

# APWU

American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

WAGE INCREASES

GOOD BENEFITS

JOB SECURITY

CONVERSIONS TO  
CAREER

PTF CONVERSIONS  
TO FTR

WORKPLACE  
SAFETY

IMPROVED AND  
EXPANDED SERVICES

LEAVE AND  
HOLIDAY PROVISIONS



## IT TAKES ALL OF US TO PROTECT OUR JOBS

***Sisters and Brothers and APWU Family:***

The current Collective Bargaining Agreement (union contract) between the American Postal Workers Union and the United States Postal Service expires on September 20, 2021. Negotiations for a new contract will begin on June 22, 2021.

The National union will be well-prepared for this critical battle. However, we cannot win a fair union contract solely by making persuasive arguments at the bargaining table.

The level of membership involvement, as well as our relationship with the public, will have a direct impact on how well we do in negotiations.

In the last round of the 2018 negotiations, our ***Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow*** Contract Campaign - along with the enthusiastic participation of so many local leaders and members - addressed the importance of a member-mobilization approach to winning power and building the strength of our union.

This brochure should be used as an important tool in building a member-driven contract campaign, capable of ensuring a good Collective Bargaining Agreement that advances our cause for workplace justice because we are ***Union Strong, All Day Long.***

In Union Solidarity,



Mark Dimondstein  
President

# THE BASICS: BUILDING A CAMPAIGN

This section of the brochure will address what can be done and how to think about adding a campaign approach to the negotiation process. So, what's involved in building a campaign?

- **Educating members on negotiation objectives:** It's important to know from the beginning what you want to get out of the campaign. In other words, why are you doing this? The National Negotiation Committee (NNC) is responsible for setting bargaining objectives after reviewing resolutions and other input from members. Members and allies need to know what objectives the NNC has established and how to assist with achieving them on local, state, and regional levels.
- **Assessing our strengths and weaknesses:** Understanding what works and what does not work in the national, state and local, is vital. This allows us to plan and best use our resources.
- **Having a clear target(s) for actions:** Knowing who our friends and opponents are.
- **Developing a plan:** Working out a strategy to have a successful local/state contract campaign and an effective Contract Action Team (CAT).
- **Rounding up the resources:** Figuring out what is needed in order to get members and the community involved. Also, identifying what resources (either volunteers or materials) are needed to accomplish CAT goals.
- **Building internal organization:** Building our union's capacity to mobilize members in order to win.
- **Building our internal and external communications:** Developing a solid line of communication between members, locals and state organizations, and the National, keeping everyone at all levels informed. Also reaching out to the public with a clear and consistent message.
- **Mobilizing the members:** Getting our members involved so that they know what this effort is and how it must be their own.
- **Developing allies:** Identifying organizations outside of the APWU that have a potential interest in our victory. This includes considering members of A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service (AGA).
- **Wrapping up:** Know when and how to close.

## Setting an Objective

Before starting a campaign, have an idea of what you want to accomplish. As the saying goes, "Unless you know where you are going, then you will not know how to get there."

In setting an objective, or a group of objectives, it is important to be concrete. So, while you can have a goal of conducting a good contract campaign, that alone doesn't tell anyone very much.

To set objectives, you will need to know something about the strengths and weaknesses of your local/state, and have an idea of what opportunities and challenges you will face over the coming period. When preparing to conduct a contract campaign and build a CAT, it is useful to conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. This is a process where the local/state leadership looks at the union's condition and makes choices based upon the results. In other words, don't come up with objectives off the top of our heads, but instead think about the union's needs. Setting objectives actually involves more than sharing bargaining goals with members and the public.

Let's use an example. Suppose a local is 75% organized. Local leaders might decide this is a weakness that can, and should, be addressed through the contract campaign. So, an objective might be to increase local membership to 80% organized. This goal is very specific, and would be developed as a result of identifying an actual situation facing the union.

One objective of the National APWU leaders is for the majority of local/states to build CATs. With this in mind, the National is prepared to assist local/state officers in many capacities to facilitate the CATs' creation as well as providing training and assistance to those teams once formed.

