



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS SOME BEST PRACTICES



All union meetings, especially as your campaign is getting ready to escalate pressure on the identified employer targets, should provide members a space to receive the most up to date information on the campaign, as well as clear ways members can take action to support the campaign. Too often, union meetings become information overload without any clear next steps for how all members can play an active role in building support for the campaign. The following are some best practices to make all union meetings more engaging and useful for rank-and-file members.

SOME BASIC NORMS

- One person will speak at a time.
- Have 2 microphones for pro and con speakers to get in line to speak or ask members to raise their hand to be added to a speakers list.
- No repeat speakers until everyone has had a chance to speak.
- Speakers must stick to the agenda.
- If the members have to make a decision, then there will be a vote on that issue.
- If someone is being obnoxious and disrupting the meeting they can be asked to leave. The Chair can take a vote asking the disrupter to be quiet or leave the meeting. This way the disruptive person knows that it is the members that disapprove of their behavior, not just the Chair.

PERK UP THE AGENDA

- Communicate to members the agenda beforehand. Distribute any proposed motions in advance.
- All union meetings should have clear outcomes for what is to be accomplished at the meeting.
- Put important and controversial items on the agenda. Discuss issues that will directly affect the campaign. Have votes on policy questions where the vote really makes a difference.
- Get rid of the boring reports. Distribute them in advance by email.

GET MEMBERS TALKING

- Liven up the meeting. Bring in outside speakers (a parent or student leader that supports the campaign) for brief talks and discussion. Use video clips or photo galleries of actions to bring a sense of movement and struggle to our campaign.
- Give people—especially new volunteers—recognition for stepping up into leadership roles.
- Have discussion breakouts by areas/clusters (depending on how your local is structured) to get more people participating. Have members role-play organizing conversations with disengaged and inactive members and overcoming obstacles such as fear or hopelessness.



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS SOME BEST PRACTICES



BE WELCOMING

- For large meetings, make sure you have a group of volunteers to sign in attendees and to verify their union membership in order to vote, as well as to welcome all members to their union meeting.
- Make sure you also have volunteers who are assigned to help any new members or first timers navigate the meeting procedures, help them understand voting procedures, and get connected with their site rep or action team leader at their worksite.
- The Chair should go out of their way to make all members, particularly newcomers comfortable, give them recognition when possible, and draw them further into participation.

BE ACTION ORIENTED

- Make sure you summarize at the end of the meeting the main decisions made by the membership and what the clear next action steps are for the campaign.
- Don't drag the meeting on so that members start drifting out before the meeting adjourns. Leave time for informal discussion and socializing afterward.
- Members and leaders should take assignments at the meeting, and these should be summed up at the end: "The organizing committee will reach out to site reps and actions teams to do X by Y date and report back on progress to the executive board at their next meeting."
- Assignments should lead the work of the union back into the workplace where more members can be involved, not just to the next union meeting or committee meeting.
- End your union meeting on a unifying and uplifting note, such as the union clap.

Sources: *Labor Notes* and [*Democracy Is Power: Rebuilding Unions from the Bottom Up*](#)