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Planning to Win: Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Labor's Corporate Campaigns

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Planning to Win: Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Labor's Corporate Campaigns

Abstract

[Excerpt] There are some labor debacles that keep us up nights with the If Onlies. No names. You know which ones they are, and why they went bust.

And the real kicker is that workers lost, not because management was so on-target clever, but because labor seemed to be playing Russian Roulette with seven bullets in a six-gun.

Which is why we love strategic campaigns. Because they show labor at its smartest and most effective. And because – with strong commitment, sound preparation, vigorous organizing and an uncynical devotion to social and economic justice – labor can put up a damn good fight and win!

Keywords

corporate campaigns, strategic campaigns



Planning to Win

Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Labor's Corporate Campaigns

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To hear some people talk, you might think the strategic or corporate campaign was born yesterday, some new wonder child of this technological era, dependent on mysterious economic formulas and complex computer equations. That may be what some experts would have you believe, but it doesn't necessarily work that way.

There's no question that a strategic campaign needs facts and figures, and some require very sophisticated concepts and numbers. But the most critical parts of a strategic campaign are the same

as for any big organizing or contract campaign—visionary leadership and a fully engaged membership with a clear justice-related goal, a manageable plan and an iron will to win.

FROM LABOR DISPUTE TO LA CAUSA

In fact, for those of us in the 40-something bracket, the classic strategic labor campaign of our formative years was the United Farm Workers grape boycott of the 1960s.

We may not have called it a corporate or strategic campaign at the time, but we did recognize it as something different from the approach taken by other unions during those weary labor decades.

Indeed, the path Cesar Chavez walked was not initially promoted by supporters in the labor movement, of whom there were painfully few. Rather, it came from Saul Alinsky and his Chicago brand of community organizing. That organizing, as Alinsky put it, is “the breaking down of the feeling on the part of our people that they are social automatons with no stake in the future, rather than human beings in possession of all the responsibility, strength, and human dignity which constitute the heritage of free citizens of a democracy. This can only be done through the democratic organization of our people. . . . It is the job of building People’s Organizations.”

The Alinsky school of organizing said that indigenous leadership must be recognized and nurtured, so that people could do for themselves, rather than be done for. Alinsky also taught that the source of power in any given situation must be clearly identified, and a strategy created to change that power dynamic in your favor. In the process, he encouraged innovative, frequently disruptive tactics and skillful use of media to magnify the impact of public action.

Cesar Chavez took those precepts and brought them to bear on the injustices and abuses confronting California farmworkers. The farmworker struggle trained thousands of organizers, pulled leaders out of the fields, targeted certain vineyards over others, built coalitions that went deep into religious and intellectual communities, made allies of supermarket shoppers in every state, and challenged the morality of a nation. This wasn’t merely a strike by disgruntled employees, it was “La Causa”—The Cause. The poster remains a movement classic. The message? Not, “Unfair to labor” but rather, “There’s Blood on these Grapes!”

The seeds of La Causa have been sown throughout the labor movement and, in fact, today’s strategic campaign has roots in that historic struggle.

LRR FOCUS: What is a Strategic Campaign?

Because of experimentation by various unions over the past decade, we can, with some accuracy, define the characteristics of a strategic, or corporate campaign. They are:

- (1) an all-out effort to resolve a conflict with management to the benefit of workers;
- (2) by exploiting the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the specific employer;
- (3) through tactics dictated by all available information about the employer and the unique situation;
- (4) that maximizes the mobilization and participation of a resolute, militant union membership;
- (5) and involves the media, public, customers;
- (6) in a powerful struggle that underscores social and economic justice.

Understanding that companies do move production to low-wage regions and that strikers are permanently replaced, strategic campaigners seek to minimize these risks by offering creative alternatives to replace or augment the conventional strike. The method employs all available information to develop an employer profile and an analysis on which to build a unique, appropriate strategy based on labor's best and most progressive social values.