To summarize, the local leadership needs to develop a specific set of objectives to guide the local campaign. Developing the objectives should take place early in the process.

## Assessing Strengths & Weaknesses

Putting special emphasis on assessing our strengths and weaknesses early in organizing a campaign is important. The campaign's success depends on this foundational step being completed honestly and accurately. The Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu put it best:

*"It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle."*

One weakness of the labor movement is failing to really understand ourselves and our opponents. Whereas management regularly tries to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of the union - also assessing their own strengths and weaknesses - unions often operate on the basis of anecdotes and general information. We sometimes exaggerate the strengths and weaknesses of both ourselves and our opponents.

When we incorrectly assess the strengths of our union or management, we lose. As Mahatma Gandhi said: "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems."

## Having a Clear Target

In the context of contract negotiations, having a clear target may seem like an obvious point, but it is not always that easy. Targets are identified with many different variables.

In any circumstance, it is important to identify the "face" of the opponent. This is applicable to any campaign, but let's take negotiations as an example. When we refer to "management" we are speaking of a broad category that often includes a lot of people. Sometimes it is worth using that term, but more often than not "management" is too unfocused. It is useful, in other words, to describe or identify an individual or group of individuals who truly represent our opponents. For example, the NNC could determine that the target is the Postmaster General, the Board of Governors, or members of Congress. This makes it much easier for multiple local/state organizations to organize around a specific target.

The target, however, may not be an individual. It may be an issue we are trying to oppose. An example would be a privatization scheme. The "target" might be the individuals and organizations behind the privatization push, like the Heritage Foundation, or it might be the process of privatization itself. By making the target "privatization," the aim is to make sure that people keep their eyes on the goal, which in this case is keeping and enhancing our national treasure - the public Postal Service.

## Developing a Plan

Once strengths and weaknesses of the local/state and the opponent are identified, and objectives are established, you are in a position to develop a full-blown written plan (a "planning document").

A plan or strategy outlines the course of action you are choosing to follow in order to accomplish the campaign's objectives. A plan can be more or less comprehensive; it might be one or several pages. The type of questions it should answer include:

Local officers and members of the Greater Seattle Area Local show solidarity with stickers on Contract Arbitration Opening Day 2016.





Akron Metro Area Local (OH) joins a local Labor Day event in 2015. There they passed out contract campaign information to other union sisters and brothers.

- What bargaining goals did the NNC establish and how can we design our local/state contract campaign to explain them?
- What are the priority goals and overall objectives that we wish to achieve through the local/state contract campaign? Are there any that resonate more with our membership?
- What activities will complement the campaign's theme?
- Who are the APWU's friends and who are our opponents?
- What steps do we need to take to achieve local/state campaign plan objectives?
  - In what order?
  - What is the timeline for implementing each step?
  - Who is responsible for implementing each step?
- What resources will we need and how will we obtain them? This is directly related to our priority goals, because there must be sufficient resources to dedicate to them. Pursuing many goals is understandable, but setting many goals without having enough resources makes achieving the goals practically impossible.
- At which points will we evaluate how things are going and make any necessary adjustments in the plan? When will we assess how well the steps we planned are being completed? A successful campaign includes making evaluations throughout the process; not just at the end.

These questions must be answered by the local/state union's leaders. This can come as the result of a planning session, or it might be the result of polling the members/bargaining

unit employees. In either case, at some juncture there will need to be a leadership discussion. A plan should not be developed by one individual who then presents the plan to others for a vote. When that happens, it can often pass, but it ends up having little buy-in through the local/state. Therefore, make sure that the implications of the plan are understood and supported by many members.

Establishing who is responsible for various tasks is an important part of the plan. Otherwise, everyone can walk away from the planning meetings and only later realize that implementation has been left in the air. Therefore, you must make sure at the end of planning meetings that all decisions are reviewed and accountability established.

