



THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

The primary responsibility of UPSEU Local 1222 Unit Officers and Stewards is to develop a strong, effective unit. A variety of factors play a role in this. However, the most important one is an active and engaged membership. Without a doubt, strong communication is critical to increasing member participation.

Unit Officers and Stewards communicate with the membership for a number of reasons: to inform, to educate, and to learn from members what is on their minds. The reason to communicate, which should always be of the utmost importance, is to encourage, to motivate and to inspire others to act.

Unit Officers and Stewards can communicate with members in a number of different ways including:

- Speaking with members one-on-one
- At unit membership meetings
- Distributing newsletters
- Communicating through emails
- Posting updates on bulletin boards

All of the above methods have a place in a unit's communication system. However, one method far surpasses the others, and that is one-on-one, face to face. This is especially helpful when the goal is to motivate workers to take action, such as to join the union, sign a petition or letter to a legislator, and attend an upcoming meeting.

The benefits of one-on-one communication are many:

- It puts a face on the union.
- It provides an immediate opportunity for dialogue and feedback.
- It build connections, relationships and solidarity among members.
- It educates UPSEU Local 1222 Labor Relations Representatives about issues and problems affecting members.

The 5 Steps of One-On-One Communication

1. Introduce yourself to your co-worker and explain why you are talking with him/her.

2. Use active listening skills to find out if there are any issues or concerns.

e.g. "How are things going on the job? What are things you are happy with and/or feel needs to be improved. How do you feel about a particular issue?"

3. Educate co-workers about the union and what can be done to build power and solve problems.

e.g. "If we take up this issue as a group, management will be more likely to listen. Standing together, we can take an active role in improving our jobs." If you are speaking about a political issue, explain how it affects the workforce.

4. Ask the co-worker to participate.

e.g. "Who else is affected by this issue? Will you introduce me to them? Will you come to the next meeting?"

5. Get a specific commitment.

Remember to follow up on the commitment. And later on, recognize the worker's contribution and ask him/her to take action again.

It's important for Local 1222 Unit Officers/ Stewards not only to communicate with members, but also with non-members in their bargaining unit. By communicating with non-members you will learn more about what non-members care about, educate them about the union's efforts and successes, and ultimately encourage them to join the union.

Watch Those C.E.G.s (Career Ending Gestures)

It is no secret an employer largely controls the actions and statements of its employees during work hours. However, once an employee leaves work, the line blurs as to how much control an employer maintains over its employees. The degree of privacy an employee can legitimately claim has become harder to determine in the increasingly connected world we live in today.

Wrongful termination cases have been filed across the country regarding employees being terminated after their employer has viewed some form of out of work statement from social media and the like. The basis of these suits is that the employees are claiming their out of work statements are protected under the First Amendment. At first glance, most would agree with the employee. However trends are demonstrating that due to social media and other public forums of its kind often connecting individuals to employers, organizations and various groups, the employers have been successful in demonstrating that this public display of free speech has the possibility of negatively affecting the employer. Be sure to think of any email, text, or social media communication, as if you were sending it to the highest level supervisor of your employer and the possible consequences. Once sent it can follow you into many areas of your life. Therefore, as a word to the wise, keep free “speech” spoken.

Slow Down, Move Over

New York has expanded its “slow down, move over law” which requires drivers on public highways to exercise due care when approaching a parked or standing vehicle on the shoulder of any public highway. The law used to only apply to police and emergency vehicles (ambulance and firefighters). Now however, the law has been expanded to apply to hazard vehicles such as construction crews, roadway maintenance crews and tow trucks. Violation of this law can be accompanied by points on your license and a hefty fine.



As written, the law expects drivers to either stay one lane away from the occupied shoulder or if merging over cannot be accomplished safely (as is often the case with New York traffic) the driver is expected to slow down and pass the occupied shoulder with “due care.” This explanation from the folks in Albany obviously begs the question “How slow is slow enough?” There is unfortunately no clear-cut answer for this question. Should a ticket be issued to a driver for failure to proceed with the required “due care” in the lane adjacent to the occupied shoulder? It is a judgement left to the police officer. The best advice to be provided is to proceed as cautiously as possible without creating a risk for collisions with other motorists so that we can ensure to keep our service personnel safe while working on our highways.

