

# QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

NSO R.A.  
June 10-11, 2011

## 1. What threats/opportunities should we plan for?

### Threats:

- Our existence, MESSA.MEA – legislative attacks
- How we do out work – MEA
- RIFs – Internal RIF @ MESSA
- Not replacing employees

### Opportunities:

- Solidarity of unions. Better and stronger
- 2012 elections

### Opportunities:

- Acting like a “Union” instead of “Association”
- Connecting with other labor unions
- Tap into retirees who want to play
- Old school organizing 101

### Threats:

- The Associations who have not been effected yet; plan for attacks on CB; insurance; etc like other states
- Successful manipulations of the public by Republicans and anti-union forces
- Using knowledge and experience of experienced teachers and staff thru retirement
- Need to educate and \_\_\_\_ organizing

### Opportunities:

- Plan; Organize; Message and follow-up
- Union rights vs. worker’s rights
- Timely messages – get the message out
- Select better leaders, expectations vs. management driven ideas and thoughts
- So bad into opportunities
- L.E. spoke about talking and getting organized
- The word out
- Stickers on dollar bills
- Look at the union labels

Less pay, restructure. Be creative in redefining work load

Training staff how to organize. We should plan for a national event (1 day strike)

Threats: More of the same?

Opportunity: Organizing member –to-member/staff

### Threats/Opportunity:

- Exploit economic circumstances to achieve bargaining concessions
- Refocus & target NSO energies/effectiveness (Both sides of table)

### Threats & Challenges:

- Lack of good communications systems to keep our members informed
- Layoffs – Diminish all of us, sap our strength
- Not having a plan before we need it

### Opportunities:

- How do we hang on to our jobs – come up with new ways
- Develop flexibility in some jobs where possible; shorten hours, etc.
- Employ out-of-the-box thinking to see what to bargain beside \$s
- Educate newer/younger NSO members about union values or disaffected members (Like the NEA Union Fair Idea)
- Identify new leaders
- Work across multiple bargaining units if not wall-to-wall
- Develop social networking tools (branch out)

Impact of what will happen to our members; then to IEA; then to IEASO.

- Biggest threat is the economy
- Public Ed is under attack; jobs; dues; IEASO jobs (as membership decreases);
- Biggest threat is our economic recovery
- Wage cuts; cuts in benefits; cuts in jobs
- What happened in private sector is happening in public sector – being mirrored

#### **Opportunities:**

- Awareness; engagement; we can cut the issue and reenergize (politically);
- Election cycle > forces political awareness and activity
- Organizing – catalysts; bigger picture . involving people as activists – changing their perspective
- Younger members who right now are very concerned with getting a job
- \*educating younger people in becoming involved politically – out of necessity – but it will become part of their perspective.
- Loss of colleagues
- Loss of union rights
- Opportunity for new grass roots new to our generation
- Loss of agency fee
- Potential loss of members
- Movement will go outside of us
- “Re-educate”
- \_\_\_\_\_ threats make opportunities
- Can make civil right opportunity and turn into bigger than self interests
- States without AF – they will be better prepared than we who could lose them. Disaffiliation.
- Engage in people/members
- Opportunity to prove relevance
- Get rid of Republican Governor in Louisiana

#### **Threats:**

- Collective Bargaining Rights – Benefits
- Dues deduction
- Evaluation Changes
- Retirement contribution

#### **Opportunities:**

- Recruiting
- Organizing
- Educating New members
- Build more capacity in local

#### **Opportunities-Threats?**

- minimize differences and deciding what it is labor unions stand for
- Labor Management Relationship building between labor and management group “all” work together
- Do focus on “common” elements-collectively stand as organization
- Place to go to for organizing our staff
- Split units AFSE/NEASO
- Security, income, benefits
- NEASO? What will happen based on AFSE
- prepare to lose vs. preparing to win
- Information when happening vs. prepared beforehand
- PSEA state budget cuts and the state wanting same for their education unions
- Solidarity in small groups of business unit members compared to wall to wall units
- Increased opportunity for managers, etc to play groups

#### **Threats:**

- The failure of the Senate Bill 5 Appeal and the loss of the ability to collectively bargain;
- OEA Management to undermine the overall objective of the organization by continuing to attack staff;
- Lack of a visionary, comprehensive plan. Management doesn’t engage staff and makes decisions without our input;
- Threat that our organization will not exist in the future;
- Reduction (in members and staff) due to privatization;
- The attack on our ability to collect political funding;
- Threat of loss of Fair Share Fee and Dues Payroll Deduction;
- Failure to understand the “big” agenda;
- We may fail to recognize the historic economic times we are in;
- We have had it so good; do we know how to organize our members?
- Misreading people’s sense of powerlessness.

