

intimately know their industry, have relationships with their coworkers, and are thus best situated to use AEIOU effectively.

The phrase “You are the union” only rings true when the membership feels like they are in the driver’s seat. There’s no ride in the labor movement like a strike, and there’s no more crucial time for workers to trust in each other than when the engine is roaring and the conditions of their working life are at stake. 1-on-1s are the nuts and bolts that hold the whole vehicle together as it flashes towards the finish line.

No other US institution gives workers as much agency over the terms of their own life and livelihood as a union contract campaign. The fortunes of the entire labor movement are recorded in the language of thousands of settled contracts year after year.

For most rank-and-file workers in recent decades, sadly these have not been contests we’ve fared well in as wages have stagnated and inequality has grown. At its most dreadful, a contract campaign is a long procession of bureaucratic bickering and deflating concessions.

But when workers get organized and unite around a common purpose, they become an unstoppable force. The campaign transforms into a vessel for realizing collective ambitions, passions, and values. The power of workers to win their demands is carried forward by the trust and solidarity that exists in the relationships between them. To go from weakness to strength, workers need to talk with each other.

A 1-on-1 organizing conversation is a talk you have with a fellow worker to 1) build a relationship of trust, 2) identify common grievances and shared interests, and 3) move together from a place of inaction to one of action. Many frameworks exist for conducting these conversations, but the one I use is AEIOU: Agitate - Educate - Inoculate - Organize - Uplift.

Elsewhere I’ve written an introduction for how to apply AEIOU to workplace problems that can be solved directly through workers coming together to take action against their boss without going through a contract campaign or formal union process ([tinyurl.com/organizingconversations](http://tinyurl.com/organizingconversations)). In this piece I provide a practical introduction with examples for how to use AEIOU in union contract campaigns.

## **The Contract Campaign**

A contract campaign is a contest between a labor union and an employer over the terms of employment in the union contract, which includes wages and benefits and sometimes much more. The duration of such contracts is typically two to four years, after which the terms are renegotiated again.

Being able to apply AEOU to different organizing situations is one of the most important skills for a running contract campaign. Professional union staff are often the ones who know the underlying 1-on-1 frameworks and give member-organizations specific conversation scripts for specific circumstances. However, there's nothing stopping motivated rank-and-file from mastering these skills for themselves. Unions are most resilient when their expertise is distributed throughout the membership and is not outsourced to union staff. After all, the workers are the ones who

## Conclusion

Sometimes my preparation is right on and I make it all the way through AEOU in a conversation. More often than not, unexpected things come up and I don't get through all of the steps. Nevertheless, I find that good preparation makes it easier to navigate the complications that arise.

In addition to stage-specific questions for a 1-on-1, before a 1-on-1 I'll typically write down some notes about that specific coworker that I don't want to forget to bring up. For example, if I'll was disappointed in the wages from the previous contract campaign, I'll make a note to check in with her about that and ask how we can do a better job this time around. If John was part of a contract campaign at his previous job, I'll want to ask him what that was like and if there's any lessons from that experience he's bringing to the current campaign.

One exercise you can do on your own or with your entire CAT team is write out possible questions for each part of AEIOU for the specific stage of the contract campaign that you're in. Having a story or two in mind to share can be good too. Putting this on a print-out or google doc for all of the CAT team to use to prepare for their I-ons is can be a good way to coordinate and support I-ons across the campaign as a whole. Roleplaying I-ons at CAT meetings using the print-out questions can make people more comfortable when talking with coworkers.

prepared for them. Organizing conversations within contract campaigns are too complex to just "wing it."

One of the most important things the CAT will do is have 1-on-1 conversations with all union members, sometimes multiple conversations, over the course of a campaign. A campaign needs a general method for conducting individual outreach to members as well as a way to specialize that outreach to meet the needs of each stage of a campaign. AEIOU as a framework for 1-on-1 organizing conversations provides just that.

