

PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

FROM PEOPLE ORGANIZED TO WIN EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS (POWER)

Educate the workers/members about the role of leaders and leadership.

Organizing does not exist without leadership among the workers/members. The only way for an organization to grow and fight is if participation and leadership development are important components of the larger organizational vision.

Respect the worker/member.

This is one of the most important principles: respect the worker's/member's life and experience. There are a lot of things that an organizer will teach them to do, but it is a reciprocal relationship. Do not be patronizing in your treatment of people. Check yourself and your assumptions about people. In planning a task or strategy, listen to them, know their situation. Make the plan together, so the worker/member is committed to the work.

Leadership develops through workers/members trying and succeeding at tasks.

One way people learn is through observation and participation. As an organizer, you need to model methods of work and leadership. Work and responsibility needs to be given, but give the worker/member realistic, doable tasks. Convey the importance of the task—it should be meaningful to them. Encourage the ownership of the organization by giving them responsibilities. You must explain why it is crucial that the work be completed and how it fits into the strategy. When workers/members fail or don't follow through, have a discussion with them to figure out what happens. Do not be punitive, instead talk about the importance of accountability to the organization and learning from lessons.

Instill confidence and give recognition.

By knowing them and their background, you will see what the worker has accomplished in the past. Give recognition for the efforts they have made or the victories they may have had. Struggle through feelings of discomfort and insecurity—don't be afraid to push. Provide training, encourage practice, and most importantly, give praise and recognition for meeting goals or taking leadership roles.

Have a strong personal relationship.

Get to know each other well. Ask about their life, their family, why they are involved. Talk about frustrations, fears and hopes. This will help build a basis of trust for the struggle. It's not just all about the work or the campaign—find time in addition to the work to get to know each other.

Bring workers/members together.

Unity and camaraderie is built when workers/members are brought together at meetings, events or actions. People learn how to trust and support each other in the face of confrontation. These are times in which people feel their strength and solidarity. It is also an opportunity to see new leaders emerge when you push the entire group.

Be tight on follow-up. Do what you say you'll do.

When you are developing leaders, it is crucial to follow up with people. Get back to the worker/member immediately after she was supposed to do the task or responsibility. Make sure to follow up in person or at least on the phone. Don't leave people hanging; if you do not follow up you may not know if people are clear on their tasks and responsibilities, if they are actually doing the work, or if they want more to do. You should never assume what people are capable of doing or not doing, so what you need to do is ask.

Raise expectations, have a vision.

Instill a vision of what can be accomplished through organizing and fighting. Discuss and study the history of people's power and victories. Maintain and develop that vision—especially through hard times. Learn lessons from the past and develop a comprehensive vision for the future. Have a vision of a better world.

Every leader needs a leader.

Once a worker/member achieves a certain level of commitment and expertise, keep pushing them to take on more work and greater responsibility. A good test of leadership is if they can pass on the skills and knowledge they've acquired to others. This also an opportunity to do more advanced study and organizing.

Guard against tailism and commandism.

Two of the biggest tendencies in leadership development are commandism and tailism. Pushing too hard for the political ideas and tactics of the group and overstepping where the members actually have unity is called commandism. Overcompensating for this problem by holding back your own political ideas and tactical reads in a way that avoids struggle and prevents the group from developing a higher level of political clarity is called tailism. It is important to be aware of both of these tendencies and consistently work to strike a balance of engaging people politically, meeting people where they are at, and allowing the actions of the group to reflect the authentic political unity of the membership.

Organizers—start with yourselves!

You are a developing leader. You can't give someone confidence unless you have it. You can't give a worker/member vision unless yours is strong. You need to be committed and also be pushing yourself. Take yourself and the organizing seriously. These principles are yours to follow as well.