**Opportunities:**

- Educate our members;
- Work with local leaders and give them the feeling of power;
- We need to engage members who were around before collective bargaining and educate younger members;
- Educate younger members on the value of Unionism.

**2. How are we going to do it? We need a “Game Plan”!**

**Game Plan:**

- Communications amongst all affiliates and all three companies need to be improved.
- Employee involvement towards making this a better step toward our communication issues and making steps toward improvement

**Game Plan:**

- NEA needs to stop agreeing with all the “reform.
- “Organizing for Power” training – needs to spread
- Need to focus on the locals and local adjustment to an organizing culture
- ACT LIKE A UNION: All the collaboration is seen as a sign of weakness
- It’s not about the dues \$ - it’s about **active membership** – change the culture
- Also activate parents / communities to our message
- Community / member education can spread exponentially if message is right
- Must energize the community

**Game Plan:**

- Younger members involved – educate
- Social media – rallies
- Media – truth vs. corporate driven
- Energize leaders on panel – voice to be heard
- Connecting with one another
- Future leader initiate – where is it?
- Arbitration – no consistent connection with \_\_\_\_\_
- Body of many – ask for backup; Volunteers – trainings to benefit all – teach and explain what is needed; we are one!
- Regional Directors falling short of their responsibilities
- Our dues pay the leaders who fall short of communication
- Education about Union – what it is
- Web site volunteers to assist
- Newsletters regarding NSO and what is going on and happening and how can we (union) help.
- CBC/NSO – We all need to know who you are doing. We want to connect with each other.
- Group Site: Union connect communicate. Talking and hearing our fears. All states/locals can talk and to all union members.
- There are many unions within IEA. As a whole we need to know each other
- Open a group site for the whole of NEA – State to state – nationally.
- We must talk to each other nationwide

Be on the offense instead of defense. NSO should be out helping affiliates deliver information

Be more aggressive! Grassroots pledge to spend at progressing companies

**Game plan:**

- Identify leaders who will mobilize members and share their values and perspectives
- NSO not really visible in our workplace. Newest members came for that reason
- Can’t really put together a game plan at this point
- Identify needs of members. How to do that? By one on ones. Engage our members not, proactively
- Our focus is on threats. \_\_\_\_\_ them to find opportunity and build on those.
- How do we want to be part of the solution? What are we willing to do to do the work differently so that we have a voice in designing the picture?
- Our members don’t always know or realize that we – IEASO (staffers) are part of a larger union. We can educate our members and have a conversation around that to push it out farther.
- Rations? How does that affect Field Services?
- Sacrifices? Yes. We want to be part of those conversations. We don’t want to wait until it’s too late. We’d rather be flexible about how we’ll do the work that be without a job. We need to build a core of activists who share common values – build organizationally
- Union = many things; sense of community. Helping people make the connections

- Build internally

Game plan:

- Organizing – face-to-face conversations disproving “we are evil”
- Reaching out in times of crisis – but not only in times of crisis
- Prepare and take time to build a game plan (even if don’t understand the organization plan as a whole – it is 24/7)
- Develop a relationship before
- Organize top/down and bottom/up
- Do not be open-ended without concern of where to go to keep chaos down

Game plan:

- Getting to know members through face-to-face
- Back to grassroots organizing
- Empowering the leaders to do face-to-face
- More talking to leaders; they talk more to members
- Step out of traditional roles to see members in another way
- Rethink seniority and traditional union values
- Review seniority and evaluation standards and RIF rights
- Evaluations – reciprocal – staff and management & provide necessary support

How?

- Flexibility / creativity
- Clearing house of models
- CBCs / WAR College
- Next years’ RA – bargaining focus & internal conflict resolution
- Affiliate Survey – adjust NSO programs to meet affiliates needs

How? What can we do?

