

Organizing for a Better UofT

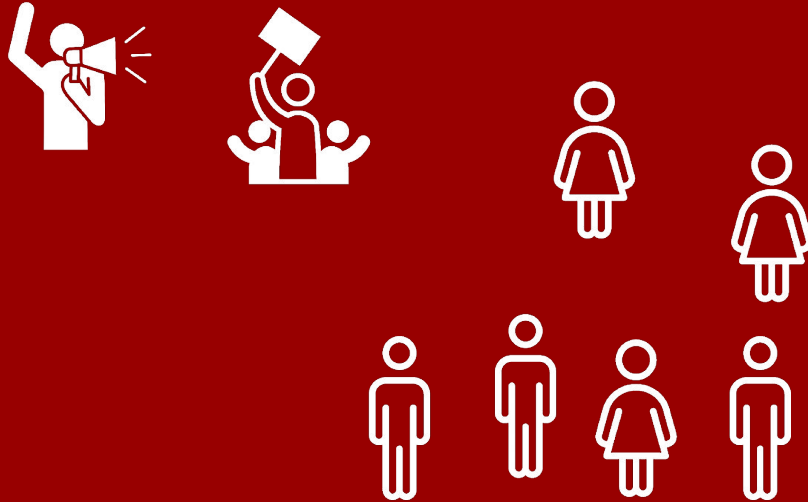
Why now?

- **We are in a historical moment between:**
 - **pre-COVID precarity, underfunding, and overwork**
 - **and a more just and humane graduate student life.**
- **This can change.**
- **Effective organizing is urgent.**
- **We also need to organize for future fights.**
- **Neoliberalism's strategy is to cultivate individualism and pit us against one-another.**
- **Just think about UofT's response to COVID-19.**

Organizing vs Mobilizing?

- Mobilizing = “For” the workers = Low participation.
- Organizing = “By” the workers = High participation.
- You organize all workers (even the difficult/anti-union ones).
- You mobilize already organized members.
- Organized workers do things without having to *always* ask.
- Organized workers will ask you to do things, too. (Remember: organizing goes both ways, up and down the structures)

What's the difference between mobilizing and organizing?



Mobilizing only includes already organized and active members. It usually is for a very specific action. It doesn't include everyone.



Organizing lets everyone work together for a better world. It's for a broader purpose. Each help out however they can. It empowers everyone.

Charting

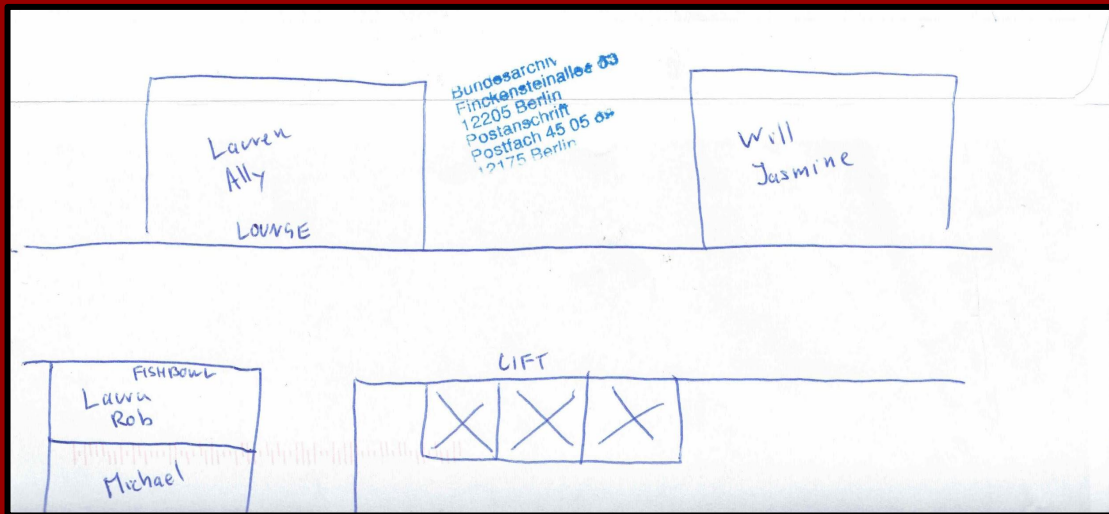
- You can keep track of who you spoke to, their reactions, their thoughts.
- You can come back to it when you speak with them again for little facts about their life, or their program. (e.g. whether they're from Alberta or doing comps)
- Example:

Table 1

Department Name	Building	Floor	Contact	Possible Mutual	Active Mems	Stewards			Emails	Division	Contacted I	Replied I	Comments II
						Current	New	Names					
Centre for Comparative Literature	Isabel Bader	3	Robert Benson		3	2	1	Talia Isaacson	EMAIL	Division 1	Yes	Yes	Met with Talia on December 4th
Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies	Koffler Building	3		Annie Ishiguro	32	1	1	Giorelle Diokno	EMAIL	Division 1	Yes	Yes	Met with Giorelle December 2nd
Centre for Ethics	Larkin Building	2			1	3	1			Division 1			
Centre for Jewish Studies	JHB	2	Miriam		6	1	1			Division 1			
Centre for Medieval Studies	Lillian Massey Building	2	Allison Eric		27	1	1	Emma Gabe	EMAIL	Division 1	Yes	Yes	Met with Emma on December 3rd
Cinema Studies Institute	Innis College	1			46	1	1	Patrick Marshall	EMAIL	Division 1	Yes		
Department for the Study of Religion	JHB	3			52	1	2	Vincent Calabrese	EMAIL	Division 1	Yes, all		
Department of Classics	Lillian Massey Building	1			41	1	1	Joseph Gerbasi	EMAIL	Division 1	Yes	Yes	Met with Joseph on december 6th
Department of East Asian Studies	Robarts	14	Mark Lush		36	1	1	Boyao Zhang	EMAIL	Division 1	Yes	Yes	Met with Boyao on December 10th