ADAPTATION FOR SURVIVAL

The past two decades have, however, brought substantial shifts in the labor landscape. Many of them have been none too thrilling. Twelve Reagan/Bush years eviscerated worker protections and encouraged labor scofflaws. Multinational corporations, flaunting the mobility of capital and the stationary status of labor, pitted the modest wages of American workers against the starvation wages of workers around the globe. Moving production offshore, and replacing strikers at home, are no longer aberrations, but the norm—and they have been beating labor's conventional responses into obsolescence.

Another significant transformation has been in the way we think about, and work with, information.

Although daring workers are the guts of the strategic campaign

process, data is the modern day weaponry which equips us to take accurate aim at unscrupulous employers.

As with most technology, the computer can be used well or badly in a strategic context. Consider, for example, the negative impact on the farmworkers of substituting direct mail for direct organizing. On the positive side, however, calculations which used to take days can now be conducted during a bargaining session on a laptop spreadsheet; leaflets, mailing labels and the like are a snap; and while it might still take a researcher or specialist to generate sophisticated financial calculations, a computer literate generalist can collect vast amounts of information from diverse sources in record time.

Finally, the past 20 years have produced a new generation of labor staffers and specialists. These '60s kids, now pushing middle age, come from a variety of backgrounds but share some common defining experiences—the civil rights and farmworker movements among them. As they've jostled their way into the labor arena, they've brought their community-based organizing backgrounds and broad social justice concerns with them. Coincidentally, they are also the first generation of labor leaders to grasp the potential of personal computers.

Put all these ingredients together, shake them up, and today's strategic campaign tumbles out.

A CAST OF CHARACTERS

Over the past dozen years or so, roughly an equal number of individuals have gained a reputation as strategic campaign experts.

Ray Rogers added the term "corporate campaign" to the labor lexicon, when he pioneered the technique of disrupting an employer's financial relationships and targeting boards of directors, in the winning struggle by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers (ACTWU) against the southern textile giant J.P. Stevens. Today, such efforts may variously be called "corporate," "strategic" or "comprehensive" campaigns.

Later, as head of Corporate Campaign, Inc., Rogers shepherded the fight of UFCW Local P-9 against Hormel which, while unsuccessful in conventional terms, became a symbol of labor resistance in the '80s.

Two other ACTWU staffers, David Dyson and William Paterson, were instrumental in the American component of a strategic campaign across international borders to assist workers at a Coca-Cola plant in Guatemala. By focusing international scrutiny on the brutal repression of workers and the murders of union leaders, and instigating a credible boycott threat against Coke, the campaign forced

Coca-Cola to intervene, leading to new franchise ownership of the Guatemala plant and survival of the union.

Richard Leonard at the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union crafted a campaign against the German chemical multinational, BASF, that featured unprecedented cooperation between workers here and in South Africa. Most recently, he clubbed American Home Products in its scheme to move jobs to Puerto Rico by abusing the U.S. IRS Tax Code 936.

Ron Carver, a veteran of the civil rights movement, has contributed a special focus on community-based coalitions and social justice concerns. Working with UE Local 277 in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Carver's coalition won a 13 week strike against the Morse Cutting Tool division of Gulf & Western by confronting G&W's socially destructive disinvestment policies. Carver now heads the Strategic Campaigns Office at the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Harking back to CIO legacy of the '30s, the UAW's Jerry Tucker devised strategic in-plant campaigns at Moog Automotive and LTV. Where other tactics failed, Tucker's use of Work to Rule on the shop floor forced a contract settlement. The concept was strikingly simple. Workers performed their jobs to the absolute letter of contract and company rules, without any additional hours or initiative. Productivity plummeted—and the companies conceded. Tucker and Ray Rogers have recently been assisting AIW Local 837 workers in applying similar tactics against Midwest corn processor A.E. Staley.



Cesar Chavez showed how humanity and morality is the basis for all labor struggles.

Even the AFL-CIO houses noteworthy strategic campaigners. Joe Uehlein of the Industrial Union Department and Jeff Fiedler at the Food and Allied Service Trades Department have helped affiliates tackle a wide variety of hostile employers.

David Chu has done similar work at SEIU on a range of projects, most recently generating strategies to tackle commercial real estate developers as part of the highly visible J for J campaign.

