



BURLINGTON SYSTEM DIVISION

BMWED-IBT

2023 TRAINING SEMINAR

**GATHERING OUR TOOLS: LEARNING HOW WE WORK, LEARNING
HOW WE ACT!**

PLANNING AN ACTION – GETTING STARTED

We're a Union. We **ACT**. It's what we do to build strength and to exercise the collective power of our membership. If we cannot **ACT** on behalf of our members and our interests, we will have a tough time making the changes we want to see.

Action must be conducted by thoughtful, well-informed, and well-supported members, but we also can't let our collective power be smothered by waiting on marching orders from higher levels of our Union. **The most effective and dynamic actions start at the local level!** Once members at your local Lodge level have decided to act, you can then reach out to System Division, National Division, our allies, and our neighbors to get the support and resources you need to reinforce your work and your purpose. **The tools available to your Lodge supplement what you do, they don't replace you!**

This quick guide won't teach you everything you need to know to organize and execute successful actions, or to forge them into successful campaigns. Its intent is to open the door, to help you and your Lodge grow into a Lodge that **ACTs**. We're here to help you get started, and here to help you succeed.

If you want to help your Lodge transition to an action-oriented team of organized Brothers and Sisters, here are a few things to consider:

- 1) **Actions have a clear purpose** – Identify an issue or concern that affects the brothers and sisters around you. It may be a local issue, a railroad-level concern, or it might be part of a nationwide campaign. For an action to have impact, you must clearly indicate what you intend to accomplish. State the problem, your intended solution to the problem, and how your intended action gets you there together.

2) **Pick a Date! Don't "kick the can"** – Once you identify an issue, firmly fix a date for an action. Once you have a date, you have a timeline to plan and prepare, you give the work you do a sense of urgency, and you can get more substantive support from allies, supporters, or the rest of the Union. Without a target date, planning becomes a vague, "what if" sort of armchair organizing. No one, including you and your Lodge, has time for that.

Also, don't cut yourself too short. A well-executed action takes time to prepare and coordinate, especially if you want outside help. Give yourself a month, maybe two, of lead time. Also, if a date has to move, so be it. It's better to adjust a plan you have than to go without a plan at all.

3) **Identify a "high-impact" location** – Once you have a purpose and set a date, figure out where your action will be highly-visible, draw attention, and unmistakably tie your action to your target. Locations should have public accessibility, be easy to recognize, and capable of logistically supporting what you plan to do. You'll also be able to get an idea if you'll need permits, special support, or other logistical issues with your chosen site. It could be a public park, a sidewalk near a railroad facility, or wherever your circumstances dictate.

4) **Exercise Operational Security!** – Treat all your actions like a surprise party. You don't want to broadcast the event too early or get too many people involved in early planning stages. There will be time to bang the drum and gather support later on. Right now, you're being sneaky.

5) **Call in the Cavalry!** – Now you've got the basics penciled in, it's time to bring in support from your System Division. We've got the reach and resources to reinforce the work you've begun, or to help you steer clear of roadblocks you might find in your path. **Your Lodge still "owns" your action**, you can just count on a great team behind you. System Division can also bring in support from National Division, IBT, other Unions, or other Organizations, too. When it's time to contact the media or begin spreading the word, you'll also want to get our big Union to back up your play.

- 6) **Set up regular progress reviews** – This is still your action, so you need to keep tabs on all the folks who are getting involved to make sure everyone is aiming at the same targets. Follow-up where more work is needed and keep up the momentum. Set benchmarks (your System and National Division officers and organizers can help you with those) and keep on the folks you assign to various jobs. If you're working on permits, or equipment, or a guest speaker, who's the go-to person for those tasks? What's the timeline?
- 7) **Bang the Drum!** – As you approach the date for your action, make the calls to your local members, friends, allies, and whomever needs to show up. Invite them, but also get a commitment from them where you can. Confirm that your folks know when and where to show up, remind them why it's important, and get them to lend a hand putting the final polish on it all, if needed.
- 8) **Raise Hell!** – Bring your energy, your enthusiasm, your frustration, or whatever it takes to make your action have an impact. You're there to bring attention to your issue. At this point, you'll have guidance on "Do's and Don'ts," so you'll have an idea of how much noise you can make. It took you weeks to get here, so make the most of it!
- 9) **Take Stock and Tie it All Together** – A single action may change things, but we know how railroads work. Your action will be part of a larger campaign to make the change you want to see. So, what went well? What needs improved? If you had to do this again, what would you change? How did this fit into the overall plan, and did you accomplish your goals? Take the time to review this with your Lodge and your team. This is where you gain the expertise to do it again, and keep doing it.

GOOD WORK! NOW, LET'S GO BACK TO STEP ONE

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