

# 5 Steps to Underground Organizing



# 1 Create a list of everyone in your workplace

When you start organizing, your first step is to create a list of everyone in your workplace who is eligible to join a union—if they can fire you or your coworkers, they don't belong on your list.



Having this list will help you track who you have spoken to—ensuring you do not forget anyone in the workplace—and how they feel about unionizing. As you progress in your organizing, it will show you which teams on the shop floor have the biggest gaps in support for the union, and where to focus your efforts.

At the start, this list should include your coworkers' names, contact information, and team/department. You will add helpful notes, assign organizing committee contacts, and keep track of staff changes as you progress.

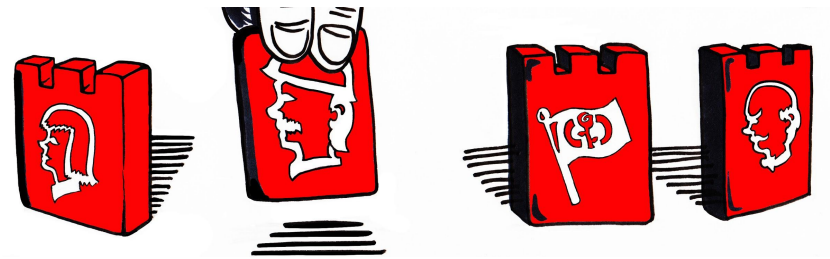
And remember, this list and all of your organizing efforts should be done securely so the boss doesn't find out.

**Check out our template to get started:**  
[dsasf.org/mapping-template](https://dsasf.org/mapping-template)

# 2 Build your organizing committee

Your organizing committee is a group of the core organizers who are consistently having 1:1 conversations with coworkers and actively bringing in new people into the fold. During your regular meetings, everyone should be sharing their experiences and discussing how you all want to change the workplace together.

Don't worry, your committee might start with just you and one other coworker. Organizing is hard, and takes time, so each member of the committee should have no more than 10 workers they are organizing. As you organize more workers in your workplace, you'll need to add more members to the committee.



Your committee will shape the tactics you use to organize your coworkers, and ultimately will be the foundation of what your union bargains for in contracts. Bringing in the different demographics and departments of the shop floor is critical to expanding the idea of what your organizing committee is fighting for and to building trust across your workplace. We've found that this is especially crucial in multilingual workspaces, where that barrier becomes an effective dividing tool by the boss.

# 3 Start assigning soft assessments

Committee members should start having 1:1 conversations with coworkers to gauge how they feel about unionizing and assign them a number on the assessment scale (listed right).

These assessments summarize not only where individuals stand with unionizing but also shows where you and coworkers stand collectively as a group. You should reach a **minimum of 75%** of the workplace saying yes to unionizing (1's and 2's) before moving to Step 4. To put that into perspective, it takes about a year to solidly hit this threshold for a workplace of about 100-200 workers.

***It can feel like a slog but trust us, this step shouldn't be fast tracked!***

Forming a union is about building trusting relationships which takes time. Unionizing is risky and your coworkers need to trust that you all have each other's backs against the boss to build a safer and more just workplace.

You might want to connect with a good union at this point—union organizers can help you overcome hurdles in your organizing work. But remember, even the best union can't magically organize your workplace for you.



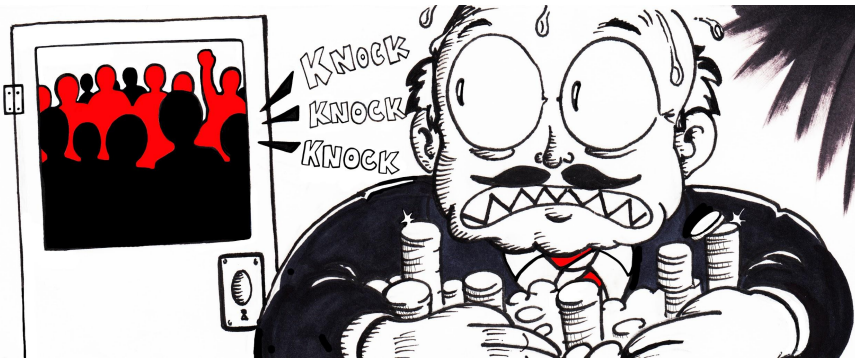
## Assessment Scale

- 1:** Organizing Committee member, will put in the work to make it happen
- 2:** Supports the unionizing effort (i.e. "Sounds cool!" or "I'd vote for the union")
- 3:** Neutral or hasn't been spoken to yet
- 4:** Does not support the effort (i.e. "That sounds like a bad idea" or "I think unions are bad")
- 5:** Will actively work against unionizing efforts, most likely will tell management

## 4 Conduct hard assessments

This step is where the rubber meets the road. You have at least 75% of your coworkers ready to say yes at this point—if not, turn the page back to Step 3.

**Now you need to ask them directly: “Are you ready to take it to the boss?”**



After this step, you'll be knocking on the boss' door with signed union cards, so this is the last step to get everyone prepared. You need to be honest and conservative with your assessments—being optimistic on a commitment from a coworker will likely translate into them not signing a card in the next step.

## 5 Sign union cards and march on your boss

Signing Union Authorization Cards is what starts the formal process of a union election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), and kicks off the boss's campaign to turn workers against that vote. Call together your strongest supporters to sign cards, catching as many supporters at once, and follow up with any stragglers individually. You don't want the actual card signing to take more than a week, to limit the likelihood of your boss catching on.

These cards are anonymous; your boss will never see who signed them. Which is why you also need to get every card signer to sign the **public petition** to your boss that lays out what you're organizing for and asking for voluntary recognition.

This public petition is a form of legal protection and makes it harder for your boss to claim they fired or disciplined someone 'randomly'. More importantly though, if someone signs a card but not the petition, they're probably going to cave during the union busting that's coming.

With the petition in hand and cards signed, gather a delegation of your coworkers to deliver the petition to your boss. With that, you've gone public! But the fight isn't over—you need to be ready with a pressure campaign to keep your coworkers organized to win.



# More organizing resources:

## **No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age**

*by Jane McAlevey*

## **Secrets of a Successful Organizer**

*by Alexandra Bradbury, Mark Brenner, and Jane Slaughter  
from Labor Notes*

Labor Notes provides all of the Secrets of a Successful Organizer handouts for free here: [labornotes.org/secrets/handouts](https://labornotes.org/secrets/handouts)

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# Let's organize together.

We will help you organize or provide you with more resources.  
Let's get together to build a better world for all workers.  
Learn more at [dsasf.org](https://dsasf.org) or email us at [labor@dsasf.org](mailto:labor@dsasf.org)

*Labor donated by DSA SF members.*

*Illustrations by [travisjustinwhite.com](https://travisjustinwhite.com).*