

# ACTIVITY 10: - Using the organising cycle and why map your workplace

## Organising a campaign

A campaign can be an organising campaign built around a workplace issue. You can also have something called a corporate campaign, which might affect your own workplace but may go beyond your own site and even be a global issue. For example, you might work for Asda, which is owned by the American multi-national, Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart is notoriously anti-union and employs numerous atypical workers so perhaps a worldwide corporate campaign against them might focus on better pay and conditions for atypical workers. However, our key aim here is to focus on organising campaigns.

When organising a campaign you need to decide if the issue is:

**Wide** – affects a lot of members; enough to make campaign organisers – union representatives, activists and the bulk of workers – taking action feel they have the mass support to win an issue;

**Deep** – should arouse strong passions and feelings; workers should be agitated; Winnable – will see a success with the right action; and Visible – will be run in a way that is inclusive and evident that you are doing it for your members.

You also need to remember the four stages of the Organising Cycle:

**1. Issues** – union representatives dealing with issues should rely on about 70 per cent listening and 30 per cent talking.

**2. Organising** – at the organising stage we make sure the union representatives/workplace representatives' committee is united and knows what the objectives are; build leaders in the workplace; communicate regularly and effectively – perhaps even using the media in big campaigns; mobilise around the issue(s); test leaders; map and code workers.

**3. Educating** – the education stage need to be flexible; representatives and other union representatives should help activists and other workers along the campaign trail and explain how the union is working toward solving the issue(s)

**4. Action** – during this stage, workers need to act collectively, stay resolute and stay united.

Once you have got your winnable issue, think about the following:

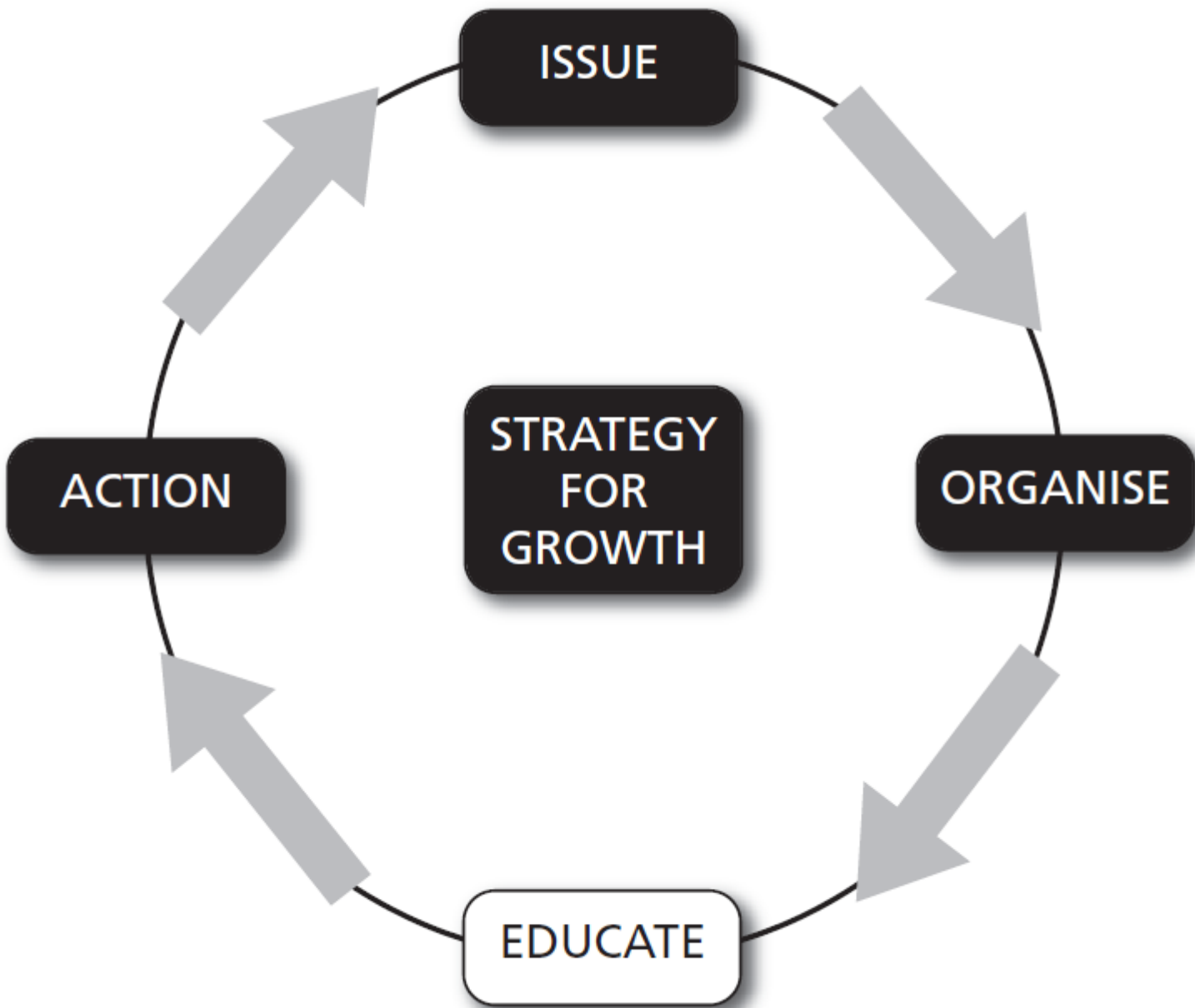
Needs – what is the need for change? Is it an issue that must be resolved?

