

Awareness-Based Systems Thinking Exercise

Overview: In this exercise your group will analyze the INTERNAL CONDITIONS in the union AND identify where to INITIATE CHANGE in the system.

Materials: Butcher paper. 3 markers of different colors.

Instructions:

You all are union member leaders in an imaginary local union.

Select one scenario you want to work on.

Select one person to write the responses on the butcher paper.

Select one person to read the scenario, out loud, to the group.

Draw an iceberg on the paper and a water line. Be sure to leave a lot of room on the paper to write the responses to the following questions.

3 Scenarios

- 1) A divided union in a large urban district**
- 2) Rebuilding the union and winning raises in a suburban district**
- 3) Building community defense with immigrant families**

Scenario 1: A divided union in a large urban district

Your local union has newly elected leaders who want to organize their union to have enough power to win a good contract.

The current contract secured modest improvements, but was broadly viewed as disappointing. It was ratified by a small group of members after hours of bitter debate. The “Vote No” camp continued to spread the opposition for a year after ratification. The opposing camp is small, but loud. They try to disrupt the monthly Rep Assemblies with countless angry objections and bitter comments from the floor. This has created a defensive union leadership team, and the long rep assembly meetings alienate new members who come to check out the union meetings. Right now, many members believe the union doesn’t do anything. They think of the union as a third party. Many members aren’t aware of the role members can play, or how they can be involved in their union. Many members can’t imagine what is possible or how the union could campaign for better pay.

Answer these questions about the different **groups/people** you can identify that are affected by the scenario. Write your responses down the left side of the iceberg:

STEP 1: Seeing the problem with fresh eyes and from different perspectives.

1. How is the way the union is structured impact what's happening (behaviors + events)?
2. In a sentence, state what each constituent group believes about the union and their relationship to it.

STEP 2: Force for and against change

3. What patterns are you seeing that keep the problem in place? By patterns we mean habits, people dynamics, union or member behaviors.
4. What incentives are there to keep the problem in place? What incentives are there to disrupt it?

ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ICEBERG CAPTURE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES.

STEP 3: What needs to change?

5. **Awareness:** What **awareness** do the leaders need to cultivate to address this problem?
6. **Organizing:** What **can the leaders do** in relation to each constituent group to achieve their goal of more powerful union?
7. **Mindset:** What **beliefs and mindsets** in the union will support this change?
8. **Practices:** What **practices and behaviors** do you think will support change?

Scenario 2: Rebuilding the union and winning raises in a suburban district

Newly elected leaders in a district, in a small city, want to organize their union to have enough power to win significant raises. The state just passed a budget that gives hundreds of millions more to public schools, including the district the leaders are in. The leaders and many union members know they will need to push to get those raises.

However, the union currently has only 30% dues paying members. Many of those members believe the union needs to win salary increases. They aren't aware of the role members can play, or how they can be involved in their union. They think of the union as a third party- someone else doing the work. These members can't imagine what is possible or how the union could campaign for better pay.

Even more of the district's educators who aren't members don't think the union does anything. And many do not know if a union exists in their district.

Answer these questions about the different **people/groups** you can identify that are affected by the scenario. Write your responses down the left side of the iceberg:

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STEP 3: What needs to change?

5. **Awareness:** What **awareness** do the leaders need to cultivate to address this problem?
6. **Organizing:** What **can the leaders do** in relation to each constituent group to achieve their goal of more powerful union?
7. **Mindset:** What **beliefs and mindsets** in the union will support this change?

8. Practices: What **practices and behaviors** do you think will support change?

Scenario 3: Building community defense with immigrant families

I.C.E. is present in the community. Some students are scared to go to school and parents are afraid to leave their houses. The bus department is down several buses because mechanics, many of which are from Latin America, are calling out a lot due to fear. This is causing system-wide late arrivals and late drop-offs. Angry parents were vocal at the last School Board meeting complaining about the bus situation.

A few immigrant parents have asked individual educators for help. Those educators having been helping as best they can. The union has not gotten formally involved. The union just settled their negotiations and members were active. A group of member leaders want to organize stronger support for the community – but they are trying to figure out where to start. Some union members are suspicious of immigrants and have been heard to say things like, “I’m not against immigration if it is done the right way.”

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ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ICEBERG CAPTURE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES.

STEP 3: What needs to change?

5. **Awareness:** What **awareness** do the leaders need to cultivate to address this problem?
6. **Organizing:** What **can the leaders do** in relation to each constituent group to achieve their goal of more powerful union?

7. Mindset: What **beliefs and mindsets** in the union will support this change?

8. Practices: What **practices and behaviors** do you think will support change?