

TEACH OTHERS

Lessons Learned from Team Leads

Leading teams can be challenging. As organizers we work with staff, members and potential members to build our union. How effectively we work as a team can greatly impact the outcome or success of the campaign. Here are some best practices from team leads.



RELATIONSHIPS

Organizing 101! Build appropriate relationships with everyone on the team from the beginning:

- Don't play favorites;
- Respect people's opinions;
- Deal with the people who annoy or intimidate you; and
- Understand what motivates people and what holds them back.

BE A LEADER

Two-way communication and being a role model make it work:

- Be the best organizer on the team;
- Be open to feedback from others;
- Ask questions and listen;
- Be accountable for your own actions; and
- Treat people like you'd like to be treated.

BUILD A TEAM

A great team lead builds trust, a common mission and mutual accountability:

- Provide opportunities for people to learn from each other;
- Give people space to step up and lead tasks, share knowledge and provide inspiration to the team;
- Have a plan, but engage the team in choices about strategy and tactics, so the team learns and moves forward together;
- Create transparency about the work, what's getting done and what's not getting done;
- Role model honesty and accountability; and
- Make sure people understand how day-to-day tasks fit into the large plan and mission.

What's My Role?

- Develop relationships
- Be a leader
- Build a team
- Teach
- Learn
- Solve problems
- Identify talent
- Mentor others
- Win

PREPARE PEOPLE TO SUCCEED

As a lead, figure out how to make the team successful and give them the tools to succeed:

- Build training components into team meetings;
- Use role-plays to help organizers practice for tough conversations, committee meetings, actions or dealing with new elements in the campaign;
- Have junior organizers shadow more experienced organizers; and
- Meet with organizers individually and give feedback on their weekly plans.

Don't Impose Goals: Challenge Them

- Have the team set goals and time frames.
- Team members should back this up with individual commitments.
- Is this enough to make a difference?
- Detail what it will take to reach the goal.

LEARN, GET BETTER AND WIN

Help people draw the right lessons from failures and successes:

- Use short debriefs to help organizers learn after house visits, meetings and actions;
- Make space for people to talk about mistakes and what they would have done differently in debriefs;
- Role model by sharing your own mistakes and analysis;
- Meet weekly with organizers to review results of the weekly plan—what worked and what didn't?; and
- Spend as much time as possible in the field one on one with organizers—observe, give feedback, role model.

INDIVIDUALS MAKE UP THE TEAM

Do treat everyone fairly and with respect, but not the same. You need people to play different roles and they need different things to be successful on the team:

- Have an individual plan for each organizer to build on their strengths and identify ways to grow;
- Identify the people who can be the next leads and mentor them in the skills and experiences they need;
- Remember people learn and process information in different ways;
- Some people or tasks need more direction and check-in; and
- Identify whether it's skill or motivation holding someone back.

Ways to Blow It

- Being an armchair boss;
- Not respecting the difference between work and personal relationships;
- Not being open to new ideas;
- Saving up all the feedback for the formal sit-down;
- Not having a plan to move past obstacles;
- Micromanaging your best organizer;
- Postponing conflict; and
- Shirking your role as leader.