A well-run union campaign will have a core group of people who are moving the campaign along at the grassroots level. In some unions they have a Contract Action Team (CAT) composed of member-organizers to do this work, which is often separate from the bargaining team that sits down to negotiate with the employer (some unions combine the CAT and bargaining team functions into one large committee). A poorly run union campaign will often just rely on union staff or the union president to tell everyone what to do.

At the bargaining table the union and the employer will each start with their strongest proposals for what they want to change in the contract and then will gradually make concessions throughout the campaign. How then will the campaign continue until the employer or the union accepts side has. The campaign continues until the employer or the union accepts side the latest contract proposals from the other side.

A union often begins its contract campaign with a survey of members about what issues they care about followed by the writing of contract proposals. Then regular bargaining sessions between the union and the employer begin, and there starts a series of union actions of increasing scale and intensity that are designed to put increasing pressure on the employer to win a favorable contract. Actions might include signing a petition in support of the contract demands, posting a selfie on social media while holding a sign relating to one of the demands, rallying outside of employer headquarters, informational pickets outside of workplaces, and shutting down of employer operations through a strike.

Contract campaigns themselves typically last six to twelve months and can involve many points of engagement and mobilization for union members.

## Educate

“Why is the employer so stuck on refusing to meet the union’s pension demands?”

“What would we need to do to change the employers’ mind about this?”

## Inoculate

“The company negotiator is saying that they’ve already given their last and final offer. Do you think they’re telling the truth?”

“What do you think would be the repercussions of going on strike?”

“What preparations would we have to make for a strike to give us a good chance to succeed?”

## Organize

After you’ve talked through everything else, you’ll want to pop the question directly.

“Would you vote to strike to try to win a better pension?”

## Uplift

Anyone who seems on the fence is someone you’ll want to check in with frequently in the lead up to a strike vote. Encourage other coworkers who support the strike to talk about it at work too so that the vote feels like a community decision and not just something decided by union bureaucrats sitting by themselves in a dark room somewhere.

## **Preparing for 1-on-1s**

When a 1-on-1 goes well, it’s the most rewarding experience I have as an organizer. When a 1-on-1 goes sour, I often ruminate on it for days after. The biggest factor that determines how well my 1-on-1s go is how well I

## **Getting to the 1-on-1**

The success of your 1-on-1s will depend on how much your coworkers trust you and how motivated they are to talk about the issues at hand. These methods will be most effective if you’ve built a relationship with your coworkers before you try to talk with them about the union campaign.

A key aspect of effective 1-on-1s is knowing how to ask coworkers if they want to talk about the union campaign. In many workplaces people will initially not have much interest in this. Going up to coworkers and abruptly bombarding them with ideas and questions about the campaign will usually make them think you are just trying to use them, so you’ll need to find more natural ways to relate the campaign to coworkers.

As a CAT member, I try to lightly introduce the campaign to coworkers by emailing out occasional updates and bringing it up casually in the break room. That way when I ask them if they want to talk more about the campaign sometime, they already have some background info about what I’m talking about.

At my job my coworkers often have some flexible time at the end of the day where I can approach them to talk about the union campaign or ask if they want to stay after work someday to talk more about it.

Before going up to a coworker, I gauge the appropriate length of conversation they’d be interested in. For a coworker who’s new to the workplace or is standoffish towards the union, a five- or ten-minute conversation after work might be the best I can hope for, which might prepare an opening for a longer conversation later in the campaign. For a coworker I already have a personal relationship with and who has expressed interest in the campaign before, I might try to ask if they want to sit down for coffee sometime to have a more in-depth conversation.

Lastly, I look for a pretext for going up to them. Maybe the issue they care about in the campaign was discussed at the last negotiations session. I try to take whatever thing in the campaign relates to them and turn it into an

### Example: Strike vote 1-on-1

“Do you think the employer’s pension proposal is enough for someone to live on after they retire?”

"It looks like the union and employer are at a deadlock in negotiations. This would all end today if the union membership just accepted the employer's last proposals. What do you think about those proposals?"

