

Potential Solutions

Problematic Practice

Too much nose to the grindstone, too little time to reflect or learn. Organizers and other staff have no time or encouragement to learn and discuss the broader context of their work.

Sustainable Practice

When work-flow allows (e.g., after a campaign ends), incorporate educational programming into the work day. For example:

- Brown-bag lunch series with authors, activists, experts on the issue;
- Book group;
- Film showings;
- Half-days off to read or watch videos in the office;
- Build up an in-office library of periodicals and books.

If not all staff are literate, provide audio and video materials as well. If not all staff read English, provide educational materials in their languages.

Encourage attendance at conferences and workshops; build time for professional development into job descriptions.

Aspirational Practice

Pay for intensive continuing education related to organizing; invite staff to enroll in [Midwest Academy](#); [Marshall Ganz's workshops](#); [Jane McAlevey's Strike School](#); the [Union Leadership and Activism](#) low-residency master's program; [Women's Institute for Leadership Development](#), etc.

Provide translation for educational events.

Non-organizing employees don't always understand what organizers do and why their work is valuable; and organizers' experience and knowledge may be lost to future staff after they move on.

Create opportunities for organizers to create learning materials for the organization to learn from their experience, transfer knowledge from organizer to organizer, strengthen organizing departments and build knowledge in the field.

Similarly, create opportunities for the communications staff, organizers and grassroots leaders to spend ongoing time to learn together how to advance key organizational messages.

For organizations that hire temporary organizers for single campaigns, consider creating year-round positions, which allows for off-season reflection, skill development and sharing of learnings.

Representing the organization in public is done only by grassroots leaders and/or by management staff, not by organizers and other program staff.

Nurture more staff as spokespeople. Offer training in public speaking and in the campaign issue to prepare more organizers to do radio interviews or podcasts, and to co-present about the campaign at meetings, hearings and conferences, along with directly affected grassroots leaders.

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Problematic Practice

Hiring is usually from the outside for managerial or high-skill positions, without considering potential of current staff to fill them.

Staff feel stuck, get no support for career aspirations or professional development. Supervisors relate to organizers and other staff solely in terms of their current jobs, taking no interest in their future.

Sustainable Practice

Consider promotion from within first. Proactively promote staff of color as part of the racial equity commitment. When staff growth is needed for a higher position, allow paid leave for skill training, and offer mentoring and cross-training, for example a canvasser shadowing a canvass director in preparation for assuming that role. Regard management as an actual skill requiring training, for example in financial management, not something that anyone can do based on common sense.

Supervisors can encourage staff to think about career goals and to take opportunities for skill development. Set up a voluntary system of mentoring for more and less experienced staff.

Aspirational Practice

For larger organizations, an internal skill-building and leadership development pipeline will pay off in the long run. Create a long-term internal management training program with stages offered regularly. Pay for certificate programs and college courses for staff with aspirations of rising within the organization.

Put a substantial amount for each employee's professional development in the budget, and encourage staff to look for courses, workshops, conferences and career counseling. In larger organizations, create a people-development position dedicated to coordinating staff development, convening supervisor support circles, improving policies, etc.