And in a memorable synthesis of management confrontation and labor culture, Eddie Burke guided the UMWA's campaign against Pittston. That highly publicized effort not only enabled miners to persevere, but brought thousands of allies from around the nation and the world to Camp Solidarity in Virginia.

Whether acting in the role of in-house staff or consultants, these strategists tend to be of a breed. First, they are primarily white males formed, at least in part, by the movement and cultural influences of the '60s. Second, even though they sometimes bicker about strategies, they share some distinctive characteristics. To put it bluntly, they are smart, pushy, resourceful, intuitive, inventive, intense, driven and, some may say, semi-insane.

When pressed, both these strategic campaign experts and local campaign participants acknowledge that the chemistry between the campaign strategist and local leaders can have a major impact on the success of a campaign. It seems to require the right kind of "outsider" and the right "insiders" to make it all come together.

In this context, outsider does not mean those outside the labor movement but rather outside the daily routine.

The outsider tends to bring a fresh eye to sort and interpret information—and a single-mindedness that is harder to achieve if you are surrounded by the demands of your normal relationships.

But without committed union leaders and activists at the scene of the conflict, success is unlikely. The insiders have the relationship webs and political bases required for a good campaign. They can mobilize fellow unionists and neighbors, and have a deep commitment to the community that precedes, and outlasts, that of any outsider. On the other hand, although the right insiders can launch a campaign without an outsider, the best efforts involve an intangible synthesis between the two perspectives.

EASY RYDER

Strategic campaigns are increasingly viewed, not as an oddity, but as a critical necessity if unions are to powerfully protect worker interests against global corporate renegades, privatization and

diminished respect for human values in the workplace.

Last year, propelled by the discouraging results of a conventional, and often corrupt, approach to bargaining, newly elected International Brotherhood of Teamsters President Ron Carey established a Strategic Campaigns Office in his union.

Backed by the formidable resources of the International, the new department worked closely with union leadership and membership to rack up four strategic victories in record time. A look at two of them—the resolution of the national carhaul contract and settlement of a dispute against Lohrs, an Anheuser-Busch beer distributor in St. Louis, Missouri—provides a sense of texture and suggests some principles that help turn a tough struggle into a strategic campaign.

When Carey came into office in early 1992, he was immediately faced with the challenge of settling the carhaul contract which had expired eight months earlier—and affected more than 16,000 Teamsters who transport new cars from auto plants, ports and railheads to dealerships. Among the issues was doublebreasting—the practice of shifting union jobs to parallel non-union outfits owned by the same employer.

In strategic campaigns, it's good to get the jump on the employer with advance preparation. However, in this case, contract talks had already been dragging on for months, and two contract proposals had already been rejected by the membership.

As International VP Tom Gilmartin, out of a Teamster local in Hartford, noted, "It was clear that the Teamsters union was reluctant to strike the carhaulers, primarily because of their ability to permanently replace strikers. Prior to Carey's election, we had been trying to talk the carhaulers to death—and it wasn't getting us anywhere."

Carey reviewed the carhaul contract morass and quickly committed to two crucial decisions. First, Carey decided to specifically target Ryder, a publicly held corporation with the largest share (25%) of the carhaul business. Second, the IBT went after the most vulnerable, rather than the most obvious, parts of Ryder's far-flung empire: retail truck rental outlets and school bus franchises, rather than the actual carhauling division.

"The Carey Administration had to succeed with a contract in carhaul," said one Teamster official, "and Ryder was the biggest company, which made it desirable to crack them first.

"But there was a lot of internal debate about how to target them. Some advisors thought the key was in the auto industry; if only we could get UAW President Owen Bieber to talk with GM and



In a public show of support, Jobs with Justice members rally with the Teamsters outside Ryder's Miami headquarters.

get them to cancel their contract with Ryder's non-union subsidiaries, we'd have some leverage. When you stop to think about it, that's pretty farfetched.

"Some other advisors thought we ought to focus on mob ties between the double-breasted operations and their labor contractors. But, in fact, that story had already been covered in Business Week a year earlier, with virtually no consequences."