Even though the mucocutaneous section is the one where you address Joe's concerns about the strike itself, it's important to go through Agitatem again briefly to resurface what this campaign really means for him.

## Agitate

in this hypothetical, Joe has been a mild supporter of the contract campaign so far and is especially interested in the pension proposal but is uneasy about the idea of a strike.

So often before a union takes a strike vote it will want to have L-on-1s with every single member who would have even a slight chance of abstaining or voting no. This is also where the employer's fearmongering about all the supposed terrible things that would result from a strike is at its highest pitch. The L-on-1s before a strike vote are often the most critical of the whole campaign.

In the lead up to a strike, typically the membership needs to vote to approve the strike. Traditional wisdom holds that you want a strike vote to pass by a bare minimum of 80%, and in most circumstances you'd only want to call a strike vote if you think you can get to 90%. Anything beneath that and there will be too much division in the membership, and the employer will be able to play workers off against each other to undermine the strike. If the union calls for a strike vote and gets less than 80% that would weaken the union's standing at the bargaining table because it would mean the union has few options to escalate. This would lead the employer to dig in its heels and pressure the union bargaining team to accept the employer's last contract offer.

70/30 Rule

opening question. "Did you hear about the latest union proposal on health insurance?"

## The AEIOU Framework

An essential feature of AEIOU that applies to all contexts is the 70/30 rule, where the organizer talks and asks questions for 30% of the conversation and the coworker talks for 70% of the time. The most important skill for new organizers to learn is how to talk *with* coworkers instead of *at* them, how to elicit coworkers' feelings and ideas instead of just spouting your own. You'll notice that each part of AEIOU focuses on questions to ask instead of things to tell coworkers. When coworkers know that their feelings and ideas are heard and valued, they'll be much more likely to participate in the campaign.

Even in the context of a camping trip, it's often best to start a l-on-1 with small talk to grease the social gears and feel things out. When the ground is prepared, you can dive into AEIOU.

Workers who are new to organizing will often drive into conversations about the campaign without a clear idea of what to emphasize or how to connect with their coworkers. This results in workers not knowing how the campaign relates to them, why it's important, or what to do about it. In contrast, with practice and intention an organizer can apply AEIOU within the flow of their own conversation style and can seduce their thoughts and questions to maximize engagement.

## Agitate

Agitate is the first step in an organizing conversation and has two parts: 1) identifying the main issue for your coworker, and 2) processing how that issue affects your coworker. Sometimes you have a guess about what issue a coworker cares about, like my opening question above, "Did you hear about the latest union proposal on health insurance?"

the union's fault. Trying to debate or argue with coworkers to change their mind usually doesn't work in my experience. Rather, try to keep the mood of the conversation open and ask questions that focus on what they care about and what's at the root of their issue.

"Why doesn't the company offer affordable family health insurance?"  
"Who benefits from the overpriced insurance costs?"

### Organize

Sometimes people just have to see up close what it looks like when the employer shits all over their workers. A good ask in the Organize part of AEIOU might be to meet up again after work to read over the union's and the employer's contract proposals on family insurance plans or to go to a bargaining session where the employer will be presenting these proposals.

Even if Lisa doesn't agree with all the demands or all the tactics, after talking about the family health insurance proposal she might start to see just a little how the union is fighting for what she cares about and how her support for the campaign advances her interests. That might be all she needs to be willing to sign the petition. "Would you add your signature to the petition to show support for the bargaining demands like the family health insurance proposal?"

### Uplift

You'd want to stay in touch with Lisa as the campaign proceeds so that you can build on the conversations and commitments she's already shown.

Some skeptical coworkers often won't want to go to anything or be actively involved at all, but it's still useful to stay connected to them and check in with them occasionally. Often having just one person they know will listen to them is what they need if they do start to have a change of heart and need someone to talk to. Alternatively, a coworker who remains skeptical but felt respected when you made a sincere effort to connect with them will be less likely to bad-mouth the campaign to other coworkers.

