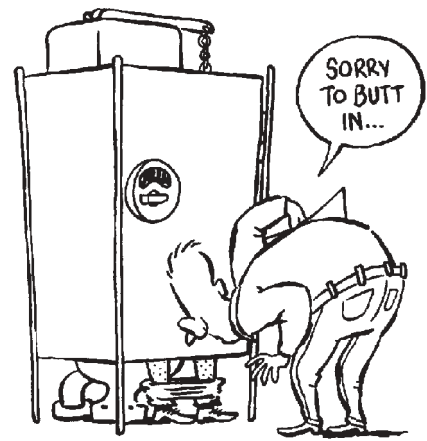
Before approaching someone, put yourself in their shoes. Would you be happier to talk to a person who

- put the “hard sell” on you?
- talked **at** you, rather than **to** you?
- argued, but didn't listen?

Or would you prefer a person who

- listened to you, showed interest and discussed **your** ideas?

Choose the right time and place



Start softly, don't hard sell

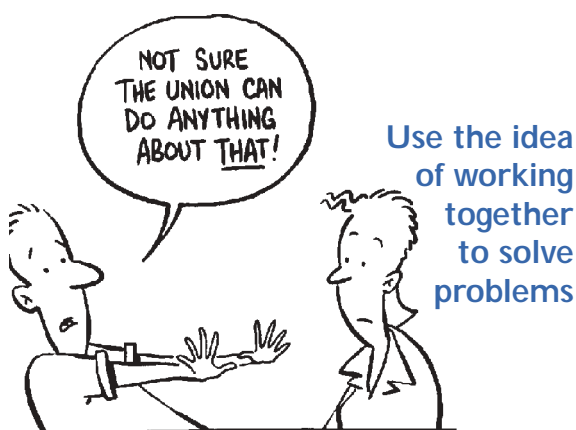


Get them talking and LISTEN — encourage



Don't argue — try to find common ground — acknowledge concerns





As you talk 1-to-1, make a list of peoples' concerns. Then you can say in later approaches, "Some people seem to be bothered about... What do you think?". This shows that you understand the real issues.

You can also use this list to build an action agenda for your workplace organisation.

Winning new members can be hard work. But the more you succeed, the more support you will have from fellow members.

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS.

If interested try to get involvement — commitment to help or join



What about questions and objections?

Many people will welcome your 1-to-1 approach because you are interested in their views. But others may be cagey or hostile.

Here are some commonly heard objections

"I've been a member before. Had nothing but trouble"

"I can look after myself"

"I don't want to strike"

"Can't afford it"

"My dad says unions only cause trouble"

"I'm just a casual"

"I'll get the benefits anyway - don't need to join"

Discuss these objections with your friends and other unionists; and with your organiser.

Here's a case study.

Talking a couple of days ago, Gino spotlighted a workplace issue. Marg explained the idea of working together, and left him with some union leaflets. Today, she speaks to him again.

Gino says what many non-unionists say — "I'll think about it".



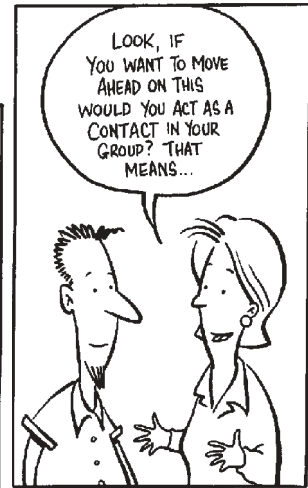


ask questions, let him talk it through



acknowledge concerns, show you are listening

remind him of the issue, explain working together



end with a question which invites a positive response

Signing up new members

A non-member may agree to join at your first approach or it may take many talks.

Always have a membership form to hand, ready for your next success.

YOU SHOULD

- know how much membership costs and how payment is made
- tell the new recruit that membership is tax deductible
- be able to fill in a membership form correctly
- have material about the services and other benefits our union provides
- forward the membership form to our Member Service Centre for processing and follow-up to make sure that everything proceeds smoothly

Don't lose interest in a new member. Try to involve them in workplace activities even in the smallest way. Perhaps they could help recruit other people, or you could seek their views from time to time. This is not just a new member — this is a potential activist.

Building your workplace organisation

Why isn't membership recruitment enough?

Numbers are important but only an involved membership will win

- the best workplace agreements
- protection from arbitrary management decisions
- dignity and job satisfaction for workers

Developing activists

Do you already have a good workplace committee, or do you feel as if you are the only activist in your workplace?

Every workplace needs more activists and contacts. Ideally, you should have a contact in each work area or each workgroup.

Use your map to identify areas where you need activists.

Aim for about one activist for every 10 workers. Some of your activists will be quiet people who simply pass information, collect views, keep in touch with you. But anyone who commits to any task is an important resource.



LOOKING FOR A POTENTIAL ACTIVIST?

Ask yourself, "Is this person...

- already a member?"
- a leader in their work area, their ethnic community, their age group?"
- well respected around the workplace?"
- more of a "questioner" than a passive "accepter"?"
- interested in general issues, not just personal ones?"
- someone others talk to, listen to?"

If you are not sure, **ask other workmates.**

When you have identified likely activists, how will you approach them? Use the same 1-to-1 technique outlined earlier in this section.

INVOLVE POTENTIAL NEW ACTIVISTS SLOWLY

Ask (one question at a time) "Will you...

- be a contact in your work area?"
- hand out some flyers (or a survey) for me?"
- find out the views of 5 or 10 people in your work area?"
- come to a meeting?"
- talk to workmates about attending a meeting?"
- be part of our organising committee?"
- come with me to see the management?"
- talk to a non-member about joining?"

With this approach, a person may gradually be willing to become more involved and carry out bigger and bigger tasks. Remember, people can be active without wanting to take on a formal union position. Most will want only a limited involvement. They won't want to go beyond the first stage - and even if they do, their circumstances may change later and cause them to withdraw.

Don't despair! Each activity by a member strengthens your workplace organisation. You cannot do it all — **spread the load!**

"Why haven't you joined our union?"

When asked this question, most non-members say

"I have never been asked to join!"

Networking and committees

When you have some activists, consider setting up a workplace organising committee or an organising network.

A committee/network will ensure continuity of workplace activity and build up involvement.

If the opportunity exists for meeting easily, a committee is best.

But in a large workplace you may also need a wider network of people who can maintain two way communication between workers and the committee. Networks can use the "phone tree" technique (see p17) to collect views and attitudes and pass information.

