

MSCF Minute



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What Do They Want and Can We Learn How to Organize Around It?

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by Darci Stanford, MSCF VP for liberal arts and Kent Quamme, MSCF treasurer

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What Do They Want?

Have you ever asked someone what they want, or what they would like? Have you ever wondered if you really want the answer? Well, we want you to do this, and yes, we want the answers.

Do we as a union really know what our younger faculty want? We constantly talk about what is good for our members and how great the contract is, but have we asked what the younger generation, the faculty who will be leading MSCF into the future, what they are interested in, what they are passionate about, what they want?

John W. Budd, Chair of the Department of Work and Organizations in the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota wrote an article recently titled, "[Labor Unions Have More Younger Members Than They Think, And Why This is Important.](#)" One of Budd's main points addresses how unions are relating to their younger members. His article asks the question, if a union (unions in general) leadership wants to be responsive to the majority of their members, why would all of the negotiated benefits revolve around the members who have been around for a while? Do we know that these are the faculty who make up the majority of the members? Or,

are these the members who are just more vocal? Maybe our younger faculty are interested in the same things as our more senior faculty, but we will not know until we ask the question.

Budd also states, "Those interested in the future of collective voice and union representation should be asking whether this middle-aged and older worker bias has contributed to the decline of unions by ignoring how workers experience unionism over their life cycles." Are our new members becoming apathetic because we are not listening to them? Do they think the union is only listening to the members who have been around for a while? Maybe our younger members are interested in things other than negotiated benefits and the traditional service model. Maybe they are passionate about different issues. As a faculty union, it is our duty to find out what our members want, what they feel passionate about, and how to organize around their issues. When you receive surveys from MSCF, please take them and know it is a sincere effort to hear your voices.

Lessons to be Learned on How to Organize

Political ideology aside. Religious conviction aside. Personal beliefs aside. Looking at the Women's Marches held on January 21st from solely an

organizing lens, it's tough to argue that it wasn't a success. One article reported it started with a 60-year-old woman wanting to march after the election. In a little over two months, this movement managed to pull off marches in 30+ different countries; with over 670 marches worldwide. As of 1/23/16, it is estimated 4.6 million Americans participated in the march (approximately 1 out of every 100 adults). In Minnesota alone, there were six cities that coordinated marches, with St. Paul drawing near 100K participants (five times more than estimated).

Consider that all of these marches likely included coordinating venues, partner organizations, speakers, music, law enforcement, bathrooms, transportation, parking, etc. If you have ever been in charge of planning an event, you know the time and effort it takes. Now times that by 670! Even after figuring out some of the logistics, you have to estimate how many will attend and hope that they do. Our guess is few of us have ever planned an event for more than a few hundred people, let alone for tens of thousands.

All that can be said is WOW! Being new to the concept of member organizing, it is tough for us to wrap our heads around how they pulled it off. How

did they manage to organize something that tapped into and engaged 4.6 million people? Is there anything MSCF can learn from this massive organizing effort that will help us engage and organize our 4,000+ members? Could MSCF engage and organize the majority of our members in under two months? What is it that will make members want to actively engage with the union so when push comes to shove we are ready to mobilize? What is it that will make members see the value and power of the collective voice? Are issues something that can be identified ahead of time or do they need to appear organically to be effective in organizing? Is it possible to engage and organize without the impetus of people being mad or outraged at something or someone?

Does MSCF have the answers to these questions yet? No, but we look forward to MSCF having larger discussions around how to engage and organize our members. We ask that all of you be a part of those discussions.

Welcome New Members!

Michelle Ottomoeller, Anoka Tech

Brent Bradley, Hibbing

Peter Spooner, Lake Superior

Stephen Donaho, Normandale

Lucille Guinta-Bates, Saint Cloud

Sara Johannes, Saint Paul