PLEASE NOTE: These laws may vary from state to state.

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A Little Extra Can Go A Long Way

Another “gift” the folks in Albany have given us is that New York drivers of noncommercial vehicles are only required to maintain a minimum of \$25,000 in coverage for bodily injury resulting from an automobile accident. So, when the distracted driver behind you plows into your car breaking your back during the morning rush hour commute, if that driver has the minimum \$25K coverage, that is all you can recover from them. Your medical bills, lost wages, pain and suffering doesn’t matter, that’s it!



Got Insurance?

But Wait! All New York drivers are entitled to obtain what is called Supplementary Uninsured/Underinsured Motorist (SUM) insurance under their own automobile insurance policy. This is additional coverage that is recoverable when the driver with minimum insurance causes damages which exceeds the \$25K state minimum. The good news is that SUM coverage is typically very affordable and advisable for all New York motorists to carry, given the high volume of motor vehicle accidents which occur.



An old time management adage says that for every minute you invest in planning, you save ten minutes in execution. The best way to achieve your goals is to prioritize them and develop an ordered plan to reach them. People who are the most productive have another common trait. They treat everything in life as an appointment. They lend importance to their duties, commitments, and activities by writing them down and giving them a time slot.

To ensure you act on your priorities in the order that's most important to you, you need to follow a method. You can apply the 80/20 rule (also referred to as the Pareto Principle) to almost any situation. It's been used in the workplace ("20 percent of the staff makes 80% of the revenue") and even by investors ("20 percent of my stocks generate 80 percent of my income"). You can also apply the 80/20 rule to time management. This principle applies to virtually every situation in which you have to budget your time in order to get things done, whether at work, at home, or in your relationships. The goal is using the 80/20 rule to maximize your productivity is to identify the key 20 percent activities that are the most effective (producing 80 percent of the results) and make sure you prioritize those activities.

STEP 1: TAKING AN HONEST LOOK AT HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME

Before you can do any sort of strategizing you need to take a good, honest look at how you use your time. For those who struggle with time management, the problem lies in the crucial steps of assessing and planning. Start your assessment with these steps:

1. Observe how you currently use your time.
What do you spend most of your day doing? How far down the daily to-do list do you get each day?
2. Assess your personal productivity trends.
During which segments of the day are your energy levels the highest?
3. Take a close look at the interruptions you face on a regular basis.
During what segments of the day do you experience the most interruptions? What sort of interruptions do you receive most frequently and from whom?

STEP 2: DETERMINING YOUR GOALS

Some people tend to follow the squeeze-it-in philosophy: they cram in everything they possibly can- and then some. These people almost always end up miserable. To work efficiently, you need to identify your 80 percent - the results you want to achieve. In other words you need to clearly define your goals. Numerous studies suggest that people who clearly define and write down their goals are more likely to accomplish them and in a shorter time frame and more direct fashion. When you take the time to write down your goals, you clarify them and sharpen your vision for attaining them.

STEP 3 - IDENTIFYING THE TOP TASKS THAT SUPPORT YOUR GOALS

Once you have a clear set of goals, identify the task you need to do that align with those goals and ask yourself these questions:

- How much time do you devote to those activities? 20%? Less? More?*
- What are you doing with the remainder of your time?*
- How much return are you getting on the remainder?*

After you identify the tasks and activities, assign a value to those goals so you can decide how to order your daily task list. Having a good understanding of your own personal goals or the company's goals can guide your own priorities.

UPSEU Local 1222 Shop Talk



STEWARD TIP: E-SURVIVAL

- Workers should understand that even though they delete email, it more than likely still exists somewhere on the computer system.
- When workers are on the clock, their time belongs to their employer. If they are caught playing computer games, surfing the web, or engaging in personal email correspondence, they're not doing their job, and can legitimately be disciplined for low or poor performance. However, if they are on break or do it during non-work time, the situation is murkier for the employer.
- Employers have easy access to software that lets them monitor the individual employee's computer, which means they can determine what workers are doing, what messages they are sending, what web pages they are surfing at any given moment and how many keystrokes they make- or don't make within a given period.

Excerpted from the Union Steward's Complete Guide



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