Because you cannot predict how your employer will respond to your strategies and tactics, you must continuously evaluate your campaign and make the appropriate adjustments.

For example, if you noticed your employer was really caught off-guard by your parking lot meetings, you may want to schedule a few more. On the other hand, if most of your members did not participate in the parking lot meeting, you may want to have your CAT explain to people one-on-one why it’s important they attend. Maybe you could even have an urn of coffee in the back of a pick-up truck and serve coffee in the parking lot as folks go to work.

In order to have a successful contract campaign, local union leaders need to meet often to discuss what’s happened and what needs to happen. Your local’s escalating activities should be decided by a group because several people working together helps develop new ideas. One person cannot run a successful contract campaign alone.

You should also make sure that you do not continually react to your employer. You’ve created your campaign. You are on the offensive. Force your employer to react to you!

As contract expiration nears, you need to understand your options. Don’t let your local union feel trapped by your contract expiration date. A contract expiration date doesn’t force you to either accept the company offer or strike.

**What options do you have at contract expiration?**

- You have the right to agree to the proposed new contract.

- You usually have the legal right to strike (however, most public employees do not).

- You have a right to offer to continue working past the expiration of the contract even without a negotiated extension. If you attempt to continue working after the expiration of the contract, you work under the existing terms and conditions with two exceptions: dues check-off and arbitration are no longer guaranteed.
• You have a right to attempt to negotiate with your employer for an extension of the current contract. This is a very common procedure. The length of the extension can be for a set period, or can continue until either party gives a notice to end the extension.

• Your employer has a right to lockout all bargaining unit members (although some public employees cannot be locked out). A lockout can be more favorable to the union than a strike.

If you are a public employee or work in the healthcare industry, make sure you contact your lawyer and staff rep. about your options at expiration because the laws governing your actions are complex and change from state to state and province to province.

Why consider alternatives to striking?
The purpose of a strike is to exert maximum economic pressure on the boss. The union should decide when the best time is to exert this pressure. Do not let your employer or the contract expiration date determine your fate.

• The continuing threat of a strike often puts greater pressure on your employer than an actual strike. The uncertainty of delivering the product or service will cause concern among customers and confusion among management.

• If the boss has invested heavily in building inventory, increasing security, and recruiting replacement workers, such expenses are entirely useless and wasteful until a strike begins. The company will either continue to pay large amounts to maintain their readiness, putting economic pressure on the company, or they will decide to reduce the expenses, which will increase the potential impact of a strike.

• If your employer is able to quickly shift work to another location, or quickly hire replacement workers, you will be stronger by building a campaign while continuing to work.

If you are working, you are making money and the economic pressure is on your employer, not you!
Conclusion

Congratulations! After working through the activities in this manual you and your members should have a comprehensive plan for going on the offensive as you prepare to win a new contract.

Through the creation of a Communication Action Team you’re prepared to communicate with and mobilize your entire membership. You’ve analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the union and the boss, identified the issues of greatest concern to your members and developed a theme and message for your campaign. You’ve determined allies you can go to for support and developed a list of leverage targets along with strategies and tactics for exerting pressure on your employer. Finally, you’ve put together a campaign calendar that enables you to keep track of it all.

The lessons contained in this guide are all about building power. The more organized your local is and the more you work together, the more power you will have. A strong and united union will make a real difference in people’s lives, leading to better contracts which guarantee fair wages, safe working conditions and a secure retirement.

Keep in mind the following steps for success when putting your plans into action:

1. Everything starts with the members. The main strength of your local union is the membership.
2. Sharing information is the key to building power and communication should be a two-way street.
3. Learn as much as you can about your employer’s operations and the way management thinks.
4. You’re organizing for fairness. Express campaign goals and issues as a struggle for social justice.
5. People in your community will support a struggle for social justice. Actively reach out to them.
6. Devise a strategy that will directly affect your employer.
7. Tactics start small and then escalate in intensity.
8. Never stop! Keep ratcheting up your campaign.

Build Power – Take the Offensive!