However, if the initial issue you raise doesn't generate much interest, you should pivot to more open-ended questions. "If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?" In one contract campaign I was in, I knew wages were a big issue among the membership so I would lead with that. However, some coworkers didn't care as much about wages because they had spouses who made more money, so my messaging kept falling flat. It wasn't until I asked more general questions that I started to get traction. It turned out those coworkers cared less about their own wages but cared a lot about being short-staffed. We were able to connect wages to better staffing because more people would apply for and stay at the job if the pay were higher.

A common mistake organizers make is to complete the first part of Agitate of identifying the issue but then skip over the second part of Agitate of processing how that issue affects them. As tempting as it is to move immediately to problem-solving (that's what the Educate step is about), your 1-on-1s will never succeed if you aren't able to slow down and talk with coworkers about *why* something is a problem for them. As workers, we usually suppress negative feelings about problems at work so that we can get through the workday, but if that's all workers ever do then we'll never come together to solve our problems. Only after coworkers are able to see through their coping mechanisms and viscerally understand why this issue is important to them will they be motivated to solve the problem.

Some good follow-up Agitate questions to ask about a coworker's issue are "How does that make you feel?" "Are there other things you would be able to afford if your healthcare costs didn't take so much of your paycheck?" "Is this what you thought it would be like when you got the job?" "Do you think about this when you're not at work?" "When you don't get the safety equipment you need, what might happen?"

### Educate

**The Educate step of AEIOU is about exploring how the campaign can solve the problem. Educate can be subdivided into three main questions.**

Many workers with anti-union views are legitimately mad about their working conditions and wages, but they've been made to believe that it's

„How could we make sure that that doesn't happen?“

“What would be the worst thing the union could do in this campaign?”

rather than fear of retaliation, for most coworkers who are skeptical of the union have primary fear of supporting the campaign is being taken for granted or being taken advantage of. You can use many of the same tools and apply them to this situation.

## Inoculate

Some skeptical coworkers aren't agnostic about the union demands but are opposed to the union's methods of pressuring the employer. You can ask them what they think would be more effective and gently challenge non-union methods while also share stories of how other unions have won

„What do you think we'd have to do to win this demand?“

“Why do you think the employer doesn’t want to pay for the better health insurance plan?”

For the sake of continuing this example, let's say Lisa gravitates towards the demand to reduce worker costs for the family health insurance plan.

If Lisa gets frustrated that there aren't any demands around parental leave, validate her concern and don't get defensive. For god's sake don't blame her for the problems that she herself is raising: "It's your fault that we don't have a parental leave demand because you weren't involved." Even if you don't agree with where she's coming from or how she's approaching this, there's nearly always some truth to people's dissatisfaction. Emphasize that the union isn't as inclusive as it could be and that she can make it better by getting involved. "Would you be willing to work with me to make the union better on this?"

The next step of AEILO is locate, which is an idea borrowed from medicine that involves exposing someone to a weakened version of a

## Inculate

This last part of Educate is where you can use up a chunk of the 30% of your speaking time under the 70/30 rule by sharing stories of when unions have taken campaign actions before. Ideally the stories you share come from your industry or focus on the same issue that your coworker cares about. Sharing stories makes winning seem achievable and can help people think through the strategy and tactics. A well-functioning CAT team might have a couple stories it can share with all of the CAT organizers, but as an individual organizer it's also good to build up a mental inventory of stories from your industry that you can relate to what your coworkers are interested in.

Third: „*What kind of action would our campaign have to take to win this demand?*“ Talk about how much leverage you’d have to create through action to overcome the boss’s resistance and win that demand. If the demand is something minor like changes to the department transfer process, maybe just bringing it to the bargaining table will be enough. If the demand is larger, like securing employer-provided healthcare, then you might need to take a bigger action like a strike.