So Teamster researchers took another look at the available data. In a new review of the Ryder annual report, several things stood out. First, the company owned or franchised 5,500 consumer truck rental outlets, located predominantly in metro areas with a large Teamsters membership. This afforded opportunities to mobilize lots of members and provided the capacity to escalate the battle, if need be. Second, Ryder had allocated millions of dollars in marketing to catch up with U-Haul. Therefore, a Teamster attack in this area would jeopardize Ryder's plans for expansion. Further research in the business press confirmed this.

The annual report also suggested that school bus transport was a potential growth area, and also susceptible to attack.

“The report said they transported 400,000 kids a day in 18 states, and were Number Two in North America,” said one Teamster official. “Also, they have to appear before public bodies to get approval for new and renewal contracts in cities where we have political influence and members on those public boards. We decided to go for it.”

Based on these two critical targeting decisions, the union employed several tactics.

For instance, the Teamsters zeroed in on the Doral/Ryder Golf Open in South Florida, adjacent to Ryder's corporate headquarters. The IBT hired a plane from the Aerial Sign Company to fly over the tournament with a sign reading, “Justice for Ryder Employees.”

And the boss reacted. In fact, Ryder went overboard, apparently convincing FAA airport authorities to prohibit the plane from flying. They also sent a “corporate security specialist” to pressure the plane owner to cancel his contract with the Teamsters. A Mr. Christopher Ferrante of Control Consultants Inc. materialized at the Aerial Sign Company Terminal, offered to buy out their entire fleet for that afternoon, and asserted that the Doral fly-over would be stopped by authorities.

This produced an unanticipated ally for the Teamsters: Aerial Sign Company owner James Butler.

“It appeared that Ryder was pulling out all the stops to get this fly-over squashed,” he relates. “My position is that labor unions have as much right as management to be heard, and those rights are guaranteed by the First Amendment. To me, it was basically a new-style picket. If they have the right to hold up a sign, they should have the right to hire the airplane.”

Although the fly-over was prohibited by the FAA, the Teamsters certainly caught Ryder engaging in questionable behavior and, with the local ACLU chapter, brought the issue of freedom of speech into the fight.

The Teamsters provided another morally-based focus for the community by challenging Ryder to distinguish itself from the unsavory labor practices of Eastern Airlines which, like Ryder, was based in Miami—an example still vivid to many local people.

President Carey took another unorthodox step. He invited Wall Street trucking industry analysts and industry press to a breakfast briefing session, where he presented a clear description of the campaign.

“The results were great,” said one aide. “The reporters and analysts wrote stories informing shareholders that a serious campaign was in progress. This follows the logic of choosing a public company, where the stockholders have a vested interest in how these issues are resolved.”

The union involved other constituencies on other fronts. The Teamsters moved the school bus battle beyond ordinary union concerns when they initiated a computer search that revealed that Ryder school bus drivers in dozens of cities had jeopardized children's safety. This information provided the basis for community coalitions with concerned parents groups and threatened Ryder's ability to win public school bus contracts.

In addition, targeting the truck rental franchises yielded real results. Beginning with 100 locations the first week, and doubling the number each week thereafter, the Teamsters made Ryder feel the pressure.

A rally and picket line co-sponsored by CWA and Jobs With Justice at Ryder's Miami headquarters—combined with a strategically timed print ad in which labor, civil rights and women's rights groups called on Ryder to uphold community standards—reinforced the message.

Franchise managers flooded Ryder headquarters with phone calls about the picketers, demanding answers. This was particularly troubling to Ryder. Most distributors make their primary income as gas stations, with truck rental as an auxiliary business. They can easily switch their rental operation to a Ryder competitor.

"The campaign grew until we were leafletting more than 600 locations," says Teamster International VP Gilmartin.

"The idea of dealerships all over the country calling Ryder, complaining, wondering what's going on, had a very clear impact. You can measure that simply by where negotiations were before the campaign, and where they ended up—with an agreement that included precedent-setting language to limit double-breasting and subcontracting of union work."

Gilmartin adds that it also had a positive impact on the union. "At least for the Teamsters movement, on a national level, this was something very new. Initially, some leaders were very interested, others were very skeptical. But as the campaign progressed, people became more receptive. They saw it as an effective tool."

Seventy days after Carey took office, a new carhaul agreement was signed.

