

# Local Union Web Sites & E-mail Lists

- Web sites & e-mail in your communication structure
- Setting up a union web site
- Creating an e-mail list
- Communicating with members via e-mail



The Labor Center  
M210 Oakdale Hall  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, IA 52242  
[labor-center@uiowa.edu](mailto:labor-center@uiowa.edu)

Printed at UI copy centers by employees represented by  
AFSCME Local 12, Council 61

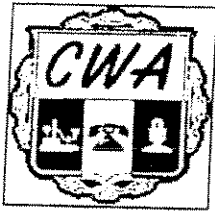
.....

## **Local Union Web Sites & E-mail Lists**

<b>Steps to setting up a site: A brief overview</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Determining Content: Audience considerations, policy considerations, and items to make available</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Some union-specific design considerations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Legal and other issues for union web sites</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Key resources for union web designers</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Creating a local union e-mail list</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Communication with members via e-mail</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Sending effective e-mail messages</b>	<b>14</b>



View all the sections of this Guide on-line at  
[http://www.cwa-union.org/about/local\\_web\\_manual/overview/intro.asp](http://www.cwa-union.org/about/local_web_manual/overview/intro.asp)



## *CWA's Guide to Establishing and Maintaining Local Web Sites*

Overview   Building Your Site   Structuring Your Site   Maintaining Your Site   Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty   Appendix of Sites and Resources

### Part 1. Overview

#### ● Introduction

- Who This Manual Is For
- Why Be on the Web?

#### ● Steps to Setting Up a Site: A Brief Overview

#### ● Questions to Consider Before Creating a Site

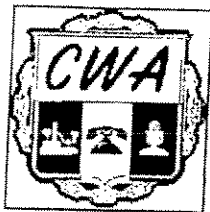
#### ● Determining Content

- Audience Considerations
- Policy Considerations
- Items to Make Available on a Web Site
- Keeping in Touch With Members

## **Steps to Setting Up a Site: A Brief Overview**

1. Assess the goals of your Web site. Determine the type of Web site you will need and the ways in which a Web site will help your local and your members. Also decide whether you want a simple "canned" Web site that doesn't involve much technical know-how on your part, a Web site that is handled by local staff or volunteers, or a site that is managed by an outside firm. Setting up a special committee for policy and review considerations may help in establishing the site's content and mission.
2. Assess your audience(s). Who is your Web site designed to reach? Average members? Stewards and activists? The media? The general public? Figure out who your main users are likely to be and design the site accordingly.
3. Assess your resources. In order to set up and run a Web site, you will need the proper hardware and software, as well as adequate staffing. Following are among the requirements for each:
  - Hardware requirements: a 486 or higher computer PC processor (or Macintosh equivalent) that has a minimum of 64 MB of RAM and runs Windows 98 or higher; a 56K or faster computer modem or a cable modem; Internet access via an Internet Service Provider (ISP); and a Web hosting service (some ISPs offer this service).
  - Software requirements: an HTML editor, an Internet browser, a graphics program (if you plan to create or edit graphics), and, depending on the hosting service you use, an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) program.
  - Staffing requirements: at least one trained local officer, volunteer, or staff person should be available on a part-time basis, at minimum, to administer and update the site and to answer e-mail. Also, depending on your needs, you may want to hire an outside firm to design, manage, or enhance to your site.
4. Designate a Webmaster. The ideal person should be trained in HTML and Web-ready graphics, and should have background knowledge of computers. Writing and editing skills also are important.
5. Do an outline or flowchart of the proposed site. Start with five or six - or fewer -- main categories of information that will be listed on the homepage and under which all the information on the site can be grouped. Then, build from there. The site's navigation should follow a logical and coherent structure.

