

1199's Advice to Rookie Organizers

Taken from the flipchart of a brainstorming session by what was then still the national union 1199's organizing directors and lead organizers annual meeting in 1985.

1. Get close to the workers, stay close to the workers.
2. Tell workers it's their union and then behave that way.
3. Don't do for workers what they can do.
4. The union is not a fee for service; it is the collective experience of workers in struggle.
5. The union's function is to assist workers in making a positive change in their lives.
6. Workers are made of clay, not glass.
7. Don't be afraid to ask workers to build their own union.
8. Don't be afraid to confront them when they don't.
9. Don't spend your time organizing workers who are already organizing themselves, go to the biggest worst
10. The working class builds cells for its own defense, identify them and recruit their leaders.
11. Anger is there before you are—channel it, don't defuse it.
12. Channeled anger builds a fighting organization.
13. Workers know the risks, don't lie to them.
14. Every worker is showtime—communicate energy, excitement, urgency and confidence.
15. There is enough oppression in workers lives not to be oppressed by organizers.
16. Organizers talk too much. Most of what you say is forgotten.
17. Communicate to workers that there is no salvation beyond their own power.
18. Workers united can beat the boss. You have to believe that and so do they.
19. Don't underestimate the workers.
20. We lose when we don't put workers into struggle.