DON'T CRY IN YOUR BEER

The Anheuser-Busch campaign, though local and smaller, produced another large win for the Teamsters.

The St. Louis local had been stalemated against Lohrs, an Anheuser-Busch beer distributor, for more than a year. Once again, the International Union was called in.

Gary Scott is president of Teamster Local 133 in St. Louis, representing the beer distribution drivers. "A year or two before this campaign," Scott reports, "we chose to strike over a distributor contract, and 52 people were permanently replaced, lost their jobs.

"We chose not to do that this time. But after reaching agreements with all our other distributors, we were unable to get a fair contract with Lohrs. We tried to go on a personal attack against the Lohr family. One of them sat on a local bank board, for example, and we tried to disrupt that link. But we weren't getting a response, and nothing was generating public interest."

The question of whether a campaign should be framed as a personal attack on an individual employer is actually an area of sharp controversy among strategic campaign practitioners.

Nothing makes members feel better than to badmouth the boss or picket his house—and few bosses are sanguine about the intrusion of demonstrators into their private lives. Sometimes it even has some dividends: Eastern Airlines President Frank Lorenzo emerged from the Eastern fray appearing both economically and mentally unstable.

However, other strategic campaigners are not enamored of this approach. As one of them noted, "At some point you have to settle, and this tactic makes it tough. Also, I always try to isolate the company within the larger business community, and a personal attack frequently encourages them to stick together. Most important, when you go for the easy 'feel good' maneuver, it almost always means you're bypassing a more important, more resonant social justice issue. It's like, after Lorenzo left, there wasn't much left of the campaign—and now he's back as an industry player."

When the International Union was called in, they helped refocus the St. Louis campaign in two important ways.

Targeting once more proved critical. "What made the campaign successful was the decision to pressure Anheuser Busch," says Scott.

"Rather than going after the distributor, we went after the product itself. That was a departure from the way we had done things before. When we used Anheuser-Busch as a target, everyone could relate. Neither Lohrs nor the brewery expected that."

The new target required some readjustment for Local 133's sister local. "You can have guidelines, but locals will have to be very flexible as circumstances change," notes John Wotawa of Teamsters Local 6, representing the Anheuser-Busch brewery workers.

"At the time Local 133 was having problems with Lohrs, I had a hell of a lot of members laid off. It was tricky for me, and a Catch-22 for our local. We wanted to be sympathetic with the

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																<p>When you're out of BUD ... YOU'RE OUT OF WORK!</p> <p>For years, seniority was the ticket to a job with the Bud distributor in the City of St. Louis.</p> <p>No longer. Now the beer distributor insists on hiring friends and family "off the street."</p> <p>Maybe the old system wasn't perfect, but it protected older workers and minorities from discrimination.</p> <p>Today, veteran drivers are out of luck and out of work. That's just not right!</p>																																																																																																																																															
																																																<p>BOYCOTT ANHEUSER-BUSCH BEERS <i>Breaking Friends Is Their Business</i></p> <p><small>Write for Bud Delivery Drivers National Campaign Headquarters • 75 Louisiana Avenue N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20001 Local Office • 4600 Linden Blvd. • Box 715 • St. Louis, Mo. 63108</small></p> <p><small>This headline is not intended to, nor does it ask any employee to cause work of casual deliveries.</small></p>																																																																																																															
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St. Louis Teamsters bring the fight out to the public arena—a Cardinal's baseball game. Cleverly combining the game scorecard with a flyer about their struggle, the Teamsters upped the ante on Anheuser-Busch.

drivers in Local 133, but our folks were also anxious about losing jobs. I had to convince them that we needed to take part, because most assuredly we would be management's next target. Anheuser-Busch is in the business of making money, after all, they feel no moral obligation to us."

The other key to success, was a powerful alliance with local tavern owners angered by a state law allowing monopoly on beer distribution routes. The monopoly meant that while Anheuser-Busch enjoyed an 80 percent share of bottled beer and a 90 percent share of draft on its home ground of St. Louis, the product was cheaper across the river in Illinois.