## Mobilizing Members

To build a contract campaign, there must be coordination between the bargaining table and members in the field. The National Campaign Committee (NCC) facilitates this coordination. Actions taken in the field must serve to advance the NNC objectives. At the same time, the NNC and NCC must know what's going on in the field, including how members feel about negotiations and the contract campaign.

Mobilizing members and keeping them active and informed is principally the responsibility of the CATs. The CATs' work must follow a plan with clear objectives and timelines.

The National will take the following steps to assist in mobilizing members:

- Establish a national-level contract campaign committee, which will coordinate the internal and public "campaign" aspect of our fight for a good contract.
- Gather data and member contact information to ensure effective two-way communication during the campaign.
- Set the theme for the campaign.
- Help establish CATs at the local/state levels; if possible, CATs should set up sub-committees, e.g., media, recruitment, etc., and remember to assign people who will be responsible.
- Share materials, including union gear, talking points and how-tos for CATs to use.
- Train Regional Campaign Liaisons to assist local/state CATs.

**Local/state CAT recruitment:** To establish your CAT, you will need to recruit members to participate. This is the first task and obviously it is essential. To begin, you will need a fairly clear idea of what will be involved for people who participate in a CAT and what they will be doing.

Think about some examples for tasks beforehand but remember that the local/state leadership, with input from the CAT and others, should set the basic direction of the campaign.

***Begin with where the members are at, not where you want them to be:*** One of the dangers with any brochure is that we can suggest things for people to do, but those suggestions may not correspond with what the members are prepared to do at this time.

What does this mean?



Dallas Area Local leaders and members picket on the 2015 Contract Campaign National Day of Action.

It means you must consider what members are generally prepared to do to express their differences with management.

- Have the members been willing to wear buttons or T-shirts? If not, do we know why and how to change that?
- Has your local ever organized an informational picket?
- Have the members ever handed out flyers to the public or to postal employees in the breakroom on an issue?
- Do the members (and potential members) generally care about contract negotiations?

The best strategy is to propose actions and activities which will garner the greatest amount of support and involvement. Actions should not be treated as a matter of principle. They should be treated as activities that help advance the campaign strategy.

**Test ideas:** If, for example, you have decided to have a button day, try to get an idea in advance of roughly how many people you expect to wear a button. Keep in mind that management is always watching to see whether there is real strength within the union or if we will bluster. If you do not have sufficient support to take an action at any given time, it's better to hold off until you build strength than to proceed with an action that will have low participation.

Also, make sure the members understand the issues. Even with the CAT, which will tend to appeal to the most active and pro-union members, make sure all members understand our objectives, so that they can be comfortable, public advocates for our issues.

Columbus Area Local (OH) standing up for Good Service! Good Jobs! Good Contract! on the 2015 Contract Campaign National Day of Action.



**Tactical Choices:** Tactics should advance a strategy or a plan. When you think about what should be done next, don't adopt a grab-bag approach. Local/state leaders must evaluate the tactics that have already been attempted and whether or not they have been successful.

Ask yourself what the members are prepared to do now. You and other leaders may be frustrated with management and how they are conducting negotiations, but are the members? You may also need to come up with a creative tactic (action) that members believe will actually influence management.

The overuse of a tactic can weaken its effectiveness. In one union, a group of workers marched on the Personnel Department to protest some unfair disciplinary actions. This step was completely unexpected and management was thrown for a loop. Management regrouped and proposed meetings to discuss the problem. The second time a group of workers went to Personnel about the same problem, fewer participated. *Over* time, the energy and interest dried up.

This experience pointed out a few things. The first was that although marching on the Personnel Department was a powerful statement, it did not bring immediate results. The meetings that management proposed were not taken seriously by a number of workers, so interest dissipated. By the time of the second action, the energy had begun to evaporate.

Yet there was another important lesson, the initial action was led by a few workers who were widely respected as "leaders" within the work-force. When they did not take the lead in continuing to put the pressure on management, interest declined.

So, certain tactics can work if the real leaders among the workers (those individuals who have a demonstrable following) embrace the action and take the lead to make it happen. The same tactic can fail if the real leaders ignore or dismiss it.