Second: „Who has the official authority to concede this demand?“ In a union campaign, some boss in the employer hierarchy has the authority to concede to union demands. This is also where you can pick out that specific boss as the cause of this problem and tap into people's anger. „Why do you think the CEO wants to keep workers doing mandatory overtime on weekends?“, „Do you think that's fair?“

First: "What could we put in our union contract to fix this problem?" You're in the earliest stages of the campaign where the contract proposals are still being written, you can talk about writing language to address the problem. If it's later in the campaign and contract proposals are already finalized, you can discuss which of those proposals relate to the problem at hand.

coworkers. In my experience, it's much more effective to be attentive to their concerns, ask questions, truly listen, and be honest about how the contract campaign can or can't address what they care about.

Sometimes sharing what issue you care about and why can make the union seem relatable and relevant as long as you don't tell them they have to care about the same thing.

Once they've identified an issue they care about, you go onto the second part of Agitate, which is to explore how that issue is affecting them. Let's say Lisa reveals that she's frustrated at her employer's lack of paid parental leave.

"How has that affected you?"

"Do you think it's fair for parents to have time to spend with their newborns?"

### Educate

"What's a reasonable maternity leave policy that you've heard that other employers have?"

Another reason it's important to have 1-on-1s during the member survey period is so that you can find issues to include in the demands that maybe aren't the obvious ones, like wages and healthcare, but that people still care about. Let's say that in this example the demands are already set and there's no demand around parental leave, so the challenge is how to talk about this with Lisa.

One option is to find other demands that are related to Lisa's situation. For example, maybe there's a union proposal for reducing costs to workers on the family health insurance plans in a way that would be better for new parents. Another option is to ask if Lisa would be interested in helping put together the parental leave language for the next contract campaign. Neither of these are ideal options, but you'll be working with non-ideal situations constantly in contract campaigns so it's good to think about.

disease to bolster their immunity to the real pathogens. **Inoculate in organizing conversations has two parts: 1) preparing people for how the boss will react to worker actions, and 2) addressing people's fears.**

Compared to other kinds of worker actions, participation in contract campaigns tends to be lower risk because of the job protections that being in a union provides. For example, there's typically very little chance of being fired for attending a union rally or even going on strike as part of a contract campaign.

However, when the stakes get high enough in the fight between labor and capital, serious risks become inevitable and it's essential that organizers address coworkers' fears. Examples of high risks in contract campaigns include if a strike goes long enough people will be at risk of not being able to buy groceries or pay rent, if workers want to consider an action that is not legally permitted (such as a strike in an industry where strikes are forbidden), and if bosses are aggressive in disciplining workers despite official union protections.

As an organizer you want to be honest with your coworkers about the risks. When it comes time to talk about these risks together, you can ask, "If we do X, how do you think the boss will respond?" It's good to spell out the range of responses the boss could have and assess the likelihood of each one.

Then you can ask, "How would you feel if the boss did Y?" People's fears can come from many different places, so rather than assume why someone is afraid of retaliation, it's best to ask.

Lastly, "How can we prepare for the possibility of Y?" One way to prepare is to figure out how to make the worst-case scenario as unlikely as possible. For example, typically when more workers participate in an action then it is less likely that the boss will retaliate. Another way to prepare is to lessen the impact of a potential worst-case scenario. For example, raising money for a strike fund ahead of time can blunt the financial risks of a prolonged work stoppage.

intensity, and somehow this will magically win over your skeptical that your goal is to say the right thing with the right amount of emotional tell them what they should care about. Some organizers mistakenly believe What you don't want to do in Agitate with people who are on the fence is

“What do you think of them?”