6. Determine the level of sophistication and complexity of the site, based on your budget, time and resource limitations, and the processing power of most of your audience's computers. Consider whether your audience will be able to download such features as animated graphics, sound, and video without long waiting periods. Also, while setting up a way for your users to send you e-mail is recommended, you should first make sure you have adequate personnel and resources to respond to messages from members. Starting out simple is best; more advanced capabilities can always be added later.
7. Find an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and a Web hosting service. Many ISPs offer free Web hosting for small sites in addition to standard Internet connections. Larger, more complicated sites, on the other hand, usually require the use of paid Web hosting services.
8. Choose an address for your site (e.g., [www.cwalocal123.org](http://www.cwalocal123.org)) and register it with a domain name registration service such as Network Solutions ([www.networksolutions.com](http://www.networksolutions.com)). (Some Web hosting services will take care of this step for you.) The cost is \$70 for a two-year term. See Picking the Right Site Address for information on how to choose a domain name for your site.
9. Set up, test and launch the site. Create a first draft on paper and circulate it for feedback. Then, once the site is ready, launch it in a test area and ask for feedback again. Try to have as much of the site completed as possible (without too many "Under Construction" areas) before you publicly launch it.
10. Publicize the site to Internet search engines and in your print publications and other materials. (Many Web hosting services will register your site with search engines for you.) Also, notify the CWA National office so that your site will be listed on the National's Web site.
11. Keep the site updated regularly and stay on top of e-mail. Update your site regularly - once a week is probably the minimum - and make sure that news and other important information remains fresh. Also, make sure that e-mail inquiries get answered in a timely manner.
12. Consider communicating through e-mail. As an added member communications tool, you may want to gather members' e-mail addresses by soliciting them through the Web site, at membership meetings, or through the local's newsletter. Collecting e-mail addresses can also be a one-on-one mobilization activity.



# CWA's Guide to Establishing and Maintaining Local Web Sites

Overview   Building Your Site   Structuring Your Site   Maintaining Your Site   Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty   Appendix of Sites and Resources

## Part 1. Overview

- Introduction
  - Who This Manual Is For
  - Why Be on the Web?
- Steps to Setting Up a Site: A Brief Overview
- Questions to Consider Before Creating a Site
- Determining Content
  - Audience Considerations
  - Policy Considerations
  - Items to Make Available on a Web Site
  - Keeping in Touch With Members

## Determining Content

### Audience Considerations

Once you've established your budget and selected your site's Webmaster, the next step is to assess your audience (or audiences). Local Web site audiences often include members, potential members, retirees, local community and political leaders, national leaders, and progressive activists. Other potential audiences include the public at large, opinion elites, the media, politicians and their staff, coalition partners, educators, and students. While you should keep all of these potential audiences in mind, determine which ones will be your priorities when you structure and design your site.

Next, ask, "What will our main users want from the site?" To help find out, consider polling your local stewards and activists or other key groups.

Following is an example of a poll that CWA Dist. 4 recently distributed to its e-mail discussion list:

To: Dist. 4 List  
 From: Seth Rosen, Admin Asst. to the VP, Dist. 4  
 RE: Ideas for a District 4 Web Page

Vice President Rechenbach has gotten approval to create a District 4 Web site next year. To aid in the Web design process, we are interested in any ideas that people might have. In particular, we would like to know the following:

1. What kind of information would be useful on a D4 Web site? Should it primarily be a source of **news** (e.g., an electronic version of memos and newsletters that now are sent through mail or fax) or should it primarily be a **resource library** (information like contracts, reports, etc.)?
2. What technical limits exist? Will graphics & photos make it too slow for your modem speed? Will people download files (e.g., contracts, pamphlets), or does everything have to be readable on line?
3. Who is likely to be the main users of a D4 site: Officers? Stewards? Members? All of the above?
4. Check out the CWA National site, [www.cwa-union.org](http://www.cwa-union.org). What should be different about a D4 site? What should be the same? Why have a D4 site?

Persons in this discussion group are the most likely Web site users, so your comments and suggestions will be very helpful.

Thanks, in advance, for your ideas.

You can visit District 4's Web site at [www.cwad4.org](http://www.cwad4.org).

Another way to determine site content is to gather input at membership or work-site meetings. Or, you might try a newsletter survey. These are good ways of gauging the type of computer equipment your users have and the extent to which they use that equipment.

A second question is, "What are your goals?" Do you want to make information available to your members? Publish your contract(s)? Communicate with the media? You should establish these priorities first, before you design the site.

Keeping in mind that the content and structure of the site should be geared to your prime audience(s), you should then structure the site accordingly. Using an outline or a flow-chart will help.

## Policy Considerations

Establishing a local union Web site often involves addressing broad policy concerns such as whether to include contracts, bargaining updates, and mobilization information. To best address these concerns, your executive board may choose to establish a special committee to make Web-site-related policy decisions. You may also need to educate key decision-makers with regard to the Web and develop a clear-cut decision-making and approval structure, similar to one you may already have established for newsletters or news releases.

