

# ORGANIZING WORKER ACTIONS

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Big changes are not made overnight. That's why we must build support for worker action, and demonstrate the ability to carry out effective actions in order to build that support. If we start with a difficult action that requires a high level of commitment and we fail to achieve our goals, the action will hurt our ability to undertake actions in the future. Therefore, the first actions should be limited to what can reliably be achieved. For example, if there is weak support in a work area we should not test our strength with an initial action that requires a majority turnout for a direct confrontation with the boss. Each action should be based on issues people care about or should be built on previous actions. This will raise the level of awareness and confidence in the union.

## **An example of escalating membership action at the University of California**

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1. *Health care workers at UCLA hear reports that Unit Service Assistant positions will either be transferred to another department or eliminated entirely.*
2. *Member Action Team circulates petition signed by over 100 Unit Service Assistants.*
3. *Member Action Team delivers petition to management.*
4. *Large group of workers meet with management to demand that the jobs stay in Nursing Department.*
5. *Workers win management commitment to keep jobs in Nursing Department.*

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## TURNOUT FOR WORKER ACTIONS

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There is no more basic organizing skill than the ability to turn out workers to a meeting, action, rally or other event. Achieving a good turnout is the single most important component of a successful event. The old organizing wisdom that “turnout is 90 percent of an event” is true.

**Good turnout depends on planning, communicating a clear vision and hard work.** The vision connects people to the event and the hard work gets them there. Planning involves all members of the MAT agreeing on the level of turnout needed and how to reach that goal. Each MAT member must have their own goal and each MAT member should be able to list by name who they intend to turn out. The event shouldn't go forward unless you know that the turnout goal can be met. Remember, people come to an event because someone they know asks them to come. Don't rely on leaflets. Leaflets don't move workers – workers do.

We must gain personal commitments from workers to attend the event. A commitment is not an “I will try” – it is a firm “I will.” Don't rely on assumptions about an individual's intentions, or claims that a worker will bring a certain number of other workers with them, unless they have specific names and commitments. Effective turnout is a one-on-one process where workers make concrete commitments.

Good turnout also depends on a systematic effort. Be relentless. Contact every supporter and potential supporter. Everyone who has committed to attend should be reminded at least twice before the event, including the night before. Every event involves cancellations and no shows. Don't be fooled into thinking that this event is any different. That's why it's important to make sure we have twice the number of commitments needed to reach the turnout goal.

### Tips for Turnout:

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- *Devote more time to turnout than preparing for the event itself.*
- *Great turnout is what makes a great event. Poor turnout will kill an event and maybe even the campaign.*
- *Pick your meeting space carefully to match your turnout. Nothing is worse than a small group in a huge room.*
- *The more people you can involve in the turnout effort, the better.*
- *Spend time teaching MAT members about how to produce a great turnout.*