“Have you seen the top demands we’re putting on the table at bargaining?”

what they care about.

coworker mad, but to listen to where they’re coming from and discover The goal of Agitate, here as elsewhere, is not primarily to make your focused on the Agitate step is entirely appropriate with these coworkers. spending an entire conversation, or numerous conversations, mostly and will react negatively to any invitation to support the demands. So have a strong opinion already of “the union” as something bad and external coworkers is definitelying the issue that they care about. As long as that remains hidden, no further organizing is even possible because they likely have a strong opinion already of “the union” as something bad and external

## Agitate

The most important part of organizing conversations with skeptical especially for people who are brand new to the union, it can be useful to work to talk with her about it.

endorse the union bargaining demands. So let’s say you go up to Liza after of the common early actions in a campaign is a petition for members to what’s happening that she’s usually willing to talk with you about it. One year but she has been critical of the union. She’s also curious enough about The context of the following I-on-I is that you’ve worked with Liza for a

some common challenges that will come up in I-on-Is.

skeptical of the campaign or outright hostile. The example below raises difficult parts of organizing is having conversations with workers who are receptive and interested in the campaign. However, one of the most skeptical and dismissive of the campaign is having conversations with workers who are

Most of my presentation of AEIOU has involved workers who are important thing is not to belittle or dismiss their fear. That’s the quickest way to destroy trust and create enemies of the campaign. Rather, find ways

**Example: Skeptical coworker refuses to sign onto union demands**

## Petition I-on-I

action they’re excited about that you can invite them to help plan and do give testimony on at a negotiations session. Maybe there’s a particular passionate about. Maybe there’s a specific contract proposal that they are of things the coworker is interested in and how they might want to Rather, over the course of the conversation you can mentally compile a list

want to be involved?”

to someone new to the campaign to be asked point blank, “How do you involved in the campaign and take on concrete tasks. Because contract The Organize step of AEIOU is about inviting coworkers to get

## Organize

community. What should we say to them?”

“Our critics will say that a strike is irresponsible and damaging to the can’t expect to get a raise. How do you think we should respond to that?”

“Some people will say that we’re in a slow economic period and talk through common objections to the union campaign and how to refute them. “Some common objections to the union campaign, and how to refute especially for people who are brand new to the union, it can be useful to

their commitment if they don’t know how to respond.

pour cold water on the hype, the coworker might get flustered and lose campaign but then goes home and has close friends or family members likely to hear about the campaign. If a coworker gets hyped about a way to inoculate is to talk through with people the counterpoints they are Before the point in a campaign where risks become more serious, another

respected and which fears are imagined and can be overcome.

supported, then they can determine which fears are healthy and need to be ignored their fear, explore where that fear is coming from. When workers feel listened to, then they no longer feel alone. When workers feel to validate their fear without exaggerating it. Instead of pressuring them to way to destroy trust and create enemies of the campaign. Rather, find ways important thing is not to belittle or dismiss their fear. That’s the quickest important thing is not to belittle or dismiss their fear. The most

“How does that affect your family?”

Perhaps you end the Agitate section by filling out a question from the written part of the member survey: “Could you tell me on a scale of 1-5 how important it is to you to see improvements in the following areas: Wages, healthcare costs, better staffing ratios, etc...”

### Educate

“How much would we need to decrease our health insurance costs for it to feel affordable for you?”

“Who at the employer really has the power to concede that demand?”

“Do you think our boss pays that much for healthcare?”

“What do you think it would take for us to win that in our contract?”

Maybe in a nearby city there’s a union in your industry that has a more affordable healthcare plan. If you know how they got that healthcare plan, you could share a brief story about it.

### Inoculate

“Some people have said that it’s not our employer’s fault that our healthcare costs are so high, and so it doesn’t make sense to fight them over it. What should we say to that?”

“When the employer says that they don’t have the profit margins to reduce our health insurance costs for workers, how should we respond?”

### Organize

“What can we as members do to advance this issue in the campaign?”

“Would you be interested in telling your story at a bargaining session to highlight how important this issue is for our members?”

outreach for. Maybe they are buddies with a lot of people in their department and would be interested in having conversations with them about the contract campaign.

Interest in getting directly involved in the campaign will vary. Depending on how the conversation is flowing and what you know about the coworker, you can calibrate your ask for involvement to what you think they will respond well to. For someone busy with young kids and a second job, maybe inviting them to the next 15-minute monthly union meeting to get updates and participate in discussion about the campaign is appropriate. Some people will only be mildly interested in the campaign, and that’s ok too as long as you’re steadily building a relationship with them, keeping them in the loop, and making yourself available to talk more if they ever become more interested. For those eager to get involved, maybe they would want to join the CAT team too.