In small workplaces try to establish a network across a number of workplaces in the same area and/or with similar interests and concerns.

SETTING UP A COMMITTEE/NETWORK WILL

- spread the work load
- encourage more involvement and commitment
- create a pool of ideas and experience
- produce a wider spread of contacts and skills
- ensure everyone is kept informed.

Networks are a very useful way for both large and small workplaces to share ideas with other workplaces.



Working in a committee

Your committee should be informal and run in a way that encourages people to take part. Don't let your committee be frightening or boring, or you will drive people away.

Of course an informal meeting is not the same as a **disorderly** meeting — disorder will put people off just as much as too much formality.

A WORKPLACE COMMITTEE SHOULD COMPRISE

- 5%-10% of workers, so that it is visible and is in contact with all workers
- someone from each job, shift, department/section, work area
- people from relevant ethnic and age groups, and include women and men
- leaders that workers turn to for advice, help.

How to conduct a successful informal meeting

before the meeting

- make sure everyone knows when and where, and why they are meeting
- try to allocate some tasks before the meeting. Who will chair it, who will take notes (the same each time or by rotation?), who will give a report (say, of a meeting with management)

during the meeting

- use an agenda, make sure everyone knows what is happening. Consider adopting a regular format
- don't let it get bogged down by unimportant matters or by repetition
- discourage any one person or group from dominating - but encourage new/quieter members to participate

- ensure a clear decision on every item. Everyone should know what it is, and who will carry it out

after the meeting

- brief notes or minutes should be written and distributed quickly. Only record decisions and action to be taken - don't summarise discussion
- make sure people know what is expected of them. New members may need help and encouragement

There is more about meetings in the next section, "Organising yourself".

WHAT ABOUT AN AGENDA?

Have a regular agenda so that everyone becomes familiar with it. Keep it simple -

1. Who's in the chair (if it rotates), who's taking notes. Welcome first-timers
2. Go through the last notes/minutes. Check that tasks allocated at the last meeting have been completed. Update your map and recognise achievements ("We have got 3 new members and 2 new contacts")
3. Messages and information from our union
4. Any reports from members (say, of a meeting). Ask, "What's new in our workplace?"
5. New matters. What next to strengthen our organisation? ("Shall we run a survey?") Allocate tasks and timing
6. Next meeting - time and place.



Networking

Creating networks within your workplace and across workplaces is a good way to get people involved.

A network is even less formal than a committee. It can be more practical if regular meetings are difficult. It involves work areas and worksites keeping in touch about issues and sharing information, ideas and experiences.

Network members might agree to keep in touch with, say, just 5 or 10 people each.

For example a network member

- might ring around the network to collect opinions about a new problem
- spread the word about a negotiating success
- share thoughts on organising ideas
- hand out flyers, ensure survey forms are completed and collected

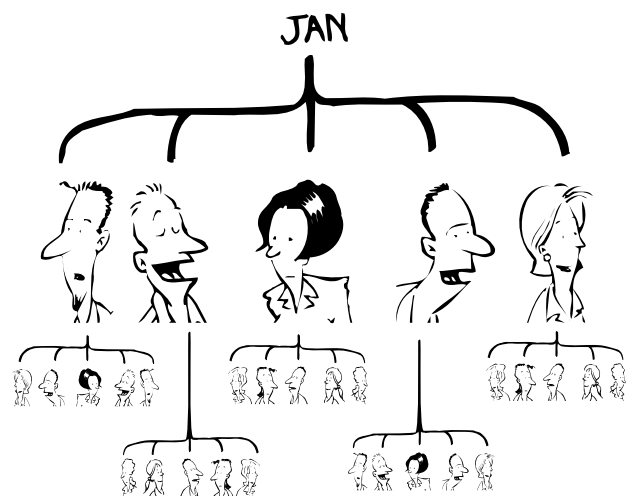
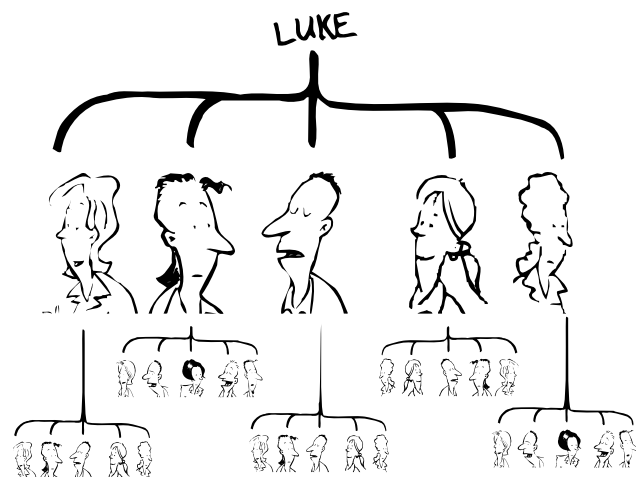
If communication between network members is limited to telephone contact, try to make opportunities for occasional face-to-face meetings. This encourages those in weakly organised areas and helps to build unity.

Make sure your workplace map records network members and other key contacts.

Using “phone trees”

The “**phone tree**” is a type of network which can be used in many workplaces, or across several. This is a simple idea for sharing the load and involving people in a modest and non-threatening way.

The tree is an excellent way to pass information, and collect views, attitudes and ideas.



Each person in the “tree” undertakes to make a small number of phone calls. The tree operates rather like a “chain letter”! For example if you want to pass a message to all staff in a number of workplaces or work areas, a tree can enable you to contact 25 or more people by making just 5 telephone calls.

Phone trees can of course be much larger than this.



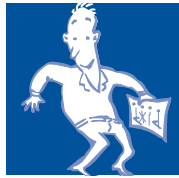
What about the workers “down the road”...or interstate or overseas?

Through our union and your own networks

- join in organising campaigns
- stop employers competing with one another by cutting wages and conditions
- help to establish decent standards of wages and conditions to benefit all workers.

Now, here are some questions for you to think about. You may wish to discuss your responses with your organiser and other activists in your workplace committee/network.