The Teamsters and tavern owners wanted the law changed and initiated a referendum campaign involving a broad community coalition to bring pressure on both the distributors and the brewery.

"It was a pretty smart move on the part of the Teamsters to get this referendum thing going," says Speak Easy Tavern owner Matt Miley.

“As liquor retailers, the wholesaler monopoly doesn’t sit right with us. I can buy liquor from any wholesaler, and it should be the same for beer. So when we were approached about repealing this legislation through state referendum, we got involved. I look at it this way: There was something in it for me, and something in it for the union. It was unique in that both groups could benefit.”

Carol McKinney, the owner of the Iowa Buffet tavern, and a principal coalition spokesperson, saw the issues more broadly.

“I have this little blue collar bar, and this campaign created a conflict” she says. “On the one hand most of my people are loyal to Anheuser-Busch products. At the same time, they’re union people and wouldn’t want me selling scab beer. Lohrs tried to pressure me. They said they’d be glad to deliver the beer at night, and all kinds of other unethical things.

“I felt the only way to deal with it was to get my voice out there. The biggest obstacle is time. We all have great intentions, but people have a hard time finding the time. But I had the moral and emotional support of my clientele and the support of the other tavern owners.

“There’s a lot more to it than just a union issue. People have got to start taking care of each other. Our whole system and our whole society is diminishing because we don’t take care of each other.”

The union’s concerns also drew wide political support. “The Teamsters understand the need for labor-community alliance,” says St. Louis Alderman Ken Jones, who chairs the 11-member Black Caucus of Aldermen.

Jones sponsored a hearing which highlighted disputes between beer delivery drivers and Anheuser-Busch not just in St. Louis, but in Houston and Detroit as well. “What this alliance means to me is that the union will support the community on social issues that matter to us, and the community will support the economic issues of the union on the picket line,” Jones explained.

“I’m not a moralist, I’m a materialist. But I think there must be a meshing of the two.”

The union also used the fight to publicize the firing of Isaiah Hair, who was unjustly dismissed by Lohrs after 12 years. The union maintained that African-American drivers like Hair were subjected to discrimination in routes and treatment, not just locally, but in several cities. Leaflets featuring the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. focused on similar problems in Houston.

But the union didn’t simply concentrate on the issues, it also engaged the membership. One of the most successful actions was leafletting at Busch stadium.

“It got everybody involved,” relates Local 133 President Gary Scott. “It was peaceful, it was easy to do. We’re just a few blocks from the stadium, and we could carpool people. It was only for an hour or so before the game, so it didn’t involve a lot of time. Yet we could reach thousands of people a night. We handed out 20,000 leaflets at each game—and got good media coverage too.”

As one campaigner put it, “In most cases, leafletting beats newspaper advertising. It doesn’t waste money, which is scarce, and it maximizes our most valuable resource, the members. You also get to look someone in the eye and make a personal appeal. It gives a human face to the message.”

The combination of smart targeting, a strong community coalition and a clear social justice message to the community worked. Lohrs settled—and Isaiah Hair returned to work.

THE 12 PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS

So there you are, with a monster employer threatening to demolish you. What is it that elevates your average ho-hum union struggle into a gutsy and noteworthy strategic campaign?

A look at the Ryder and Anheuser-Busch campaigns suggests some principles that can make the difference. The tactics will change with the employer and situation, but the underlying precepts by which to evaluate your progress remain constant.

1. Seize the initiative. Like the Boy Scouts, be prepared. If you’re going into a tough conflict or strike, it’s critical to think ahead of time, “If we go out, what could we do to exert enough pressure to win it?”

Although some campaigns require hundreds of hours of research, more often the key information about company finances is in the annual report, 10-K S.E.C. forms, business press reports and other easily available material. At the very least, these will point you in the right strategic direction.

2. Map the big picture. Draw a map of all the relationships your employer has, beginning with your own. Honestly evaluate your position, how well you’re organized, how hard it would be for him to find replacement labor. But don’t stop there!

Look at who owns the company, who’s on the board of directors, who are the suppliers and customers, what regulation must the employer reckon with, what are the financial commitments, what individuals or institutions capitalize the company.

That map will help you choose an effective strategy.