Additionally, if the tactic does not seem to bring results, continuing it will probably lead to decreased support, even if there was a broad response to its initial use. Something different may need to be done in order to re-energize member interest.

It is essential to engage the real leaders in a discussion about what is being considered, as well as evaluating what has already been attempted. If the workplace leaders believe that a particular tactic no longer has value, it should not be pursued. This does not mean caving in to cynicism, but rather analyzing what worked and what didn't, and then making a determination for the next steps.

**Workplace actions:** Concerted activity is lawful. Here are some things to consider when planning an action:

- What types of workplace or near-workplace actions do your members have experience with?
- Are the members prepared to make their feelings public about contract negotiations?
- What will the impact be on potential members?
- Can you hold a picket line or demonstration near enough to the workplace to make a difference?
- How many members do you expect to be willing to engage?
- If the proposed action is a rally or picket, is there a public location where you could hold it that would get good attention, particularly from the media?
- What is the anticipated reaction by local management?
- Will the action tend to attract, scare, or antagonize allies?
- Are there actions that can be taken at the workplace that will make a point clear? What are the potential ramifications of the action, if any?

There are a range of actions you can take, but always consider the questions above when making plans. Pressure tactics should never begin with the maximum or most militant tactic. The basic principle is escalating pressure, using each action as a method of both educating the membership, as well as showing management that you are not backing down.

## Rounding Up Resources

To implement a campaign, you must have resources. This means figuring out how many people are needed and a budget. Do this after the full plan is developed. While you are working on your plan, consider what resources - including, but not limited to, money - the local/state has on hand.

When developing a budget, think about the different aspects of the plan that may have a cost and do your best to estimate what it will be. For example, if you are planning to send participants to contract campaign training, what will be the anticipated cost? Another example is figuring out how much purchasing T-shirts for Gear Day will be. Then, compare projected expenses with available resources.

Coordinating a contract campaign relies on an immense amount of volunteer labor.

Members on the workroom floor in San Jose, CA show their solidarity on a Sticker Day in 2015.



For example, there will be activities that must take place outside of work hours. There should be no expectation that these activities will be compensated. In some locals and state organizations, this will represent a real culture change. If that's the case, then the request for volunteer work should be accompanied by an explanation of why the change is taking place and what it represents, so that members don't think it's "personal" or the union is just being cheap.

An example of what you can say is, "We've learned from past national negotiations that getting management to agree to our demands requires pressuring them in every way we can, which is why we need volunteers to [organize rallies, contact elected representatives, etc.]." Your explanation should be genuinely compelling, so members understand why it is necessary to volunteer their time to work on the campaign.

If locals determine they will need outside resources, then approach the NCC to see what is available. The NCC may be able to assist with providing tools for interacting with the media, as well as other materials such as flyers, signs, stickers, buttons, etc. Locals/states may also be able to get various forms of assistance from their AFL-CIO central labor council(s) and state federation(s), assuming they are affiliated. For example, central labor councils and state federations may have people who can assist with mobilizing people for a rally. They, along with your local Jobs with Justice chapter (if there is one), have contacts in the communities and within the labor movement who can offer various forms of support to the contract campaign.

Members-at-large who do not have a local, or members whose local/state does not have a CAT, can still be involved in the national contract campaign. Contact the NCC ([ncc@apwu.org](mailto:ncc@apwu.org)) for more information about what you can do.

# GETTING STRONGER: BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL POWER

The strength or weakness of our union can be the deciding factor as to whether we win or lose our campaign. No matter how strong a local may think it is, if it has never engaged in a mobilization campaign, it will face significant, though exciting, challenges. Here are some suggestions for building/strengthening locals and state organizations:

## Map Your Workplace(s) and Membership

There are two ways that Contract Action Teams (CATs), with the approval of local/state leadership, can use mapping to get a visual sense of your internal organization:

**Diagram the workplaces you represent:** Literally create a map of your workplace(s) and identify where you have members (and, if possible, note potential members) who may be willing to participate. Considerations are:

- A union member that attends union meetings [can be counted on to help];
- A generally positive union member [does not regularly attend meetings, will periodically volunteer to help];
- A passive union member [rarely if ever attends union meetings, does not really engage with the union];
- A potential member who is generally positive [someone who is not a member but is not antagonistic to the union], or
- A potential member who is generally negative, if not outright anti-union [someone who is not a member and is generally very contrary].

