



What Makes a Good Steward?

What makes a good union steward?

Dozens of qualities go into the mix, obviously, but while discussing this question in a leadership training class, a steward came up with something unique. She said that a good steward brings in information from outside the workplace about the union movement, exposing members to bigger issues and broader fights. She specifically mentioned local political activities, area labor battles, union organizing campaigns and even a boycott list.

Everyone in the class, including the instructor, realized the importance of this good quality because it put the role of the steward in a whole new perspective.

A steward often gets locked into handling only day-to-day problems in a particular workplace, dealing with the contract, with a specific workforce, with a narrow set of problems. A somewhat broader definition of a steward's job description includes building the union, increasing membership involvement, creating group grievances, even signing up new members, but still, focused only on the steward's particular workplace.

Unionism as a Movement

In itself, a concentration upon building the union is a dramatic expansion of a steward's responsibilities. Looking at unionism as a movement, however, opens up a much larger opportunity.

Unionism, as many of our members have forgotten, is a movement founded upon solidarity: one worker joining with others to form a group, and groups helping out each other. In order to begin this process, however, a couple of things have to occur.

- Workers have to learn about other workers in trouble and understand the most basic point of unionism: an injury to one is an injury to all. A good steward will constantly stress this point.

- Workers need to participate both in boycotts and in the "please buy" lists, helping out our brothers and sisters. A good steward will constantly provide information about current campaigns, encouraging coworkers to use their consumer power to build the movement.
- Workers need to appreciate the importance of new organizing and to understand that organizing is the responsibility of every member. A sharp steward will create a list of nearby non-union operations, and begin to create contact lists of likely pro-union workers.
- Workers have to learn about other battles that are being fought, often right up the street. Stewards have mentioned going to work in an industrial park, for example and seeing picket lines at an adjacent building but having neither information about the strike nor the curiosity to go and find out.
- Workers should even learn about other struggles around the world. In a global economy, our sense of solidarity should also become global. Multinational corporations should have to deal with truly international unions. A steward can distribute information about workers' movements in many countries.
- Workers have to become self-reliant. We need to gather and post new information, rather than waiting for a mailing from the union office.
- Stewards need to begin to look around for effective methods of distributing information.

Finally, workers need to learn a proactive attitude from other workers. A good steward will not only emphasize this point but will be a real role model.

Information is great but only if it helps build your organization. A good steward is at the center of the organizing movement.

by Bill Barry

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The Coronavirus Pandemic, Employer Obligations and Workers' Compensation

In these unprecedented and uncertain times, Morici & Morici, LLP continues to actively ensure that the rights and interests of our clients are protected. We have received many calls from clients working in essential jobs, including transit workers, delivery workers, construction workers supermarket employees, and food and service workers, with concerns about their health and the health of their families. It is vitally important that those affected deserve to be protected. We pride ourselves in remaining in the forefront of evolving law, including the law involving Workers' Compensation benefits, in the interests of protecting the rights of our clients.

Additionally, many workers are concerned about employer obligations to inform colleagues, employees, and customers when workers test positive for Coronavirus. Employers must comply with evolving recommendations from federal agencies to ensure that businesses disclose enough information to maintain a safe work environment under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, without disclosing employees' confidential health conditions.

We are also encouraging UPSEU members who were, or suspect they were, exposed at work to promptly notify their employer, even if they are not sick yet. As the Coronavirus Pandemic is something the law has never seen before, there is still some uncertainty about who will be entitled to Workers Compensation benefits. The vast majority of workers in New York State are covered by the Workers' Compensation Law. The few who are not, are covered by other legislative or negotiated workplace or illness programs. Should you have any questions regarding Workers' Compensation benefits, or any other issues during this trying time, please do not hesitate to email or call us.

Please stay safe and healthy. We are here if you need anything.

Editor's Note: For those UPSEU members out of the Long Island area, you may contact one of these firms with any questions you may have.

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THREE WAYS TO DECLUTTER YOUR MIND



Researchers estimate that you have about 60,000 thoughts every day. And many of those thoughts involve thinking the same things over and over again: *I never have enough time. I have nothing to wear. I look stupid. My house isn't clean enough. My life would be better if I had more money.*

Rehashing the same things, focusing on the negative and worrying about things you can't control wastes time and your mental energy. The key to building more mental muscle involves decluttering your mind of those mental habits that are keeping you stuck.

Here are 3 tips to help you spring clean your brain and rid yourself of the thinking patterns that keep you from reaching your greatest potential.

1. Get rid of the pity parties.

Feeling sad or disappointed is healthy. But self pity is different. It involves magnifying your misfortune and convincing yourself that your problems are worse than anyone's else's. If you're not careful, it will keep you stuck. When you find yourself hosting a pity party, commit to taking some type of positive action. Even if you can't solve the problem, like you can't fix a loved one's health issue, you can choose to do something to make your life or someone else's a little bit better.

DECLUTTERING TIP:

Be on the lookout for language that implies you are a victim. Saying *"No one understands,"* or *"Bad things always happen to me,"* are red flags you're filling your head with garbage. When you catch yourself thinking that way, take a deep breath and identify one action step you're going to take right away to improve your life.

2. Challenge your self doubt.

Self doubt tends to be too deep rooted to respond to superficial platitudes that you don't actually believe. Repeatedly telling yourself that you're awesome may not drown out the negativity. The best way to deal with self-doubt is to challenge your negative thinking head on. Each time you prove to your brain that you're more capable and competent than you think, your brain will start to view you in a slightly different light. Consistently challenging your self-doubt will change the way you think.

DECLUTTERING TIP:

You need courage, not confidence to take action. So the next time your brain questions your ability to succeed, simply say: *"Challenge accepted."* Be willing to prove yourself wrong and acknowledge that your brain isn't always right.

3. Distinguish worrying and ruminating from problem solving

Whether you're struggling to pay your bills or having a hard time dealing with a co-worker, active problem-solving is helpful. Rehashing the same things over and over, imagining catastrophic outcomes and second guessing your decisions won't get you anywhere. If it's a problem that can be solved, work on changing the environment. If there's nothing you can do to fix the problem, work on changing your mind set.

DECLUTTERING TIP:

Schedule 15 minutes every day to worry and ruminate. When you catch yourself thinking about something outside those 15 minutes, remind yourself it's not time to worry yet. When you reach the scheduled worry time, sit down and worry. Then, you'll confine your worries to one small chunk of time rather than allowing them to take over your entire day.

When you declutter your mind, you'll have more time and energy to devote to positive and productive things. That will help you to build the mental strength you need to become the best version of yourself.

by Amy Morin



STEWARD TIP: EFFECTIVE LISTENING

People's brains process thoughts approximately four times faster than they do to the spoken word. It's very easy to skip ahead in a conversation using your assumptions and extraneous thoughts to fill in for what has yet to be spoken. Don't run away with your thoughts. If you slow down and resist the urge for quick analysis, you will be better focused on what is actually said, and better able to respond appropriately and knowledgeably. Take the time to get the full story. It's a good idea to wait until the speaker is done before responding. That way, you'll be acting on the maximum amount of information, while validating the speaker's right to unimpeded communication.

Excerpted from The Union Steward's Complete Guide

JUST A REMINDER

UPSEU Local 1222 Scholarship Applications are due July 1st

Applications may be either downloaded or completed online.

All information may be found on our website at:

www.local1222.org



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