



Marketing Issues

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Don't Overlook Your Allies

"A problem shared is a problem halved," as the old saying goes, holds true in an organizing campaign. When working your way through the road blocks of an organizing campaign, it will be a great deal of help to be able to draw on a network of individuals who will assist you through the process.

Allies are the people who give you assistance, advice, information, protection and possibly even friendship. They are your support base. By building strong, mutually beneficial relationships with your allies, you can survive and thrive in this modern era of anti-union sentiment. You will accomplish your organizing goals quicker and more efficiently. Working together with your allies should help you and them achieve more.

The Obvious...

Anyone who can help you achieve your objectives is a potential ally. Usually the ones that come to mind for an organizing campaign are your union members, your international representative, the marketing department and other building trades members. These people all have a common goal of organizing and are your natural allies.

Others that you may not think of right away are local union contractors, suppliers and vendors. All three of these are our partners—even if only in business. Speak to them about your organizing campaign—not to reveal every detail, but enough to gain some valuable information for your campaign. Union contractors often have information that can give your campaign that much-needed boost to send it over the top; however, we often fail to discuss our needs with them until negotiations are at hand.

Suppliers and vendors can be key to a successful campaign—they want quality contractors associated with the material they sell. If they have a bad experience with a contractor, they will let you know, as long as you are considered an ally.

And the Not-So-Obvious

Allies can be found in unexpected places. The receptionist of the company you are trying to organize can be a great help. He or she can provide valuable information to you without even knowing it: Is the boss in a good mood today?



Is the boss at such-and-such job site, or attending a certain event? Organizing expert Mark Breslin calls this person the "Gate Keeper" for good reason: you must get past him or her to get to the boss. Show them the respect they deserve, and you may get some information in return.

Clients of contractors can be tremendous allies. When a client has a good experience with your union contractors, the client should be willing to support your goals. A bad experience with a non-union contractor might be exposed to you as well—information you can add to your publicity sheet.

The press can be your friend, especially concerning public works projects. Once you provide them with your facts, it will be turned into a free-flow of information to the public through the media.

Finally, your community should be your biggest ally. Interest groups, community leaders, politicians, civic groups and employees of the contractor—these are crucial partners and you must continually maintain relationships with these friends.

A successful organizing campaign cannot be done without a large network of allies. They should expand across several different sources. Remember: "A little help from my friends" in this case can make or break an organizing campaign. ■

Local 154 Pickets Non-signatory Contractor

Local 154, Long Island, NY, Business Manager Sal Giovanniello and Apprentice Coordinator John Keating lead a group of Roofers (and a rat) in a picket against a non-signatory contractor at the Sheraton Long Island hotel.