This gives you a good sense of what the workforce looks like, who you can count on, and who you will need to win over. You can see where your strengths and weaknesses are within the workplace(s) you represent. Approach everyone you can and do not count anyone out unless they request it.

**Diagramming your membership:** Another approach you can use is to pull out the membership roster and go through it name by name. The idea here would be the same, i.e., to figure out what the membership looks like. You can use this to figure out who could potentially be at the core of a contract campaign, but also who needs to be won over.

## Know Your Workplace Leaders

In every workplace there are leaders. These are individuals who may or may not be union members or active in the local/state. Nevertheless, they are individuals who are looked to by others and are respected for their views and opinions. They may be individuals who are active in their communities (but not at work), they may be involved with religious institu-

tions and have a significant following, they may run carpools, or they may lead a club or informal social group.

Such individuals need not have a title in order to be real leaders. You probably know individuals like this and can identify them because *they have followers!* They are key to building and/or strengthening your local/state organization because they are often the people your members will listen to, regardless of whether or not they listen to you. These are the individual's people will gravitate to, seeking their advice and support.

If you have them on your side, you are well on your way to building a very strong organization.

Keep in mind, it is important to look for leaders among various social groups within the organization.

## 1:1 Organizing

Building a contract campaign means motivating members to get involved. It means beginning with the assumption that members need to be engaged, rather than taking their participation for granted.

Too often, we in the union movement assume all we need to do is put out a few flyers and that is enough to keep the members informed and call them into action. Too many things are competing for an individual's attention to rely solely on this method.

Members must be approached about engaging. This is called *one-on-one (1:1) organizing*. It involves talking with members about contract issues. When you speak with other workers depends entirely on the culture of your local union or workplace (as well as the law and the Collective Bargaining Agreement).

In some cases, you can have lunch meetings to discuss the campaign. In other circumstances, you might want to arrange to meet people after work. In other circumstances, you might want to visit your co-workers at home, so that everyone can speak more freely. In any case, when conducting 1:1 organizing you must be :

- **A good listener:** Do not talk AT someone, talk WITH them. Make sure that there is a dialogue. You want to get feedback from the union member or potential member.
- **Responsive:** If someone raises questions, attempt to answer them. If you cannot answer their question on the spot, tell the person that you will be back in touch and ***make sure you follow up.***
- **A good organizer:** Plan activities the person you are attempting to recruit can get involved in, whether it is handing out a flyer or getting contact information from their co-workers.

## Recruiting Potential Members into the Union

Contract time presents one of our best opportunities to recruit new members. The union is most relevant to potential members during negotiations. One task the CAT can always focus on is organizing.

To organize/recruit new members, the APWU National Organization Department and the Retirees Department specify a time-frame at the beginning of the contract campaign where there will be a major push for new members. During this time, local/state unions can also develop strategies to increase membership. There could be special outreach to potential members prior to or after their shifts, and/or a special email outreach to potential members. There could also be special appearances by friends of the union, local political figures, and others showing their support for workers joining the union. During these national organizational drives, local/state unions have the advantage of being able to add a personal touch to the sign-up process and should seriously consider customizing their message.



Members of the San Jose Area Local Contract Action Team recruiting new members at an organizing event in March 2015.

Try to reach out to potential members throughout the length of the contract campaign, and on an ongoing basis afterwards. Although decisions and votes are reserved for union members, information about negotiations and the issues involved should be circulated in a way that enables potential members to find out what's happening. Perhaps in a local where enforcing safety standards is a constant struggle with management, the CAT may wish to have a copy of a PS Form 1187 on the back of contract campaign material. Negotiations should be a time for outreach and inclusion, rather than treating the union as if it is a club or clique.