POWER'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT METHODS

ORGANIZATIONAL WORK: OBSERVATION AND PARTICIPATION

In order to develop our members, we need to give them work and responsibility (making sure that the tasks are reasonable and doable). This is a central way of developing our leaders. Some goals of involving people in organizational work are:

- To develop their organizational commitment and feelings of ownership, while increasing their practical and political skills.
- We need to be really deliberate about the process for involving people in the work, and specific to the work the organization is currently doing and the needs and desires of the individual.
- In order to involve people in the work, explain why the task is important and how to do it. Debrief about the work afterward, giving constructive feedback and recognition. When members fail or don't follow through, have a discussion with them to figure out what happened. Do not be punitive; instead talk about the importance of accountability to the organization and learning from mistakes.

ONE-ON-ONES: ACTION AND REFLECTION

We need to engage people in the work, and help them reflect on and learn from their experiences. One-on-ones create that space. One-on-ones should be ongoing, giving the member a consistent time to reflect on their work and on the organization. This is also the best time for the organizer to give feedback to and receive feedback from the member. It's important to balance criticism and praise—to make sure that the member values themselves, but doesn't get a swelled head.

One-on-ones can take a variety of forms, like debriefing after tasks are done, talking in the car ride home after a meeting, having dinner or refreshments together, or having a formal check-in meeting. They are used to accomplish a variety of goals, such as setting goals, debriefing activities, evaluating performance, discussing the organization, pushing people, and increasing commitment.

POLITICAL EDUCATION & SKILLS TRAINING

It's important to do political education and skills trainings in order to push our members to develop political consciousness and organizing skills.

POWER University is an example of one such training.

POWER University: The stakes are high in what we are trying to do, and our enemies are well

informed and organized. This means that we have to be smart about the way we approach our work. POWER staff and members have developed POWER University as way to develop the leadership capacity and strategic vision of our membership. POWER U provides people with a complete organizational history and a summary of the important lessons we've learned over the years, and introduces members to the kinds of analysis that help us make strategic decisions. This program is designed to make us better organizers by sharpening our technical skills—like outreach, phone-banking, speaking in public, and meeting facilitation. Technical skills help us get the work done and move the organization forward. These technical skills are put to use on a daily basis to help POWER:

- ❑ Recruit new members into the organization
- ❑ Train and develop its members to take on greater responsibilities within the organization and to lead the broader movement
- ❑ Take action against the system to end poverty and oppression

POWER U is also about making us smarter strategists by sharpening our critical thinking and analysis. POWER U is one of the ways in which we develop our theory-driven practice, by exposing us to the history and lessons from people who have struggled for justice. POWER U focuses on developing members' understanding of:

- ❑ The local power structure: the people and institutions that have control over some of the most important aspects of our lives
- ❑ The local economy: especially the role of no- and low-wage workers in contributing to the strength of the local and global economy
- ❑ The history of the movement: learning from the successes and failures of others who have struggled against exploitation and oppression provides valuable lessons for our work and often prevents us from reinventing the wheel
- ❑ Organizing, not helping: we need permanent solutions to our problems and we can only do this by organizing and going after the root causes of those problems, while help is only temporary
- ❑ Learning to develop strategic demands: in order to build unity among the working class and challenge the system that keeps us down, we need to be smart about what we ask for, and how and when we ask for it

These skills help develop the brains of the organization and give POWER the thoughtful and creative energy needed to fight for our interests in the smartest possible way. POWER's emphasis on strategic skills development is also one of the things that distinguishes us from a lot of other grassroots organizations.

POWER U is also lots of fun—it's not just about reading books. We make political education interesting by using popular theatre activities, role-playing, and games—all of which are designed to deepen our understanding of the work we are doing to build people power. POWER recognizes that leadership development is also a process. Some people are natural leaders, but may not know a lot about the nuts and bolts of organizing. Others may have good technical skills, like writing or speaking in public, but they may not be as strong in understanding the way the system operates. Our goal is to nurture and develop both the technical and strategic skills of our members, gradually giving them the full set of tools they need to take on greater responsibility, ownership, and leadership within the organization.