1. *Do you know who are the non-members in your workplace? Do you know why they are non-members?*
2. *Have you prepared a workplace map?*
3. *Have you discussed recruitment and workplace organisation with your organiser?*
4. *Have a look at the section on “Signing up a new member”. (p 14) Are you well equipped to sign up a new member? (Do you know the rate for membership fees, do you have enrolment forms.....?)*
5. *What objections to joining our union have you come up against? How did you handle them?*
6. *Do you have a workplace committee or network? If not, how might you go about setting one up? Work out a plan, and then discuss it with your organiser.*
7. *Develop your own list of useful contacts. Make sure that you have a good list - have you included other activists at your workplace and/or in nearby or related workplaces?*
8. *Would a phone tree help communications in your workplace or network?*



Organising yourself

It will be easier to organise your workplace, if you are well organised.

Here are some ideas that may help you.

A contact point

- perhaps a pigeon-hole or box or basket where workers know they can leave messages for you.

Telephone

- if you have access to a telephone, make sure workers know how they can reach you or leave a message.

Noticeboard

- where workers will see it (a noticeboard is a requirement in many awards). Don't let your noticeboard get out-of-date. Replace material that looks old - people ignore noticeboards that never change and have torn, yellowing notices!

Records

- keep your records and information to hand. A box, an inexpensive box-file or concertina file can be adequate.

YOUR RECORD SYSTEM

- keep it simple
- label material clearly
- file material as soon as you receive it
- keep it up-to-date
- check your system regularly, and throw out what you no longer need.

Diary

- to record appointments, union meetings, and other commitments.

Action list

- a simple clipboard will do. List everything you are currently dealing with. Cross items off as you deal with them, and check it regularly.

Whether you use these suggestions or not, develop a **system** of working that meets **your** needs.

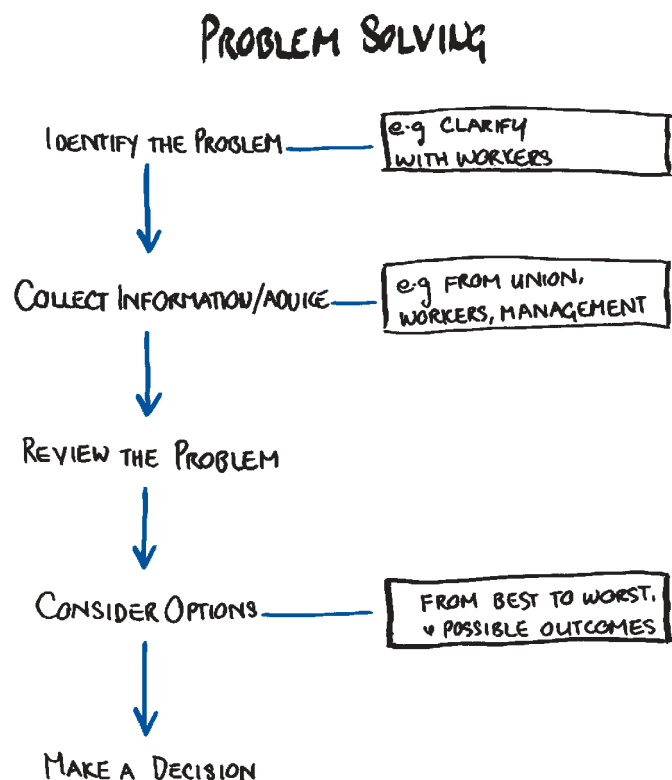
The more systematic you are the more success you will have.

Problem solving

There is no magic to handling problems. The keys are:

- to be methodical, and
- to use all the resources/information available to you

The ideas and support of your workmates are a major resource. Seeking them is also a convincing way of involving them in your workplace organisation.





Good communications

By following a few guidelines you can improve your communication skills.

Most union training courses also provide good opportunities to test and brush up these skills.

Listening

Listening should be active, not passive. If you don't listen you will not be able to assess a situation accurately.



ACTIVE LISTENING

- at meetings, take notes
- watch the "body language" and facial expressions of the person speaking
- look interested in what is being said to you
- hear the person out — don't jump to conclusions, don't interrupt with a response too soon
- remember — being a good listener shows respect for the other person.

Note-taking

Note-taking is a good habit.

If you phone our union office for information, take a note of the response - or you may find yourself making the same phone call again next week!

After a meeting or interview, check your notes, clarify anything you are not sure of and check them for legibility. Keep them until the matter is concluded.

TO BE A GOOD NOTE TAKER

- always carry a notebook and pen
- don't trust to memory
- write brief notes
- write clearly
- record the main points only, especially
 - names
 - place
 - time
 - facts
- keep your notes

A GOOD ORGANISER...





Interviewing

There are some guidelines on 1-to-1 discussion in the earlier section on “Organising your workplace”.

If a worker comes to you with a problem, the same general advice applies

- talk in a quiet place with no time pressure
- make notes and explain why you are doing so
- listen actively
- ask questions to get the facts straight. Clarify the issues by restating them
- discuss options. Agree on the next step (if there is one)
- after the interview check your notes
- if necessary, record what you need to do on your action list and be sure to report back to the worker.

Speaking

Whether speaking at a formal or informal meeting or at a negotiation with management

- organise your ideas before speaking
- only start when people are ready; watch reactions - “do they understand what I’m talking about?”
- limit what you have to say - keep it short
- speak more slowly and clearly than usual. Make sure everyone can hear you
- before finishing, repeat your main message.

Reporting

Every union activist has to give reports at some time or other.

Reports are often an important part of a meeting. You may have to report on a negotiation, or a union meeting you have attended.

Adopt the same approach as is suggested above for speaking.

Keep it clear and simple.

If the matter is complicated, try to use a handout or butchers’ paper stuck to a wall.

THE ABC OF GOOD REPORTING:

- A be **Accurate** — but use your honest judgement. Stress key facts and issues, ignore what is irrelevant
- B be **Brief** — the report should only be as long as is necessary. If you ramble, people will lose your thread and stop listening
- C be **Complete** — do not ignore facts which don’t suit your own point of view — or you will discredit your report and yourself
- D be **Direct** — follow the rules for good speaking. Present the material clearly and simply.

Conducting a meeting

This section supplements the guidance on workplace committees in “Organising your workplace”.

Meetings should be informal wherever possible. The objectives should be, to complete the agenda, to involve members and to reach decisions by consensus rather than voting.

Try brainstorming a problem

This can be a good method of tackling a complicated, difficult issue. And it helps to involve everyone:

- ask everyone for ideas, however wild
- list them without discussion
- then group them, put similar ideas together
- now evaluate each idea or group of ideas - test them against your objectives.