## Electronic Organizing

In this digital age, there are tendencies that often reflect different generational approaches to technology. Some activists over the age of 50 are reluctant to participate in the cultural change that has been brought about through the electronic information revolution. In some cases, senior members and retirees refuse to use computers, the internet, text messaging, etc., almost as a matter of principle. On the other hand, there is a tendency among younger activists, particularly those in their 20s and 30s, to ignore "tried-and-true" organizing techniques and focus almost exclusively on electronic communication. Both tendencies are wrong.

It has been documented time and again that the surest way to reach and win over an individual is through direct, one-on-one contact. No matter the age of the individual, looking someone in the eye and speaking with them is hands down more successful than any other form of organizing. At the same time, electronic communication and the internet offer new ways of reaching members and tapping into various "communities" and networks that are established in cyberspace.

Each type of communication channel has a purpose. The most effective method is to *use a multi-channel approach* in order to reach as many individuals as possible. Publications, newsletters, flyers, websites, email, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), text messaging, or phone calls, are all instruments for linking with our base.

That said, the use of electronic organizing is best done if the people who are doing it know what they are doing and love it. Not everyone has to be an expert at digital media. If a member has basic technological skills, the local/state can make use of digital media to advance a campaign.

A few cautionary notes to offer regarding the use of digital communication:

- Electronic contact does not replace human contact;
- Do not overuse electronic organizing. If, for example, we send too many emails, people will tend to delete them without reading them;
- If you are using digital media, the content should be regularly refreshed (something new every couple week for a website, every couple day for social media platforms);
- Websites and emails (for mass audiences) should be attractive and engaging. Bland sites get bland results.



# I will participate in APWU's Campaign We will increase worker power with a Collective Action Team!

During the last two contract campaigns, the CAT teams were crucial in mobilizing, inspiring, and organizing members towards the goal of a good union contract. Management saw us united in our demand for a Good Contract Now! and after a long struggle in negotiations and the interest arbitration process, we received a strong Award that includes full COLAs, strong wage increases, and no lay-off and job security protections.

After the success with the **Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow** campaign, the role of CATs is expanding to continue building strength and solidarity on the workroom floor. CATs—now Collective Action Teams—will now be counted on to assist in mobilizing members for National APWU campaigns, solidarity efforts, and non-member organizing in addition to future contract campaigns.



We are facing many challenges, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and threats of privatization. United around **One Team, One Fight**, we can and will win a better Postal Service for all of us, because we are **Union Strong, All Day Long**.

**Please complete this form (Please Print Clearly)**

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President's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
President's Signature

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City State Zip Code

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Contract Action Team (CAT) Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
(CAT) Telephone Number

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(CAT) Cell Phone Number

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(CAT) E-Mail Address

# APWU Collective Action Teams



\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Local Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
CAT Coordinator

**CAT Committee Names (Please Print Clearly)**

**Email Address**

**Cell Phone**

<b>CAT Committee Names (Please Print Clearly)</b>	<b>Email Address</b>	<b>Cell Phone</b>
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\*\*\* (CAT) Committee Names and information needed for T-Shirt Coupon.

I would like to request a member and non-member list.  Yes  No

(Please check sort order below)

Finance Number/Pay Location       Alpha by Last Name

Return completed form to:

**American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO**

**National Campaign Committee**

**1300 L Street NW, Washington DC 20005**

**Fax: 202-842-4297**

**E-mail: [ncc@apwu.org](mailto:ncc@apwu.org)**

If you had a Contract Action Team during the *Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow* campaign, please still fill out your members information. We are updating our contact lists.

# ***NOTES***

The logo for the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) is displayed in a large, bold, dark blue font. The letters are stylized, with the 'A' and 'P' being particularly prominent. The logo is centered within a white, pentagonal shape that is part of a larger geometric design consisting of dark blue and light blue triangular sections.

*American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO*

**American Postal Workers Union  
1300 L Street NW  
Washington, DC 20005**

**[www.apwu.org](http://www.apwu.org)**