

One-on-One Conversations: Organizing Around Negotiations

We are about to go begin negotiations for a new contract, and the VA has made its initial proposals: they want to kill our Union.

The VA Proposals

- They propose deleting 42 of 66 Articles in our contract and stripping nearly all representation rights we currently have.
- Remove all contractual limitations on contracting out our work- they want to privatize the VA
- All bargained rights over child care, details, temporary promotions, reassignments, shift changes, relocations, telework CWS/AWS- gone.
- Official time is decimated- reduced 99%. They want to kick the Union out of the facility.
- They want to lock the contract in for 10 years but be allowed to make any changes they see fit.

They want to kill the Union, weaken the Department and privatize the VA. We aren't just fighting for our jobs and our rights, we are fighting to keep the VA around serving America's veterans.

We Need to Talk to every Member

The key to saving our Union and the VA is individual one-on-one conversations with every coworker we have. Non-members need to join, and members need to get actively involved. What follows is a short guide to how to have those conversations.

Every Single VA Employee Needs to:

- 1) Stand Together: **Join** the Union; and
- 2) Have a Voice: **Survey** each of our coworkers for their top three concerns in the contract

HOW TO HAVE ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS

1) Goals for the Conversation

The goal in these conversations is to help members of the bargaining unit to:

- 1) Recognize the sacrifice made during the shutdown, improvements needed at work
- 2) Get their story heard, and for us to understand their experiences in the workplace and the issues they are worried about
- 3) Understand that the solution to those concerns is to make their voice heard as an active union member
- 4) Realize they need to join and take action with the union.

The end result of these conversations, of course, should be for each member of the bargaining unit to understand their role at the center of their union, and to have a vision of how their membership and engagement leads to a strong defense against the coming attacks that concern them most personally.

2) Structure of the Conversation

There are three main elements that lead to successful one-on-one conversation:

The Purpose	70% of the conversation should be your coworker talking about their experience and their concerns regarding the legislative attacks we are facing
The Solution	30% of the conversation should be you explaining how getting engaged through the Union is the solution to your colleagues' concerns
The Ask	The conversation should end with you asking your coworker to join and get involved. Any ask should be very specific (e.g. sign up today, come to a meeting Thursday, sign up a friend, pass out flyers, etc.)

3) Pointers for One-On-One Conversations

Listening to your bargaining unit employees is key.

- Get coworkers to elaborate
- Develop concerns and flush them out
- Ask follow up questions to each concern, digging deep – listen for cues
- Get coworker’s personal story
- Ask fact-based questions and gather information
- Demonstrate that you are interested in them – they are the union and the issues they are concerned about are the issues the Union focuses on
- Don't “go fishing,” laundry list issues to workers, or be an interviewer
- If your coworker says something about the union that isn’t factually correct, don’t contradict them. People shut down when they are contradicted *without even realizing it*.

Affirm, answer and correct. For example:

- Concern: My cousin is in a union that doesn’t do anything for him.
Response: 1) I understand what you are saying. (affirm).
2) The fact of the matter is every union is nothing more than the workers who are members. Like joining a gym, if people don’t show up to exercise, you won’t see improvements. (answer)
3) The only way we can address the issue you talked about, the threat of future RIFs, is if everybody is a member and shows up. Can I count on you to stand up against RIFs with your union?
(redirect)

Steps to One-on-One Conversations

Step 1: Introduction

Step 2: Getting the Story

Step 3: Sharing the Union Vision

Step 4: Making the Ask

VA Bargaining Survey

This is a guide for the conversations. It is not a script; speak naturally and from the heart.

Steps	Description	Example
Step 1: Introduction	Get the person's attention; show the urgency of the discussion.	Hi , my name is [Name], and I work with you here at [facility]. Did you know that we are about to bargain a new contract and the VA is trying to take away our rights on the job?
Step 2: Getting the Story	People join because the union is linked to things they care about — find out what the person wants to change and why.	<p>How long have you worked here? The VA is taking aim at our rights on the job, proposing to cut 42 of 66 Articles in our contract and stripping nearly all representation rights we currently have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the section prohibiting contracting out our work- they want to privatize the VA • All contract rights over child care, details, temporary promotions, reassignments, shift changes, relocations, telework CWS/AWS-gone. • Official time – time for representation is decimated- reduced 99%. They want to kick the Union out of the facility. • They want to lock the contract in for 10 years but be allowed to make any changes they see fit. <p>Knowing our contract is on the line, and the VA is gearing up to privatize, what issues matter most to you?</p>
Step 3: Sharing the Union Vision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledge your co-worker's concerns 2. Discuss what is at stake; make it urgent 3. Give the plan to win if we stand together and take action. 	I hear you saying [concern]. The union is the only way employees have power to [address that concern]. The question is whether you want to [address issue] by having a voice on the Hill and at the bargaining table OR let the Agency make all the decisions. By not joining the union, you are saying you don't <i>want</i> a choice. We can save our jobs, but it will take all of us!
Step 4: Making the Ask	Ask them to join! If the answer is no, find out why, and return to the issues mentioned earlier. Be prepared to follow up with any other action (upcoming meetings, joining committees) this person can take to become an active union member.	<p>Will you stand with us on this issue?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Great, the first step is to join the union. 2) Second, you need to have your voice heard on the issues that matter to you [survey]. 3) We won't have the power to make a change if we don't stand together, can I count on you to stand with us in reaching out to our coworkers to make our VA better for all of us? [volunteer to get involved]