

Components of an Organizing Conversation

The organizing conversation consists of the following basic elements:

1. Introduction

You will want to start your conversation by creating a connection with the member. You want to include who you are, why the conversation is taking place and why it is important and relevant to you. In the space below, write your quick intro:

2. Get the Story/Identify Self Interests

You and your colleagues want to learn what members think and what interests them. Be sure to LISTEN. In the space below what are three questions you can ask that will get at member concerns, aspirations and recommendations? Remember, we want people to feel directly connected to this movement.

Example: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing you and your students?

3. Educate and Vision

Members recognize when there's a credible plan to win and when there isn't. Generally members aren't engaged because they don't see a plan to win that is rooted in their self-interest. We have to educate them about the plan, connect their self-interest to the opportunity for success and the necessity of doing it together. When we talk about "agitate," we mean linking the concerns raised by the member in the earlier part of the organizing conversation and asking the questions that examine what we can accomplish if we use our power. What are some questions or statements you want to remember to highlight when you do your one-to-ones?

Example: This Legislature can make decisions that will have a lasting, life changing impact on higher education. What could happen if we stand together? What if we fail to act?

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4. Inoculate

In the "inoculation" part of the conversation, we are simply letting the member know what is being said by the opposition who hold positions counter to our union's. What are members likely to hear about our plan? How will you deal with these objections?

5. Move to Action, The Ask

No organizing conversation is complete without an "ask" of the member. To reach our goals we are asking for 100 percent participation every step of the way. Each structure test matters and you need to ask your colleagues to join in even if it is difficult. Write your ask(s) below.

Example: Will the member join your colleagues and take a stand?

Group Practice:

Practice doing one-to ones in groups of three. During this activity each participant will play the role of observer, organizer and member. You will have _____ minutes to do each role. The facilitator will keep track of time. When you observe your colleagues, use the guidelines below to give feedback on the one-to-ones.

Observer guidelines

Introduction:

- Did they explain why they are there, why it is important to them and make a connection?

Get the Story/Identify Self-interests & Issues

- Did they find out the top three things the person they are talking to wants to change at work?
- Did they listen and ask probing questions?
- Remember the 70-30 rule. 70 percent of the time is listening.

Education & Vision

- Did they link the issues raised by the member earlier in the conversation?
- Did they explain how the plan to win works?
- Did they connect personal action with collective power?

Inoculation?

- Did they ask or address what they may hear or see from people who oppose the plan?
- Did they mention what the _____ will do?

Call the Question

- Did they ask them to do something that shows their support and commitment to the plan?
- Were they able to connect "the ask" to the self-interests identified earlier?
- Did they move people out of their comfort zone?