

New Members

Below is a more detailed sample agenda for a new member orientation.

Welcome (5 mins)

So glad you're here, review the agenda, staff introductions (including what stores/locations staff come out of, where applicable), new member meetings are part of our active, growing union (show any video footage).

Ice-breaker (10 mins)

- “As a union, we're all in this together, so it's important for us to know more about each other. One important way this happens is by attending union events, but for now, let's start by each going around and introducing ourselves and where we work, and our jobs there.”
- Ask people to also share if they've ever been a member of a union before, or if anyone in their family has. Ask them what other organizations or activities they are a part of.

Unions 101 (15 mins)

- Acknowledge the experience (whether people's own or their parents, etc.) with unions in the room. Explain that there's a lot of proud labor history in this area of the country.
- Post or project the “organize” fish (in the steward handbook). Ask the group what this picture has to do with understanding unions and what people see happening in the image. (If no one offers this, mention that the picture shows a shift in power; that collectively, all of the small fish can change their circumstances)
- Ask what the participants think a union is and why having one matters (this can be a large or small group discussion, or a paired exercise, depending on the size of the group). As for quick report-backs from a few pairs/ groups.
- Ask if anyone can think of an example of gains that the labor movement's won that benefits everyone (paid sick leave, paid vacations, paid overtime/ the 8 hour day, safety and health protections/ OSHA, FMLA, etc). Explain that these were not things given to workers, but fought for by workers in unions just like ours.
 - But remember, we can only preserve what we've won and expand workers' rights by continuing to stand up.
- Ask for examples of what's different between union and non-union worksites (with our union, we can't be fired for no reason, we're not treated according to favoritism, we can come together to challenge discrimination, unsafe work conditions, etc.).
- Post or project the “Union Triangle” (in the steward handbook) and explain the different sides of the triangle (organizing, representation and politics). Point out the ways your locals members are active in each of these areas

UFCW ACTIVIST: MEMBER ORIENTATION AGENDA

- Explain that nationally, there are approximately 13 million people who belong to unions.
- The UFCW belongs to a labor federation called the AFL-CIO.
- There are approximately 1.3 million UFCW members in the U.S. and Canada, with hundreds of local unions.
- UFCW members work in:
 - Supermarkets and grocery stores;
 - Meatpacking and meat processing plants;
 - Food processing and general manufacturing;
 - Non-food retail (including liquor) stores;
 - Warehouse/distribution
 - Healthcare
- The UFCW IU, the International Union, has offices in Washington DC. International Union staff help to coordinate the work of local unions—especially through organizing campaigns, political and community coalitions, legislative and electoral efforts, member education, safety and health, communications/media and legal assistance.
- If possible, project the UFCW website and social media sites and encourage the participants to explore these further:
 - WWW.UFCW.ORG
 - <http://www.facebook.com/ufcwinternational>

Local Union History (10 mins)

- Explain the history of when your local was founded.
- Explain that there are different roles at the local. These may include:
 - You! – Members
 - Welcoming Committee Members
 - Stewards
 - Executive Board
 - President and other officers of the Board
 - Staff (organizers, union representatives, others)
 - (if available, share an organizational chart, preferably with the members on top)
- As each category is mentioned, explain the role of each, noting how stewards, executive board members, officers and staff are selected or elected (or as much as you want to say about this).
- Mention any state-wide and/or local labor councils the Local belongs to and why these matter.

- Project the Local's Facebook page and/or other social media if you have one to let the new members know how they can learn more and connect online.
- Mention the print newsletter—and distribute copies of the latest issue.

Bargaining & The Contract (5 mins)

- If possible, distribute copies of the members' contracts. Explain what a union contract is and highlight key sections.
- Ask if anyone has been a part of negotiating a contract before, as a member of this union or another. If someone has, ask them to explain what happens.
- Explain that the bargaining process begins with input from the membership. Then, a bargaining committee comes together and presents the members' proposals to management. Management comes back with counter-proposals and there's a lot of back and forth. Eventually, there is a contract offer to vote on. Only members covered by the contract get to vote on the contract. Once the contract is voted on (referred to as ratified), it's up to all of the members to make sure that the company follows the rules.
- Explain that through collective bargaining, union members join together to win the best possible wages, benefits and working conditions. How can we strengthen our bargaining position so that we can win better contracts? (Answer: when we're all more active and involved with the union, and when we stick together, then management notices and we have greater power during negotiations).
- Inform the participants of any upcoming contract negotiations.

Why Politics Matters (5 mins)

- Refer back to the "Union Triangle" and the side of the triangle devoted to politics.
- Explain that everything we all care about: jobs, unemployment, wages, education, healthcare, etc. is directly connected to politics. As hard as we fight for strong union contracts, everything can be taken away (or improved) through laws and policies passed at the local, state and national level.
- Explain that it's for this reason—to truly be organizations that fight for working people—that unions are involved in politics.
- Provide a local example where our union's involvement in politics made a difference.
- Introduce the Active Ballot Club (ABC), what it stands for and pays for (political education, the tools we need to call and mail information to members, etc... i.e. not just donations to politicians).
- Ask for ABC sign-ups and pass around cards. Ask people to take extras to sign up their co-workers. Give examples of worksites that have high percentages of members signed up. Explain how many members nationwide give just a little each paycheck and the impact this makes—that it all adds up.

UFCW ACTIVIST: MEMBER ORIENTATION AGENDA

Wrap-Up/ Q&A (10 mins)

- Thank everyone for attending the meeting.
- Ask what questions folks have.
- Announce any upcoming meetings, trainings, events. Have sign-up sheets where people can indicate their interests (in union committees, future activities, etc). Ask if anyone has ideas for the types of events, meetings, trainings, they'd like to see. Are there community issues or concerns they'd like to work on through our union?