



TAKING THE CONVERSATION ONLINE

Here are a few ways organizers have used online tools:

VIRTUAL BREAK ROOM

An email list or Facebook group can be a forum to discuss issues, share information, draw up plans, and make contacts—off the clock and away from the boss.

Fast food workers at the Oregon Zoo communicated through a secret Facebook page when they organized to join Laborers Local 483. The online activities complemented an energetic on-the-job campaign that forged “zoolidarity” through actions such as a march on the boss.

“The Facebook page allowed us to answer questions about unions, address gossip at the zoo, announce organizing meetings, and later to respond to anti-union rumors that crept into the workplace,” said Matt Ellison, part of the organizing committee.

CONNECTING ISOLATED WORKERS

Email and Facebook can allow information-sharing and discussion among people who don’t regularly see each other on the job.

Educators at California Virtual Academies, who work from home teaching online classes, used three Facebook groups to communicate during their organizing drive. One group, the “CAVA Water Cooler,” offered a place to socialize, share stories, and vent. The second group was for supporters. The third was a private meeting space for the organizing committee to plan.

The 40-person committee also met regularly through a videoconferencing app called Zoom. But the educators met in person several times, too. “Nothing’s going to replace actually seeing each other,” said member Cara Bryant.

NETWORKING BETWEEN LOCALS

After teacher locals in a northern corner of Washington state organized one-day strikes against school underfunding, the “Badass Teachers” Facebook page helped the activity go viral. Soon, locals representing half the teachers in the state joined the strike wave.

Fired Portuguese dockworkers used Facebook to make contact even across national borders. Dockworkers in Spain turned away a ship loaded by scabs in Portugal—a crucial pressure point that helped the fired workers win back their jobs.

RANK-AND-FILE RESISTANCE

Machinists Local 751 member Shannon Ryker started the “Rosie’s Machinists 751” Facebook page to rally Boeing workers against mid-contract concessions their International was pushing.

Though the contract narrowly passed, the page became the seed for a new caucus. Union dissidents such as rail workers, auto workers, and carhaulers stay in touch through email lists, conference calls, Facebook groups, and occasional in-person meetings. These methods helped Chrysler workers pull off a 2-to-1 “no” vote on their national contract in 2015, forcing bargainers back to the table to make improvements.

