



THE CAMPAIGN FOR A STRONG CONTRACT

WHAT IS A CONTRACT CAMPAIGN?

A campaign is an action plan with a beginning, middle and end, working towards a specific set of demands that we want to win. A campaign has a target, someone who can give us what we want. It usually involves a series of escalating actions, which allows us to progressively turn up the heat.

And specifically, a contract campaign is an approach to negotiations that goes beyond the dynamics of the bargaining table. Besides mobilizing members to win our demands, the mobilizing itself builds solidarity and the union's capacity for future fights. It includes member education and mobilization as well as broadening the union's struggle to include the community and political leaders.

KEY POINTS:

- A campaign is a strategic and motivational way to organize our activities.
- Campaigns help us target our resources and energy on a specific objective.
- Campaigns are an opportunity for us to build a permanent worksite structure – regular meetings, organized member structure for information sharing and mobilization, and more.

ELEMENTS OF A MODEL CONTRACT CAMPAIGN

☐ Start Early

A good campaign may begin a year or two before the contract expires. Start with an honest evaluation of the union's strengths and weaknesses against the employer

- Research the employer's position, especially vulnerabilities.
- What are the trouble spots with the current contract?
- What has management been pushing?

☐ **Assess the union's strength:**

- How many leaders do you have?
- Which units are strong with active leaders?
- Which units need work?
- How accurate is your contact information for the membership

☐ **Work Together**

If bargaining can be coordinated across hospitals, this adds to your leverage. Decide goals and strategy together and ramp up your contract campaign in unison.

☐ **Members Must Decide**

An involved membership with the power to make decisions is crucial. If a campaign is top-heavy and most members are passive, management will know it. Members must be clear what actions they are willing to take and stick to the plan once it's formulated.

☐ **Prioritize**

Through surveys and thorough discussion, everyone should be clear on the "must-have" goals. Knowing your goals enables everyone to agree on whether or not you've won.

☐ **Broad, Representative Bargaining Team**

The best way to ensure you're pushing for the right issues is for your bargaining team to represent a good cross-section of the membership. The best practice is to elect your bargaining team, increasing their authority with management and membership during negotiations.

☐ **Build Leadership, Share the Work**

In addition to the bargaining committee, you will need a strong Contract Action Team of delegates and rank-and-file members with representation from every shift in every department and every social group in the facility, with every contract action team member responsible for communicating one-on-one with about 10 people. Creating such a member-to-member network enables new rank-and-file leaders to step forward.

☐ **Keep Information Flowing**

A strong communications network using one-on-ones through rounding, What's App group chats, unit meetings, flyers, email, and social media will keep members mobilized over the length of the campaign. Management will push for an information blackout – don't fall for it.

☐ **Use Escalating Actions**

Build momentum as you approach the expiration date, starting with actions that require less risk. Your goal at first is to get members involved in some visible way. Then build intensity,

involving more members and putting more pressure on management. Remember that your power is on the job, not at the bargaining table. Use that power when negotiations get sticky.

❑ **Mobilize Community Support**

More and more, unions need allies to win a decent contract—from the community, nearby congregations, other unions in hospitals and in the community, even among elected officials. Securing public support means having a message that resonates with a broader audience, and solidarity works best when it's a two-way street. Build connections and stand up for issues your allies care about before contract crunch time.



Contact us at labored@nysna.org.

For more information, and our current training schedule, scan the QR code.