

Charting and Mapping a Workforce to Plan a Campaign

Organizers often use charts and maps of the workforce to plan a campaign and track the campaign's progress.

Charts

We chart so that we know where members work, to whom they relate, and who their leaders are. Charts also allow us to see a diagram of the workplace that shows where the union is strong or weak and where we need to recruit leaders. The chart is a snapshot of the workplace and helps us build a more focused campaign.

There are many different ways to chart depending on the information that is most important to your campaign. Charts can include the following information:

- Information on every worker: their name, location, shift, job classification, full-time or part-time, membership status, and any demographic information that may be important (gender, age, race, ethnic background, years of experience, etc.)
- Where there are stewards and where there aren't
- Whether stewards have been trained
- Phone tree information
- Where Contract Action Team (CAT) or organizing committee members are
- Who is signed up for the political action fund
- Who has signed a petition or worn a button

How to chart

- Break down your facility by work area -- a natural and small unit of elbow-to-elbow contact within the workplace. The kitchen probably is not a work area, but salad makers might be. Nurse's aides is not a work area, but nurse's aides on 3 West would be.
- Divide the workers by work area. Write their names on a large chart for a wall display or on a piece of 8 1/2 x 11 paper for carrying around with you, or both.
- Identify leaders within each area. These aren't necessarily only the pro-union leaders, but are the natural leaders of the workers.
- Color code the chart, using highlighters or colored dots to signify the information you are tracking. For example, if you want to track CAT members, stewards, and non-members in a work area you might make highlight CAT members in blue, stewards in yellow, and give non-members a green dot.

Charts are only as useful as they are accurate. The process of filling out a chart can be time consuming at first, but maintaining the chart is relatively easy. If you don't take the time to update the information, the chart quickly becomes useless. Enlist the help of worksite leaders to keep the information updated by keeping track of the people in their area. Some locals include work area charting as part of the normal job of a steward or worksite leader. The more worksite leaders track information in their area, the more likely they are to be in touch with workers in their area. Charting is also a good initial test of new leaders.

Mapping

One of the weaknesses of charting is that it basically follows management's organization (departments, shifts, locations), but does not track the natural organization created by workers themselves. It does not give us an accurate picture of the social network in a workplace—who hangs out with whom, where they hang out.

A map of a workplace will tell you:

- How people are already organized, both formally and informally
- How communications naturally take place—and how a worksite leader can tap into that
- How to find and use the natural leaders who already exist in every workplace
- How management is organized

How to map the workplace

- Draw an outline of the worksite. For large facilities, you might want to map by department or work area. Draw the floor plan including workstations, desks, machines, etc.
- Place a circle where every worker is usually stationed and write in their names. Identify the activists, non-activists, and anti-union workers. You may want to use different symbols or colors for each of these categories. Identify those workers who can move around in the course of their work.
- If you are aware of loners or people who don't mix with any group, indicate that by using some special mark. Also, identify the weak links: a snitch, part-timer, new hires, etc.
- Mark influential people or informal work group leaders. They may or may not be stewards.
- Indicate on your map where members of management are usually stationed. Mark those who are leaders or anti-union or even sympathetic.

Rating

Many organizers use a simple rating system to keep track of where individual workers stand. The most common uses a 1 rating for strong supporters of a campaign, 2 for moderate support, 3 for haven't shown support yet, and 4 for those who are definitely opposed or unreachable.

Ratings allow you to target 1s to play a more leadership role, 2s to increase their commitment, 3s to change their minds, and 4s to neutralize or spend less time on.

Some care should be taken to keep these ratings from being bandied about among workers, as some may take offense at being labeled.

Testing

Once you have made charts and maps, it's important to test whether the information about union support is accurate. A petition drive is an example of a way to document areas of strength and weakness.