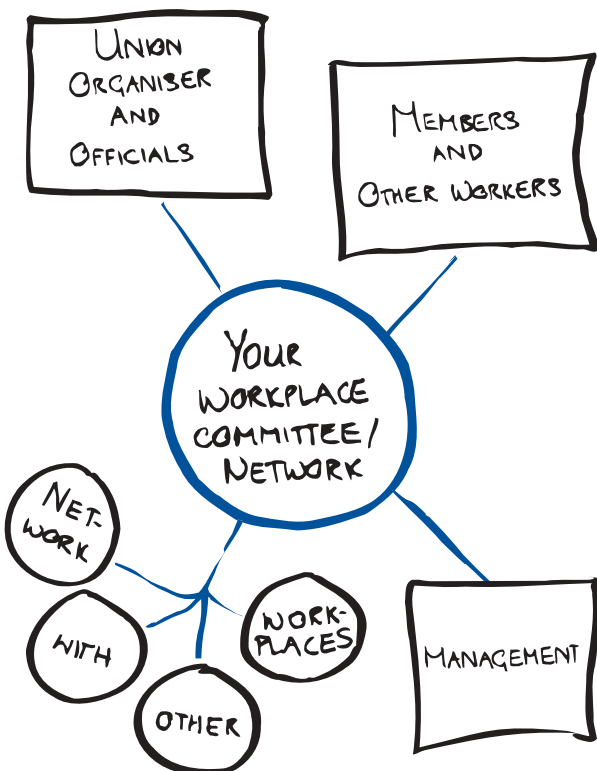
IF YOU ARE IN THE CHAIR

- keep discussion flowing freely, try to involve everyone
- avoid private debates which exclude other members
- in a long discussion, summarise occasionally and invite new contributions
- try to deflate tension, hostility
- make sure decisions are clear.

Here are some more questions to think about. You may wish to discuss them with your organiser and your fellow activists.

1. Do you have a notice board for union matters? Is it up-to-date and tidy?
2. Is it easy for members and other workers to contact you, by phone, message or personally?
3. Do you keep an action list or other record of matters you are currently dealing with?
4. Do you know what union training programs are available?
5. Are you happy with your own record system? Do you keep it up-to-date? Do you regularly throw out old material you no longer need?
6. Do you take notes at all interviews with members, non-members and management?
7. And do you take notes when making phone calls; and when attending meetings?
8. If you ever take the chair at meetings, you have had to deal with people who seem afraid to join in the discussion, and also other people who seem unable to keep quiet! Think about how you have dealt with these situations. Ask yourself, "How could I handle them better — so that the quiet ones feel they can make a contribution, and so that the noisy ones back off a little?"

KEEPING IN TOUCH





Winning in your workplace

When reading this section remember that every issue is an organising opportunity. When you “win” an issue, big or small, let everyone know and celebrate.

Representing individual workers

Your workmates will come to you for all sorts of information and help.

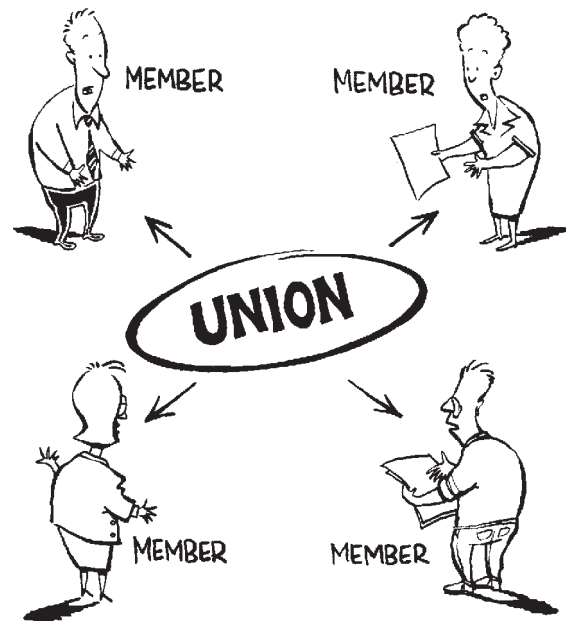
For example, you may get questions about

- some of the services provided by our union
- “how do I get maternity/paternity leave”?
- “do you think my mother should be getting a pension?”
- “what is our union doing about ...?” or “what are you doing about....?”

and dozens of others.

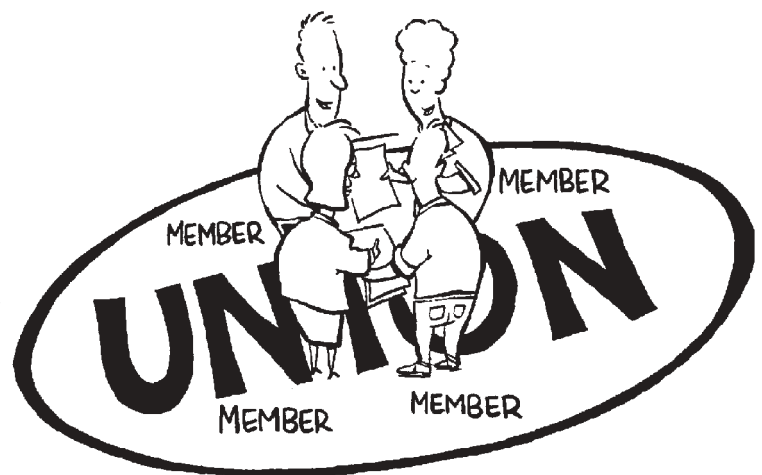
Three golden rules

1. Ask yourself, why is the question being asked? Is it just a passing interest, or is there an important problem for the individual? Could it affect a group of workers?
2. Give an answer on-the-spot **only if you are sure it is correct**. If in any doubt, say that you will check. When you have checked (from your own resources or through your organiser or our Member Service Centre), get back to the person as soon as possible.
3. Keep a brief note - first, as a reminder if you have to check, second, so that later you can ask the person “Is everything OK now?”, and third, because your records may uncover a more general issue.



DON'T LET WORKERS THINK YOU HAVE A MAGIC WAND.

If they want issues resolved, they need to get involved. They will see the difference in management's response when you all **work together**





What about personal questions?

Sometimes a worker will ask a question or seek advice about a **personal or family matter**.

For example, about an alcohol problem, a domestic issue, or financial matters.

If it is not work-related, you should not give direct advice. But you may know of a government or non-government agency which can help. If you do not, then your organiser or our Member Service Centre can probably tell you. Assure the worker of confidentiality.