Mapping

- Helps you strategize your conversations.
- Helps you manage time better.
- Helps keep track of who you've spoken to already.



Structured/Organizing Conversations

- **What makes an Organizing Conversation different from a chat?**
 - **Have a purpose.**
 - **Try to move a worker/person/friend.**
 - **Always have an ask!**
- **As an organiser, you want to involve your fellow worker in the process: i.e. “Can *you* do this”; “how can *you* fix the situation”**
 - **The Union, its stewards, staff & execs are not the sole agents--only facilitators of mass, sustained action**

Why do we use a structure?

- **“Map” to achieve our goals.**
- **Consistent messaging.**
- **Get consistent information back.**
- **The words we use might be different because we aren't robots, but our goals and the path to get there are the same.**

6 Steps!

1. **Introductions.**
2. **Get Issues (and agitate).**
3. **Education/Vision (collective action as solution).**
4. **Call the Question/Make the ask.**
5. **Inoculation.**
6. **Next Steps/Work Assignment.**

1. Introduction

- **Purpose: set context for the conversation.**
 - **Who you are.**
 - **Why you are talking.**
 - **Be confident.**
 - **Be clear.**

2. Issues & Agitation

Issues

- **Get their story.**
- **Get details about the issues they care about.**
- **Prompt them to “see” (recognize) their own reality.**

Agitation

- **Raise expectations.**
- **Direct their anger at UofT.**
- **Egg on/motivate frustration with status quo.**

2. Issues: Best practices

- **70/30 listening/talking.**
- **Ask open-ended questions.**
 - **My favourite is: “If you can change three things about your department, what would you change?”**
- **Ask follow-up questions.**
- **Don't make assumptions.**
- **Don't be more agitated than they are about their issues.**
- **Don't interrogate them (keep it friendly, sympathetic).**

2. Cues you can move on to

- **They are visibly agitated or frustrated.**
- **They are saying how unfair the situation is.**
- **They are wondering what can be done about it.**

3. Education (Vision, Urgency, Expectations)

- **Collective power as the solution.**
- **Provide a vision of how it can be different.**
 - **“Imagine having a 6th year of funding?”**
 - **“Imagine having consistent TAs year over year?”**
- **Educate about how it can be done.**
 - **Why does forming a strong union make this possible?**
 - **“What would happen if you (or even just your department) went alone to UofT or the department chair?”**
- **Only when we are a solid majority do we begin to formulate demands.**

4. Call the Question/Make the Ask

- **Assessing what they think of the plan and what they are willing to do.**
- **Get them to sign a petition, vote, become a steward or picket captain, attend meetings.**
- **Ask the question and wait for their answer before you talk again, even if it gets quiet (just like in tutorials!)**

5. Inoculation

- **Prepare workers for the bosses' poison.**
- **Let the worker express what they think the boss might do (you want to hear their fears or doubts first).**
- **Get them to understand that the boss/management will fight any change.**
- **Make sure the person understands management is about POWER and CONTROL.**
- **Prepare them but don't freak them out!**
- **In our case: prepare for frustrations on Bill 124 and place the blame on Ford Government and U of T**

6. Next Steps/Follow up plan

- **Ask them to do something specific.**
- **The ask *can* depend on the person.**
- **Give them information they need and help them succeed (build their confidence).**
- **Make sure it connects to the plan discussed in #3 (Educate).**
- **Make a specific follow up plan with them.**

6 Steps, again!

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Handling Objections: AAR

- **Acknowledge/Affirm**
 - **Affirm their feeling without legitimizing the excuse.**
- **Answer**
 - **Answer the question and address the issues they've raised concisely.**
- **Redirect**
 - **Ask a question that takes them back to THEIR issues.**

- **Acknowledge/Affirm**
 - **“I understand you feel that way right now, especially since UofT never talks to any of us about the changes they are making before they make them.”**
- **Answer**
 - **“While things don’t change overnight, the reality is that if we choose to do nothing then nothing will ever change. When we come together, we have a chance to make an improvement to these types of things because we have more power as a group than we do on our own.”**
- **Redirect**
 - **“If you and the other TAs had a way in your workplace, what would be the first thing you’d improve?”**

Best Practice on Objections

- **Don't spend a lot of time on the objection.**
- **Don't let them off the hook.**
- **Don't ignore the objection.**
- **Come back to their issues.**
- **If they say “no” or “maybe,” ask: “What’s holding you back?”**
- **If they say “I’m too busy,” ask: “Do you think that’s because UofT wants to keep you too busy?”**

Thank you!