3. Think like the boss. By thinking like the boss—whether it's a tough plant closing or contract fight or some other calculated anti-union, anti-worker effort—we can get beyond the conventional response they're expecting from us and make a real impact.

Historically, we've looked at employers from our own point of view, in terms of his dependence on us. However, we can assume the boss is anticipating a certain response from the union—let's say a long strike—and is willing to bear the cost of that reaction. Nor does the willingness of a union to maintain a lengthy strike necessarily produce a victory. If we maintain or limit our response to the predictable picket line, or simply shout louder at the plant gate, and we don't disrupt any other financial or political relationships, we're just cooperating with our own demise.

4. Go for the higher vulnerability. Most employers are vulnerable somewhere, and all employers are more vulnerable in some places than in others. Withholding labor is only one vulnerability, not the exclusive one—and these days not always the most effective one. The decision on where to focus your attack should be made on the basis of weighted vulnerabilities.



The UMWA hit the Pittston Coal Co. on all fronts in its corporate campaign. The Daughters of Mother Jones led the way in the use of nonviolent civil disobedience when they took over the Pittston headquarters in Virginia.

If something is a potential or targeted growth area for a company, then it's probably more valuable as a target than any other unit of comparable size or dollar value.

Likewise, companies are usually more vulnerable in areas where they are subject to government regulation, where they must interact with the public, where the product is discretionary, or where there are easy alternatives.

5. Plan to win. Your plan must be realistic and manageable. To mobilize the membership, things have to be reasonable, logical and possible. Members should be able to participate without super-human sacrifice. If the perfect tactic is beyond your economic or human means, scale it back to the level you can implement. And you must have the likelihood of being effective. Deep down inside, people want badly to win and want to do what they think reasonable to achieve a victory.

6. Stay flexible—clear your mind of assumptions. Successful campaigns are built on dozens of readjustments.

The biggest hindrance to effective campaigns is going by rote, by habit, by what we're used to doing. Unions, like people, don't always change course in time to avoid mortal damage.

Frequently old, ineffective ways of conducting conflicts prevail over new tactics. And the strategy and tactics of one strategic campaign will often not be effective in the next.

Even with a good plan, it's necessary to stay flexible. A specific tactic may backfire, a prospective ally may evaporate. You gotta roll with the punches.

7. Struggle for social justice and human rights. Cesar Chavez said, "The fight is never about grapes and lettuce. It's always about people."

So often, when we condemn the company for trying to bust the union, we talk like we're addressing the labor council instead of the public. We presume that most people think that union-busting is bad—and that they actually understand the implications. Those are risky assumptions.

"I call it the brother-in-law test," says one campaigner, "namely, will the average brother-in-law get the message? And at training sessions, I make participants pledge never to use that old stop sign with a slash across the employer's name. All it tells people is that you don't like your employer. It's a message aimed at members only, it doesn't mean a hill of beans to the general public."

Instead, focus on the human costs of the company's irresponsible social behavior.

Let people know what the real problem is, and why the employer's behavior is wrong. And do it in a way that will be understood, and have an impact, even on those people who don't know or care about unions. If we use that as a standard, we're likely to be successful. And, in the process, people may end up knowing more—and caring more.

8. The more you involve the members, the longer they can last.

If you involve people in a struggle where they feel they have a chance, then their desire to win is usually enough to make them want to participate. And if you do it in a way that's fun, then it energizes people instead of draining them.

Union staff and leaders are sometimes wary of strategic campaigns because they don't think the members will want to get involved. Their concerns may stem from the old model, where you turned people out simply on the basis of loyalty. The problem is that if you overuse loyalty, it evaporates—and you also have to pay it back in kind. It sometimes takes more work up front to involve members on the merits of the campaign itself, but it usually pays off in heightened membership participation as the campaign evolves and leaves the union stronger.

9. Go where you are most visible. In the old days, work places were situated in communities, so if you put up a picket line, you could actually stare your neighbors in the eye and shame them not to cross.

No more. Today communities are more fragmented, and many industrial work sites have moved to industrial parks, where there's no one to see you, no matter how many pickets you turn out.