But a family issue may still be work-related - for example if the worker is having difficulty in caring for a dependent because of their work hours, or if they need time-off for a family emergency. Then you may need to consider whether to talk to management on behalf of the worker and/or seek advice from our Member Service Centre or your organiser.

Handling work problems

Whatever the issue you should go about resolving it in a systematic way.

Workers may raise such problems as

- “I don’t think my pay is right”
- “My supervisor has a down on me — seems to think I never do anything right”
- “This person I work with keeps touching me. How can I get rid of them?”

Here is a general procedure you can adopt to resolve workplace problems raised by individual workers — often referred to as “grievances”.

1. Interview the member, making notes of the facts and issues. Be sympathetic but ask questions - “How long did you work?”, “Can I see your pay slip?”, “Why do you think the calculation is wrong?”, “Have you queried it with the pay office, what did they say?”, and so on. Get the full story. If you have to take the issue up with management or our union office, you need every detail in your notes.

2. Now assess the situation:

- a) do you need more information? Who can supply it?
- b) is it an issue you have dealt with before?
- c) if you need to talk to management, which particular management person? Or is it something you need union office advice on?
- d) is it an issue which could affect other workers? If so you may need to talk to your contacts or network

3. When you have made your assessment tell the worker how you think the problem could best be handled. Get their agreement to what you propose.

4. If in doubt, contact your organiser or our Member Service Centre to discuss the situation.

In some workplaces, there is a grievance procedure or policy agreed with the employers.

You should follow any grievance procedure set down and agreed with management.

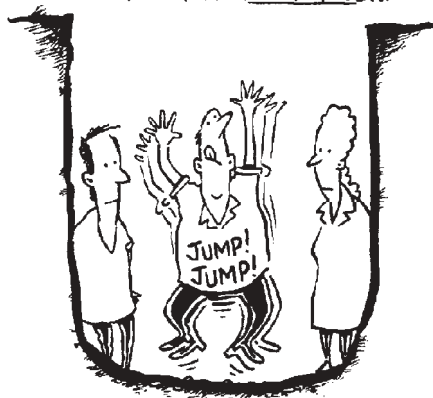
AN IMPORTANT REMINDER!

Most people regard their problems as urgent. But in reality there are few issues that require instant action.

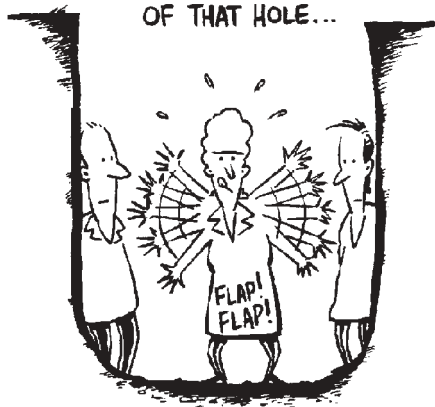
Make sure you know all the facts and all the options before you respond.

THE HOLE STORY

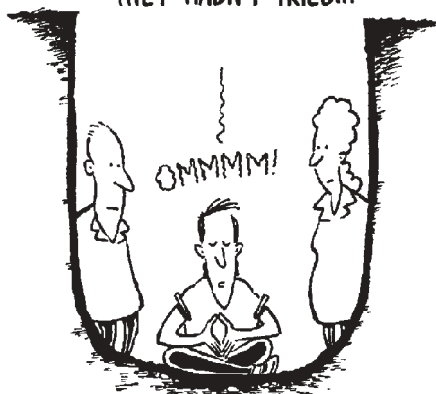
THEY TRIED EVERYTHING...



...TO GET OUT OF THAT HOLE...



THE ONLY THING THEY HADN'T TRIED...



...WAS TO HELP EACH OTHER OUT!



Natural justice at work

Whether at work or anywhere else, we are all entitled to natural justice. Broadly, this means that a person is entitled

- to know what their alleged offence is
- to know what evidence is relied on
- to have a right of reply

These entitlements become important if it is alleged that a worker's behaviour or work performance is unsatisfactory.

If the matter is a minor one, the supervisor and the worker will usually be able to resolve it, whether or not they wholly agree.

If they cannot resolve it — or in cases where there is any question of a formal reprimand or warning or even dismissal — a worker should be entitled to have a workplace representative or workmate present at any discussion.

In such a case you should follow the process outlined above about grievances.

Your interviewing skill is again most important

- what is alleged?
- in what way does the worker disagree?
- were there any other witnesses?
- does the worker think that they are being "picked-on"?

To this information you need to add your own local knowledge of the worker and the supervisor.

What is their normal behaviour like? Is this a one-off problem, or is there a pattern of behaviour on one side or the other?

Discuss your problem with another activist - preferably someone who knows a little about the local situation - or talk to your organiser.

A calm discussion of the facts with someone a little removed from the scene can be very helpful.





Equity issues — discrimination and harassment

Discrimination means treating a person less favourably than another person because of some personal characteristic, such as their race, gender or a disability.

Sexual harassment is behaviour of a sexual nature which causes another person distress (such as unwanted sexual propositions or physical contact, or the display of offensive posters).

Our union strongly condemns every form of discrimination and harassment.

Your employer has a legal responsibility to ensure that discrimination and harassment does not occur in the workplace (whether by supervisors or workers) and to take firm action to stop it if it does occur.

OUR UNION'S POLICY ON EQUITY ISSUES MEANS THAT YOU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO

- discourage members from discriminating against other people in your workplace on any ground such as race, gender, sexual preference
- deal with it responsibly if it occurs
- co-operate with management in any genuine attempts to stop or prevent discrimination

There are a number of Federal and State laws which ban discrimination at work.

To fight discrimination you should

- make it absolutely clear that discriminatory behaviour is unlawful and opposed by our union
- assure workers who complain about discrimination that our union will support them if their complaint is justified

- ensure that management has developed a policy and procedure for handling any discrimination issues, and that these are known to workers. If there is any doubt about the way discrimination issues are handled, you should raise the matter with the management and begin negotiations for an agreed policy and procedure. If in doubt, consult your organiser or our Member Service Centre.

What about the management?

In your role you are involved with 3 groups of people

- union members and other workers
- your union organiser and officials
- the boss, the management.

Just as you should be aware of the role of the various people in our union office, so you must identify the people who are “the management”.

Most managers see their role as being to organise work to minimise costs and maximise profits or efficiency.