Aims – what are you trying to change?

Objectives – what are your targets so you know you are on track?

Method – what activities will lever change and get members involved?

Implementation – making it happen, think of practicalities and the possibility that you may have to modify the campaign strategy; and



Evaluation – did it all work?

This is known as the **NAOMIE** method.

Examples of Campaigns can include:

- Health and safety concerns about management's seemingly 'couldn't care less' attitude
- Holiday and sick pay not being paid (there are still companies that don't pay staff when they're off sick)
- Living Wage (London cleaners' campaign etc)
- Environmental Campaign to get your company to take action on 'Green Issues'

Important aspects of organising campaigns:

- Preparation and research
- Identifying Issues and Leaders
- A united, enthusiastic and knowledgeable committee
- Industrial wins by collective action
- Building sustainable organisation
- Newsletters and leaflets (when and why) – these are sometimes not enough on their own so Unite representatives will need to ensure communication with members is frequent and informative
- In some campaigns, getting the media to take note of the issue(s) is important – the pensions dispute at Grangemouth in Scotland between the Ineos oil company and its employees, for example, got incredible coverage on national TV.

## **Sharing responsibility and actions, work as a team:**

During a campaign, keep the duties and tasks shared. Remember not to overload your activists and potential activists, give them small tasks first and see how they do. Your workplace representatives' committee may be experienced but if you've got new representatives and activists involved in a campaign, you need to be aware that their development will be gradual, not instantaneous!! Membership involvement is important to help fight for good pay and conditions, organise new members and solve issues on the job. But most workers aren't born union activists, and many don't think their participation makes much difference. To convince them to get involved we have to show them that their participation will be worthwhile – and maybe even enjoyable. Clearly, the enjoyment bit is enhanced if members win a particular issue. Here are some proven ways to build participation and strengthen the union.

## **Find out what members want:**

Members are more likely to participate in the union when they're tackling an issue they care about. Come up with a list of workplace problems that really bug people. The issues can be small, like the condition of the rest-rooms or the way job assignments are made; but bear in mind, they should be winnable and deeply felt.

## **What is a winnable issue?**

A winnable issue is something that has a reasonable solution that members believe is fair. If you are working with a group that is not very involved in the union, it might be a good idea not to start with a problem that requires a lot of money to fix or something that management has a longstanding commitment not to change. This is not being afraid of taking on the bigger issues. For workers who have had little union involvement, gaining a small win can boost their confidence, show them that workers can win if they're united and resolute, and encourage them to take further action over the

bigger issues in future.

## **Know the management:**

It's useful to gain an idea of what management are likely to do during a campaign. Are they naturally aggressive? Are they reactive or more pragmatic? Is it possible to embarrass them? Will a lot of grievances or campaign issues bother them? Who has the most power and how might you be able to influence them? This list of questions is not exhaustive.

## **Carrying the campaign forward:**

Once you've got a winnable, widely felt, deeply felt and visible campaign issue going, make sure you get the workforce fully behind you to pressurise the management. Be prepared to be flexible and to modify your campaign as it progresses. When carrying your campaign forward, start with the most reasonable and constructive tactics, like meeting with management or circulating a petition, and work your way up to more confrontational approaches if necessary.

Some examples of creative tactics that other workers have used successfully have been:

- To protest against the sacking of a flight attendant for borrowing a magazine from an airplane overnight – co-workers collected old magazines and presented them publicly to airline management;
- To confront a problem with a particular supervisor, workers wrote him a mock performance review and distributed it in the workplace;
- To fight a new policy that men wear ties, everyone came to work with the ugliest, most absurd ties they could find;
- To show management workers were serious about refusing a change in shift assignments, members wore badges that simply said, "No!"

## **Build membership support:**

Start with the people who are most agitated about the campaign issue then ask them to help reach out to others, and so on, until as many workers as possible are involved. Get them working in harmony with the workplace representatives' committee.

## **Keep members together:**

To keep members united, you'll need to communicate with them every day. Make sure everyone understands the union's tactics and is prepared for the ways management might respond. Think ahead. Be ready with at least one more tactic. Often, the key to victory is showing management that you won't give up. Once the boss sees that you're serious, management may decide that it's easier to agree to a reasonable solution than to keep resisting.

## **Celebrate and learn from campaigns:**

When your members have won an issue, call everyone together to talk about how things are better as a result of them getting involved and taking action. Review your tactics so you can build on your success and learn from any mistakes. Thank everyone who participated. Maybe you can distribute a leaflet claiming victory or get some recognition at a union meeting or in the union newsletter. Even if you're not able to claim victory, applaud the fact that members took action and stuck together, and point out that it will take more membership involvement to win next time.