### Uplift

**The Uplift step of AEIOU is about following-up with coworkers in the days and weeks after the conversation.** This could mean checking in with them and offering support if they get stuck on their task or staying in touch with them if they have to back away from the campaign for some reason. It could mean debriefing with them after they finish the task and exploring what task or role they want to take on next.

The goal of a grassroots organizer isn’t to blitz out a lot of 1-on-1s with people and never talk to them again. Rather, your aim is to build a broad network of collaborative and trusting relationships with people across the campaign. Only a community of workers based on healthy individual relationships can maintain the democracy and capacity for action that is strong enough to win.

## **Contract Campaigns in Weak vs. Strong Unions**

All of this talk of how to do 1-on-1s within a well-functioning contract campaign may seem irrelevant to those of you who belong to a

Not every union member is going to take an active role in the campaign, but by talking with members early on, even the more passive members can see how the issues at stake affect them and why the campaign is deserving of their support.

“If you could change one thing about work, what would it be?”

### Agitate

In the bargaining survey 1-on-1 example here, let’s say that the questions you ask reveal that the cost of healthcare is the main issue this coworker has because it eats up a lot of their paycheck. In the bargaining survey 1-on-1 build a campaign strategy around the top demands.

The strongest way to start a campaign is for the CAT team to talk to each union member in person about what they want to see changed at work through a new contract. The CAT will still use a written survey, but it will be filled out by the organizer and member together in talking about the issues. After all of the survey 1-on-1s are done, the qualitative and quantitative results can be discussed at member meetings and CAT/bargaining meetings to choose what issues to prioritize and how to build a campaign strategy around the top demands.

The weakest contract campaigns don’t even attempt to solicit from members what they want from the contract and instead the bargaining team makes up the demands by itself. Slightly better is when the union emails this by itself to all members asking what they want in a contract. However, out a survey to all members asking what they want in a contract. However, this by itself is still a shallow form of engagement because it involves no deeper discussion about issues and no collective deliberation by members about what they envision.

In the campaign and the membership will be too weak to win anything. “What’s been the most difficult part of your job this last year?” “How did that make you feel?”

It’s often easiest to avoid having 1-on-1s with coworkers early in the campaign because the stakes feel low and any serious action appears far away. But that’s often a mistake. If you wait to talk with coworkers until the stakes are high and a strike is imminent, then people won’t be invested.

### Example: Member Survey 1-on-1

Below are brief examples of how to approach 1-on-1s in different stages of a contract campaign and with different types of coworkers. I outline AEIOU with examples of questions to pose and other notes on what to think about.

The particular approach you take in a 1-on-1 with a coworker will depend on the following factors: how new the coworker is to the union, what the coworker thinks about the union, what issues in the contract campaign the coworker cares about, and what stage the campaign is in.

### Examples of AEIOU in Contract Campaigns

1-on-1s can be very time-consuming to set up, prepare for, go to, and follow-up on. Don’t be hard on yourself if you or your CAT team don’t have the capacity to have as many 1-on-1s as you want. Just keep using the capacity you have in the right way and aim to gradually build up the number of people who are involved.

The main difference between a weak union and a strong union is how active the rank-and-file is in organizing. Even if your union’s contract campaign doesn’t conduct member surveys and don’t have CAT teams, nearly all of the concepts here can be applied by individual rank-and-file bargaining units as a whole feels overwhelmed. If organizing across the or small groups acting on their own initiative. If organizing across the bargaining unit as a whole feels overwhelmed, try organizing across the department or on one demand in the campaign that you can mobilize pressure around. Whatever success you have in this campaign you can carry over and build on in the next one.

dyfunctional or lazy union. The truth is that weak unions today are the norm and strong unions are few and far between.