Among key policy decisions is whether to set up discussion boards or e-mail discussion lists. While such services often help build support and solidarity among members, they may also potentially become complaint centers for disgruntled members or activists. If you do set up one of these forums, you may want to assign an officer or staff person to moderate the discussion.

## Items to Make Available on a Web Site

After you have determined your audience(s) and addressed policy concerns, the next step is to determine site content. Following is a list of possible content categories and items:

1. News/Publicity
  - press releases;
  - newspaper/newsletter articles; and
  - photos of leaders and members in action
2. General Information
  - local officers' names and areas of responsibility;
  - the local's address, telephone number, hotline number, fax number, and e-mail address;



- important meeting dates; and
- the local's background and history

#### 4. Hot Issues

- contract(s) and/or bargaining information updates, including putting the local's entire contract(s) online;
- mobilization information;
- political activity information (see "Legalities, Formalities, and More");
- information for retirees;
- health and safety information; and
- information on other worker issues

#### 5. Contact Information

- e-mail and/or a "Contact Us" form

#### 6. Other

- search capabilities;
- tools for officers and stewards, such as grievance forms; and
- links to other sites, including union sites, government sites, reference sites, and others

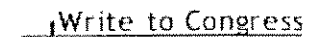
## Some union-specific design considerations...

Your site should address your local union's distinct needs. As you're making decisions in building your site, and as you maintain and change its features, ask yourself if the web site is reflecting and carrying out the goals of your local. Look at other union web sites for ideas and examples.

Sample home page buttons from some of Union Web Steward's "Web Sites of the Month"

For example:

- If you want your web site to be an outreach tool, does the site provide for two-way communications, with e-mail and phone contact information available? If you're trying to build an e-mail list, does the site include a feature for capturing visitors' e-mail addresses?
- If you are trying to increase member involvement in politics, does the site contain political action information, including instructions for activists?
- If you are trying to increase membership, does the site include information on how and why to join the union, including a way to access a membership card on the site?
- If you are trying to encourage more workers in your area to unionize, does the site have an organizing section?
- If you are trying to publicize accomplishments and activities, does the site showcase these on a regular basis?
- Does the site include links to the international union, to other locals, the IFL and Central Labor Council, and other resources?
- If you're trying to increase member knowledge of the contract, is the contract, or a guide to key contract provisions on the site?



Free web counters can keep track of who is visiting your site and how often: monitor this use and determine if your site is serving the audience(s) you intended (leaders, members, the general public?)

You are visitor number **00000168**

# Union Web Sites: Some Legal and Other Issues<sup>1</sup>

## 1) Check with your international union

Most unions have policies on local union web sites (what should and shouldn't be included, suggested links, etc.). As you start setting up a new site, or whenever you are in doubt about a piece of content, check with your union!

## 2) Political Candidates on Your Web Site

Unlike your union newsletter which is mailed to members only, most Web sites are open to public viewing. Because of this, different legal restrictions apply on political content endorsing or advocating for candidates. Most general political information (issues, statistics, etc.) is ok to include on the site, but if you want to publicize your union's endorsement of candidates, or if your newsletter argues for defeating certain candidates, you must follow the rules below before putting it on your union site:

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) has ruled that restrictions on spending for television and newspaper advertising also apply to web sites. This means that if you feature an article in your local newsletter announcing the union's endorsement of a candidate, you can't automatically post the same article on your Web site, because on line, the article can be considered an "ad," on a site paid for with members' dues money.

According to an AFL-CIO memo regarding partisan political content on union web sites:

"The FEC interprets and enforces the Federal Election Campaign Act to preclude a union or corporation from listing on its Web site endorsements of presidential and other federal candidates, or otherwise expressly advocating on its Web site a candidate's election or defeat, if the Web site is accessible by the general public." FEC considers a publicly accessible Web site "to be a means of public communication comparable to other outlets, such as leaflets and print or broadcast advertising." Using the site for political endorsements violates the FEC rule that bars unions and corporations from using their treasuries to communicate partisan advocacy messages beyond their so-called 'restricted classes,' which for unions includes union members, union executive and administrative personnel, and their families.