This is why we need a fair and orderly industrial relations system. Employers and workers have their own views about the way work is best organised - who should do what job, what workers are paid, and so on.

This does not mean that workers are always in conflict with the management - on many matters they may be on common ground. But conflicts (that is, differences of view) will inevitably arise. These should be resolved quickly and sensibly. This will usually occur where there are good management practices and people like you are well resourced (eg through training, information and union support) and have the backing of the workforce.



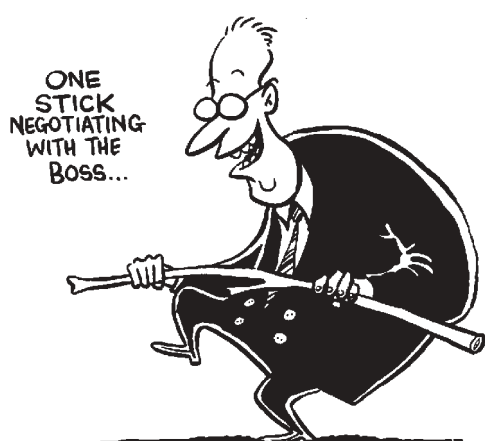
What should be your relationship with management?

To serve your workmates well you must be quite clear about your relationship with management.

Here are some general guidelines you should follow

- know how your management works - go to the right person on any issue
- state your issue clearly and get a clear response. Always have another worker with you. This involves more people and checks your understanding of what has been said. Take notes of what is said and what was, and was not, agreed

WHICH IS STRONGER?



- after any meeting, record the result. Use your notes if you need to meet again or involve your organiser
- you may like or dislike particular management people, but always maintain a level and clear relationship. Your responsibility is to deal with that person on behalf of workmates without personal feelings getting in the way. Management people should have the same attitude towards you.

WHO IS THE MANAGEMENT?

What is the structure of management in your workplace?

What is the pecking order?

Who makes which decisions?

What is their attitude to your workplace organisation?

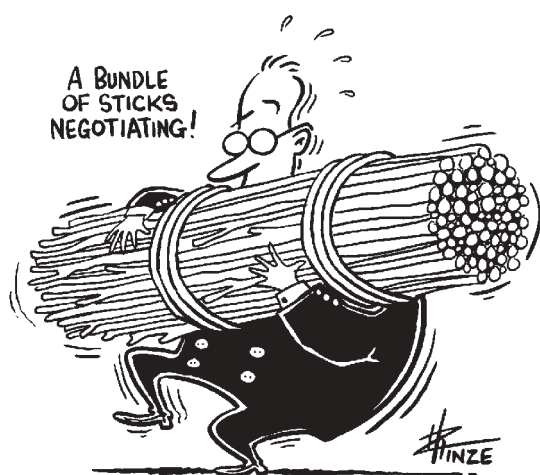
If you are having problems with a particular management person, don't let it fester! Talk to your organiser, workplace committee or other activists and members. All these people can make useful suggestions.

Negotiating on workplace matters

Apart from individual problems and grievances, there is a range of issues you can negotiate with management.

What issues might be negotiated?

The list can be almost endless.



Some issues can be obvious - for example, if there are sudden changes in work methods workers will probably let you know very quickly!

But, other issues may be hidden. Why?

- the issue may have been around so long that workers just accept it — “that’s how its always been”



- workers may fear confronting the management about an issue
- sometimes morale in a workplace is very low, but it is difficult to specify precise issues
- it may be that no-one has ever had the thought - “This could be a better place to work in, if only...”!

While negotiating, the boss may want some exchange of benefits. Consider such proposals carefully and always seek advice from your organiser.

Identifying workplace issues

How can you identify issues?

In recruiting and organising 1-to-1 in your workplace you have been picking up ideas of what people are thinking. You can test these by conducting a **workplace survey**.

A survey is a good way of involving workplace committee/network members and other activists, as well as encouraging discussion amongst the workers generally.

If you decide to conduct a survey consider

- will the survey go only to members or will you try to involve non-members?
- how will you explain the purpose, without giving people unreal expectations about what can be achieved?
- how will you design the survey questions? Ask your organiser for advice. You may also be able to get some help from local sources (eg a friendly person at a local university or TAFE, or a community organisation that has experience)
- will it be easy to interpret the results clearly?
- can you test the survey questionnaire on a small group, before issuing it generally?
- when distributing the survey can committee/network members identify more potential activists?

Ideally each worker should receive a hand-delivered copy from someone who can take a little time to explain it. That person should stay while the worker completes it; but if that is not possible, someone should pick it up, say, the next day.

After the survey you should let workers know the results, and keep them involved.

Preparing for negotiations

Preparation is the most critical phase for successful negotiations. Your team will certainly do a good job if they are well prepared.

- **Have clear objectives** — what do you want to achieve?
- Make sure you have **workplace support**.
- **Collect all the relevant facts** and information about the issue(s). Use the ideas and experiences of workers on the job.
- Write down as clearly as you can **the key arguments** in favour of your claim.
- **Plan your tactics for the negotiating table.** Who will be on the team, who will be the spokesperson, who will take notes?
- **How will management respond?** Who will represent management - are they decision makers?
- **What are your options?** If necessary, do you have a compromise or fall back position?
- **How will you inform workers of the results after the negotiation?** You must keep the support and involvement of workers.

Don't forget that there are two aspects to a claim — one is the strength of your argument, the other is the strength of workplace support.

Consider letting management know about your claim before the first meeting. This may speed up the negotiation. In this way you might avoid them saying “We will have to think about it”.



At the negotiations

Your preparations will now pay off.

AT THE NEGOTIATION

- the chief spokesperson must control the team
- ensure that one member makes careful notes
- be firm but polite
- don't be sidetracked — stick to the issues
- do not discuss or debate offers with your colleagues at the table — seek an adjournment
- check management offers for clarity — be sure you understand any offer

Some people use “tricks”. These usually depend on acting — for example, pretending to get angry, shouting, walking out, threatening industrial action and so on.

You are strongly advised not to use such tricks. The best “trick” is for your union team:

- to be well prepared
- to know you have workplace support, and
- to present your case strongly and logically.

IN NEGOTIATIONS, DO NOT

- conduct negotiations alone — this can lead to confusion and misunderstanding
- make a “deal” beyond your authority — have the support of your workplace (and where necessary, our union)
- debate issues with your own colleagues during negotiations. If things seem to be going wrong, call for an adjournment and discuss the matter in private

When management responds, listen carefully and ask questions to make sure that you have the correct picture.