- Stick together
- Train younger people about unionism what it looks like
- Listen to older folk about past and listen communicate with members
- When negotiating, etc communication needs to be key to members
- Emphasize shared sacrifice and evaluate the conclusion
- Evaluate what didn’t work well in crisis situation
- If reduction in staff we still need to mobilize the same quality
- What does being in a union mean? Shared sacrifices and how does being in the union effect me?

Game plan:

- Push each other, push our members;
- Get out of our comfort zone;
- Give up some control – trust our members;
- Take risks, try different things;
- Be willing to have some failures;
- Embrace / Engage members now, while they are energized!
- Keep the momentum going;
- Plan NOW for the November election!
- Associate and Professional Staff Unions need to stay Visible and keep pressure on Management to keep us informed of their plans;
- Reach out to small business owners who depend on those who have jobs in the community.

**3. What might that look like? How will we collaborate? And with whom?**

We need to collaborate between each other and amongst all companies and affiliates withing Look like, act like a real union. Collaborate with everyone who Members combined are a wealth of knowledge – we need to tap into that Labor coalitions – not just unions - progressives

How:

- State affiliates need to form standing organizing
- Be on organizing committee all year
- Be mobile, be fluent, be ready to react before we have to
- Each affiliate need to budget
- Need more than just staff to embrace and buy into organizing culture – not a program. More than “challenging the status quo.
- Ask more than leaders known (Traditional) (Political)

- Framing how it will be done is our biggest obstacle
- Share the stories – build upon successes
- Train “those who can” to do it
- Involve the community
- Listen to how it is done and what they need
- Electronically set up communication

What/How:

- Needs: Bargaining strategies; organizing strategies; best practices / case studies
  - Negative lessons too
- Need more frequent communication from NSO. Website is a billboard, not used as an effective communication tool.
- Newsletter. Technology. Video conference
- Buddy system – connect affiliates facing similar issues
- Provide directory of subject experts

What/How:

- Grassroots movement;
- Go local by local;
- We need to maintain our capacity as staff;
- We need to educate people at all levels about what the threats are and what we need to do.

**4. How will we change?**

We started at our Bargaining Committee this year. We have made a conscious effort in making sure everyone is tarrying informed on progress during bargaining. Good communication during affiliates exchange of info. No e-mail wars. Coming together as a united front during this difficult bargaining time. We are currently reacting and hard to get ahead of it to be proactive.

But now need to have our message and STAY ON IT!!

Short and to the point and about protecting students

Change the “leadership” paradigm and staff lead the members

New approach > more saul Alinsky model

Mentor; one-on-ones organizing educated advocates.

Be more aggressive!! Less reactive, more proactive.

How:

- National movement
- Finding new leaders threatens the leaders and get overwhelmed
- In addition NSO should
  - Stagger the term limits
  - NSO should model best practicing
  - Encourage new leadership to the end
  - Other states will learn and adopt the cultures

Challenge what can NSO do to educate?

- Need education/mentoring of unionism
- Internal organizing
- Teach people to fish and where you don’t have to fish for them

**5. How will we communicate the change and engage our members?**

Newsletter – Quarterly Affiliate newsletter. It’s been pushed down on the priority list. We need to push it up as a priority. Get the message out to affiliates that this needs to be done. Maybe assign one individual, per affiliate to be responsible for making sure deadlines are met and rejuvenate the information out in newsletter to share the information company wide.

Staff working with members and elected to share the stories and spread to the community

Help this leaders be better advocates

One on one small group work staff w/local leaders

Use the “Union” word

Educate, one-on-one contact

Change our approach to what we do before you get hurt

Change: Face-to-face (go back to grassroots

Advanced technology; Facebook, Twitter

Need to be responsive to members when we are more about ourselves than about them. Not as many opportunities to get together with colleagues

The wording of the question implies the change it top down not bottom up

Members not understand what it means to be in a union.