So go where you can deliver your message to the largest number of people you want to influence. Take advantage of everyday events like rush hour on the New York subways, or special community celebrations like the county fair, or make your employer squirm by an embarrassing demonstration at a trade show. The opportunities are everywhere!

10. Make your struggle a community concern—not a labor-management pissing match. Coalition is more than a fashionable labor buzzword. It is a way for the broader community to join you in condemning the injustices of your employer.

To the extent that the public perceives the campaign as a labor-management pissing match, they won't want to interfere. As ludicrous as it may seem to us in the labor movement, our struggle will

be seen as a conflict between two giants, probably equally bad, or as a fight too complex to understand.

A good coalition can change that. Most unions only understand limited, comfortable coalitions: labor, the church and one or two social groupings.

That's a good start, but not the last word. Ask, what is the natural coalition for this unique struggle? Then get together with those who are also victimized by your employer's actions, and raise hell.

11. Escalate—and be relentless. Leave yourself some maneuvering room, a way to raise the stakes—and force the employer to wonder what awaits if he persists. If you have let management know what you intend to do, and have vigorously executed your plans, you can bet they'll worry.

When you're relentless with a powerful message to the right audience, it's likely to be a real threat to the company's marketing, or to some other targeted vulnerability. Unless a company is suicidal, they'll give up before they go out of business, or lose more than they can later recoup. As Ray Rogers tells his audiences, a campaign escalates from A to Z, and most companies quit before the end.

There is usually a moment when they just lose heart and yield. The problem is, you can never predict when that moment will occur. The trick is for *you* to keep heart, and continue to campaign with intensity, despite the uncertainty. You only have to last one day longer than they do!

12. Nothing beats success—but you can never lose by putting up a good fight. Strategic campaigns are becoming so popular because they work. However, you never know how long it will take, and there is never a guarantee. "There's no last straw, no last tactic that forces the employer to capitulate," says one campaigner. "It's the unknown power."

"No strike has ever been lost," Eugene Debs said, and most observers agree that the memory of a strong union battle fought for justice and human rights will outlive the pain of the loss to inspire future fighters.

"I've done these a lot, and I usually win," says one campaign wizard. "But it's a funny thing, you can always lose."

"I've never known for sure that I was going to win a campaign, and usually there are long periods where there's no indication. The employer doesn't give out signals, 'In two weeks, I'm going to cave in.' The only signposts are these principles. I use them like a checklist, and I readjust or realign the strategy to meet them. Usually, if you show tenacity and put aside doubts, it works."

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

The Teamster campaigns against Ryder and Anheuser-Busch brought together a revitalized and concerned International union and motivated local union leaders, all of whom combined skills and resources to develop and implement winning campaigns based on these principles.

But the essence of a strategic campaign is not so easily captured. You need that intangible element, a combination of will, imagination and spirit that some individual, or group of individuals, must bring to the process.

To succeed, we must be on the lookout for those folks in every shop and every local, and then provide them with the support to move forward.

“The big thing we learned from the Anheuser-Busch experience is that this type of campaign can work,” says Local 133 President Gary Scott. “We learned that a lot of minds can come up with different ideas and approaches, and that members will get involved. Next time, we’ll have even more participation because we were successful. We won a battle we didn’t think we’d be able to win.

“I think it just comes with experience. Do I think I could do one without the International? Yes, as long as they were in the background to assist.”

International VP Tom Gilmartin says that the Ryder campaign has changed his approach in his own Hartford local. “The campaign had an immediate impact on me. In the 10 years I’ve been a Business Agent, striker replacement has become the norm. I now do all my negotiations with an alternative strategy in mind. I develop my position, I involve the members in planning, coordinating and mapping out the strategy. The bottom line is I saw it as effective.”

Gilmartin also believes that the principles of strategic campaigns can be transmitted to new practitioners. “I love the guys who do these campaigns,” he laughs. “They’re creative, and energetic and they have this sensitivity to the public viewpoint that makes them on target about strategy. It’s amazing. They’re sometimes more in touch with the communities than we are.

“But it can be taught. Like most lessons, you learn more by doing than listening. You gotta listen. But then you gotta go out there and *do*.” ■