If there is an offer, make sure you understand what has been offered.

AT THE END OF THE MEETING

- summarise the final position to check that everyone agrees what it is
- commit any agreement to writing and have both sides confirm it by signing it
- if your claim is rejected or there is no offer likely to be acceptable, say that you have to consult with the workers and our union
- if the management make an offer which appears acceptable - do you have the authority to settle? If you are not sure, take it back to the workers

After the negotiation

Assess the result and the way your team and the management performed. Learn from your experience, especially if you are going to have another meeting.

If you have reached a satisfactory agreement:

- prepare a report and recommendation for workers and your organiser.
- what needs to be done to make the agreement work? Assign a member of the team to check that the agreement is carried out.
- celebrate your success with your team and others who contributed.

If an offer is less than you expected, or if there is a complete rejection:

- review your objectives and expectations.
- prepare a report for the members and your organiser. Can you go back and try again?



- if you are to try again, what new information and arguments do you need?
- if you recommend accepting the current management position, under what circumstances could you go back later - do you need more facts, more support from workers?
- remember that there are few instances in which a good claim cannot be renewed. Negotiations on some issues can take a long time. The important thing is to keep making gains!

How can workers show support?

There are many ways workers can display support. "Display" is the key word here. What you want is for management to see that workers are serious about the claim and are united in their support for it.

Here are some ideas - can you think of others?

- if your claims are based on a survey of workers, management will know that your claim reflects workplace opinions
- if members of your workplace committee/network talk to workers about the claim and collect information from them, this will also be known to management. Activists should promote discussion at meal and other breaks
- unity of purpose and solidarity can be demonstrated by everyone wearing a coloured ribbon or badge, or even wearing the same coloured clothing. Management will soon know why they are doing it. A petition is another way to demonstrate support
- if there is a health and safety issue, everyone might wear a band aid in an obvious place
- holding a picnic or BBQ for workers and their children with posters and other signs which highlight the issue. You may be able to involve local community organisations in such an activity if the issue is of interest to them
- produce flyers which support your claim. Use them to lead discussions at meal breaks

- when initially presenting the claim, all workers affected might take the claim to the management

The workplace committee can use its imagination freely!

Introducing an element of fun

does not detract from a show of solidarity. In fact it may help workers who are afraid of being involved in a "dispute"

Important employment conditions

Superannuation

Universal superannuation has been one of the great union achievements.

YOU SHOULD

- be generally familiar with the relevant scheme
- contact our union if workers have any queries
- check that new employees are enrolled in the relevant scheme
- make sure that workers nearing retirement know their entitlements and have access to reliable financial advice
- make sure workers who are leaving the job for any reason are advised of their rights and options
- keep up-to-date with changes notified by our union or your scheme

Training and education for the job

Many people want opportunities to increase their job knowledge and skills.

Our union, together with the whole trade union movement, is constantly pressing governments and employers to increase training opportunities, on- and off-the-job.



Your workplace committee/network should consider the training needs and opportunities available to workers and include the subject in any workplace survey.

A joint workplace training committee might be considered.

A TRAINING COMMITTEE CAN

- identify training needs and issues, including literacy and numeracy
- draw up a training plan
- monitor and review training

Awards and agreements

Awards

An award is a legally enforceable decision of an industrial tribunal. The key minimum wages and conditions of most employees are covered by awards.

Awards are made after a tribunal has heard submissions from unions and employers. These submissions are very comprehensive.

Our union also keeps awards under review and up-to-date.

When there is a need for change in any award, our union and employers go back to the tribunal and seek a change - called a "variation".

These are persuasive facts to explain to any potential member who is reluctant to join our union. Can they, as an individual, prepare and deliver such award submissions to a tribunal or an employer?

Agreements

Most workplaces have enterprise or workplace agreements in addition to their award. Do you have an agreement? Have you got a copy?

Agreements have the same legal standing as awards. Contact your organiser if you think the terms of an agreement are not being followed.

These agreements are negotiated collectively by workers (with the support and assistance of our union office) and their employer.

Collective agreements are another strong argument for workers to be involved in your workplace organisation and our union.

Without organisation, how will workers negotiate a collective agreement? How can your negotiating team get access to the best research and experience without the support of our union? Our union has a great deal of knowledge and experience of agreements and negotiations in similar workplaces, and access to a wide range of research.

You should stress these facts to those reluctant to be involved.

Using your award and agreement

Because our awards and agreements set key conditions, you need to know how they apply to your workplace.

Make absolutely sure that you are reading the latest version, and that you understand the relationship between your award and agreement.

Discuss your award and agreement with your organiser.

If you have any reason to believe that award or agreement conditions are not being followed in any matter, you can seek advice from your organiser or our Member Service Centre.

What about individual contracts?

As we know, many employers are encouraging, or even forcing workers to accept individual contracts as opposed to a collective agreement.

The theory behind individual contracts is that if a person has a problem, they can take it up with the management. However, imagine if you had been a woman in the 1970s and asked your employer for maternity leave. Would the employer have said "Yes of course you can have leave"? In fact employer groups argued against such leave, which was only achieved in 1979 after strong union and workplace pressure.

Based on our extensive bargaining experience, CPSU strongly favours collective agreements over individual contracts. However, the union



recognises that sometimes individual contracts are the only option for workers, and we offer our expertise and experience to help members in this situation get the best possible outcome.

Collective bargaining is the most effective way for workers to express their interests and concerns. **It gives them the argument of their strength to support the strength of their argument!**

Individual contracts can undermine awards and collective agreements. **If an employer tries to introduce individual contracts, discuss the issue with your workplace committee and your organiser.**

Health, Safety, Compensation and Rehabilitation

Bad health and safety practices create hardships for workers and cost the community billions of dollars.

The work-related death toll easily outnumbers both our national road toll and death by suicide.

IN AUSTRALIA AS A WHOLE

- there are more than 2,700 deaths each year due to work-related injury and illness
- 26 workers in every 1,000 are affected by serious workplace injury every year
- the cost to the whole community of work-related injuries is estimated at over \$27 billion a year - comparable with the Australian Government's total expenditure on health

While there is legislation on health and safety, the involvement of workers on-the-job is just as crucial as in any other issue, such as wages or job security.

The law generally puts the principal responsibility for health and safety at work on your employer.

In addition to legislation on health and safety, workplace agreements may also include some health and safety provisions of which you should be aware.