Listserv that will facilitate communication

<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>How will we meet member fears?</b>  Offer our support. Help educate and training for our newest members  Be positive, active listening, supportive, stay engaged in issues, honesty instead of platitudes, keep sense of humor  Admit our fear and together meet our fear.  Members become more engaged when they hurt – when they fear  Educate  Listen  Affiliate leaders as liaisons between their members and NSO leadership  Internal organizing  NSO needs to be more responsive to members</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>What strategies and/or tactics do we need to implement?</b>  Engage management in changes in staff's jobs  Need:  People (with substance &amp; drive)  New leaders  Energy  Management with us  More visibility  Communities on board  Don't be a "Chicken Shit"  We need to know what the members fears are</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>What action steps/items do we need to consider?</b>  Define strategy, develop long-term approach, build in time to look ahead. Don't react without thinking through.  Organize nationally with understanding it will be grassroots; not topdown.  Fears come from not knowing – bring it to light &amp; instill some hope.  How motivate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's in it for me?</li> <li>• What kind of tradeoffs can be made?</li> <li>• Creative about how to motivate like e-mail with videos and relational organizing</li> <li>• Walk the walk and talk the talk all the time-We are union and the benefits of that</li> <li>• Create union identity and it's a constant part of you.</li> <li>• Teach the role and differences of collective bargaining vs. individual bargaining</li> <li>• Buddy program-educate and mentoring</li> <li>• Use resources of those members doing this for a long time</li> <li>• Digital age new ideas and methods should be used</li> <li>• Bring CBC out to field</li> <li>• Activists out to less knowledgeable staff</li> <li>• Who belongs to what territories ex. NSO and regions and who belongs to each</li> <li>• Communicate across state lines</li> <li>• Have links on the NSO Website where we can have access to other affiliates sites</li> </ul>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>What resources do we have available? What do we need?</b>  We have trainings available. We need to continue to encourage future trainings for our members  Number of teachers  Number of staff  More guidance from NSO. Experienced union professionals.  People – Food – Collective Power  Time for collaboration.  Training opportunities / skill sessions  Members  Tailor communication medium to message / audience  Technology – use it!  Protocols – trickle down communication does not work  We have the resources – we need NSO to use them to be responsive to members</p>

<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>What do we need from our CBC? From NSO?</b></p> <p>CBC – The way CBCs are structured, we are ok with that  NSO – We need more support from NSO and we also need other perspectives that just Michigan. We would like to hear of other members situations – another point of view.</p> <p>Collaboration with other states  Coordinating our efforts  Assistance and networking “No Bosses!”  What we need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing training</li> <li>• Helping develop member survey tools</li> <li>• Help learning how to do 1-1 interviews and other tools</li> <li>• Letter from Chuck to all members about what is happening in staff contract take-backs. We need to know where “this bad bargaining” is happening</li> <li>• Help developing a steward system</li> <li>• Ideas from all the CBCs about ways to reinvent our jobs; e.g., if we can bargain for teachers anymore, can we provide professional development instead?</li> <li>• Review National CBC goals &amp; SS – do we need to adjust these if we lose salary and benefits (in order to have goals to build back)</li> <li>• Bring people together to strategize; even by webinar</li> <li>• Help the NSO members who work in State Affiliate Insurance Trusts. Their situation is a little different because they (employees) may not have union backgrounds</li> <li>• Help NSO members identify other possible careers if they get laid off</li> <li>• CBC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ updated contract info &amp; health insurance data – information – web site no updated for affiliates – yearly</li> <li>➤ CBC guidelines do not match up with contracts boiler plate language</li> <li>➤ Need to be able to look beyond our CBC for comparability</li> </ul> </li> <li>• NSO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Leadership availability venue for gathering issues and sharing with affiliates</li> <li>➤ Opportunity to brainstorm state issues and how to address</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>More than just reporting out  Transparency  Strategic planning skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need more NSO recognition of our struggle in Ohio and a push for a stronger, more visible presence of NEA in Ohio!</li> </ul>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Other thoughts or ideas?</b></p> <p>How to develop different model of management for leaders when dealing with affiliate issues. Just as we want better communication from management, we need more open, two-way, respectful communication from/with NSO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webcasts – Reports from Region</li> <li>• Listservs – directors to their affiliate members</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Active website</li> <li>• Personal Substantive responses to requests</li> </ul> <p>Facilitate webcasts by affiliates as they ratify contracts, so other affiliates can get details in real time.  Don’t wait until CBS</p>