Our union office will provide you with advice when you need it.

Organising around health and safety in your workplace

Health and safety interests most workers.

They often do not raise health and safety matters because they think they are **“just part of the job”** or because they think “There is nothing we can do about it”.

You should demonstrate that your workplace organisation and our union have a positive attitude to their health and safety.

Activity around health and safety concerns is also a good way to show workers that organisation is the best way to deal with workplace matters.

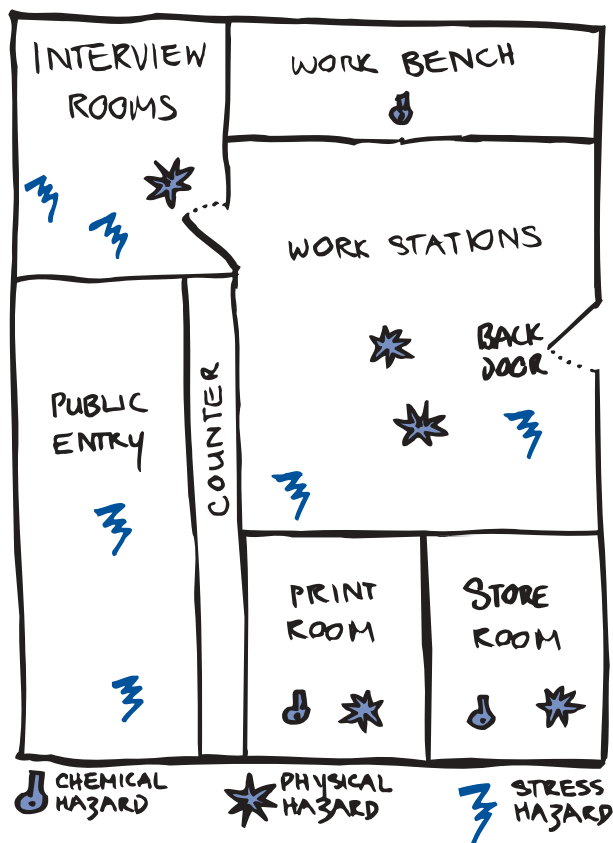
BUILDING INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH AND SAFETY

- talk 1-to-1 to employees about any health and safety concerns
- from this list you can prepare a questionnaire which can be distributed to workers by your workplace committee and other activists
- use the results of the questionnaire survey, together with information from workplace records of illness and accidents, to develop a health and safety profile of your workplace
- apply this profile to a map of your workplace Are there are any links between particular locations or jobs and health and safety problems?
- talk to your organiser about health and safety representatives and a committee if you do not already have these



Your organising committee should maintain close contact with any workplace health and safety representatives or committees.

Under federal and state legislation all workplaces should have a system of elected health and safety representatives and (usually) committees.



Make sure that senior management persons are involved in, and have a strong commitment to, health and safety.

Union training courses are available. Contact our union office for details.

Compensation — what happens if an injury occurs?

PREVENTION IS MOST IMPORTANT

Whether an injury or illness has been caused by an accident or a health hazard, make sure that a proper investigation is carried out to prevent recurrence.

A record of compensation claims adds to your workplace H&S profile.

All accidents, hazards and incidents should be reported as soon as possible to your employer on a written report form. This ensures that there is a reliable record if evidence is needed later to substantiate any claim, and so that the hazard can be investigated.

Your employer should have report forms readily available. If this is not the case, you should immediately raise the matter and have it corrected.

YOUR CHECKLIST

- ensure that any injury or incident is formally recorded
- help any injured worker to fill out a claim form
- inspect the site. Note the name of any witnesses in the case of an accident. Advise the worker to contact our Member Service Centre if she/he requires further help.
- note details of the injury to discuss possible preventative action
- advise the worker to maintain contact with yourself
- note any claim in your own records, in case any follow-up action or information is required by our union or the worker.

Lodging a compensation Claim

Processing a claim for compensation is a technical and legal matter.

Do not attempt to make judgements about whether or not a claim will be successful.

Any member who is injured at work and needs assistance to lodge a claim should be advised to contact our Member Service Centre.

You should also keep in touch to see if the worker needs any help.

Contact our Member Service Centre if you think an injured worker does not understand the way their claim is being handled or if they need any other advice or support.



Rehabilitation and return to work

If a worker has been off work, the issue of a return to work must be considered, particularly if the injury had on-going effect.

There can be complications, especially where a worker's capacity in their job has been reduced (either temporarily or permanently).

Help to ensure the best result by keeping in touch with our union office and your employer as well.

IF SOMEONE IS INJURED YOU SHOULD

ENSURE THE WORKER COMPLETES AN INCIDENT REPORT

↓
INVESTIGATE CAUSE OF INJURY

↓
ASSIST WORKER TO COMPLETE COMPENSATION CLAIM

↓
FOLLOW UP WORKER ESPECIALLY IF OFF WORK

↓
CHECK ON PROGRESS OF CLAIM - PROVIDE EVIDENCE, WITNESSES IF REQUIRED

↓
PROVIDE SUPPORT ON RETURN TO WORK REHABILITATION

↓
CHECK WITH MANAGEMENT ABOUT RETURN TO WORK

Now here are some more questions for you to think about and discuss with your fellow activists and your organiser

1. Have you considered surveying your workplace to find out what issues concern workers? Think broadly about the kind of issues that could be raised, and don't forget health and safety issues.
2. If you have health and safety representatives and/or a health and safety committee, is there close cooperation with your workplace committee/network?
3. What award(s) cover your workplace? Do you have any collective agreements? If you are unsure or feel you may not be up-to-date, talk to your organiser.
4. Do you have an agreed grievance procedure? If so, does it work well? If not, discuss any problems with your organiser. If there is no agreed procedure, is there an "understood" way of taking up workers' problems? Is it satisfactory?
5. Does the management have a policy and procedure for dealing with discrimination in any form? Is it sufficiently known to workers?
6. Have you considered the training needs of workers? Do workers have reasonable access to training opportunities?
7. Do you have a methodical way of dealing with questions and problems raised by individual workers? Go through the way in which you have dealt with any recent questions - this will help you to see if your approach can be improved.
8. Are you negotiating any issues with the management at present, or are you planning to do so? Make a note of the process you followed or propose to follow. Compare it with that suggested earlier in this section - you don't have to follow that approach in every detail, but it is useful to check that you have not left out any vital step.