**What to Do?** If you want to include candidate endorsement information on your site, there are two possible solutions:

- 1) **Pay part of your Web bill from COPE funds.** Put a disclaimer on pages with political endorsements, keep track of the percent of the total space these pages take up on the site, and bill your COPE or political action fund for that percentage of your Web service bill.

---

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this section were adapted from the CWA "Guide to Establishing and Maintaining Local Web Sites" page on "Legalities, Formalities, and More."

*Sample disclaimer: "This portion of the Website is paid for by the CWA Committee on Political Education, with voluntary contributions from union members and their families, and is not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee."*

- 2) **Set up a "members-only" section of your web site.** Some web sites contain both public information, plus a "members-only" section that can only be entered with a password (be aware that this will require several steps: getting technical help setting up the feature, distributing individual passwords to members, and explaining the feature ... plus convincing people to use it!). If you go this route, it is fine to put political endorsements on this part of the site.

### **3) Copyright and Trademark Issues**

Many photos and logos on the web are copyrighted, meaning you can't just cut and paste them into your web site without permission.

- You can and should use your union's logo on your site, but corporate logos are protected by copyright/trademark law—don't put your company's logo on your site unless you have permission.
- It's ok to link to articles and photos in other copyrighted publications, but usually not ok to cut and paste the full text into your site.
- It is usually ok (and in fact encouraged practice!) to use articles from other union publications, including materials from the AFL-CIO, Iowa Federation of Labor, and your international union. Just mention the source when you reprint articles from other union publications (for example: "Reprinted from the Spring 1997 issue of the IAM Journal. c.1997 JAM. All Rights Reserved.")
- If in doubt, it is always ok to quote part of an article within your own article, as long as you attribute the source.

### **4) Member permission**

If you're using member photos on the web, as a courtesy, you might consider asking first to make sure it's ok. Some members who don't mind seeing their photo in the members-only newsletter might not feel comfortable having the same photos available to a worldwide public audience.

## Key Resources for Union Web Designers

Check first with your international union to see if they have a set of policy guidelines for local union web sites, or if they offer resources and help in setting up your site!

### **CWA's "Guide to Establishing and Maintaining Local Web Sites"**

[http://www.cwa-union.org/about/local\\_web\\_manual/overview/intro.asp](http://www.cwa-union.org/about/local_web_manual/overview/intro.asp)

Comprehensive step-by-step guide to creating, publicizing, and maintaining a site; includes scores of additional resources and some basic technical guidance. (See the next few pages for samples of some of what is covered in this guide).

### **Union Web Services—"Web Steward" newsletter**

<http://www.unionwebservices.com/mws/0310.html>

Has two very useful resources for ideas:

- "Web Site of the Month" reviews point out interesting features of other local union web sites.
- "Resource of the Month" section suggests useful resources for union web masters.

### **AFSCME Webmaster Corner**

<http://www.afscme.org/publications/webmstr.htm>

Contents include:

- "Putting Your Union on the Web" How-To Guide (2000 – a little outdated) at <http://www.afscme.org/publications/puttc.htm>
- Links to suggested resources for web masters & "Web tips" section

### **LabourStart Web Browser**

<http://www.labourstart.org/opera.shtml>

Fast browser alternative to Netscape & Explorer available for free download. Pages checked in this browser are "guaranteed" to work in any other browsers.

### **Free Web Tools**

<http://www.bravenet.com/>

Useful tools to download for use in your site (counters, forms, calendars, etc.).

## Creating a Local Union E-mail List

**Questions to ask yourself first: Do you need an e-mail list? And what kind?**

- How many members have e-mail addresses? Where/how often can they access e-mail?
- Will it be a voluntary/optional list, or a list of ALL members? Will non-members be allowed on the list?
- If you don't already have them, how will you collect members' e-mail addresses for the list?
- Can union messages be sent to work e-mail addresses, or only to private/home accounts (will the union explain how to get free/private e-mail accounts)?
- Who will create and manage the list?
- How often will messages be sent, and what kinds of messages will be allowed?
- Will the union set a policy on how the list is used, or will it be up to the list manager(s)?
- How often will the list be updated?

**Key Question→How will e-mail affect the communication structure you already have?** Will e-mail messages replace, damage or improve communication structures you already have? How?

Pros of using e-mail in your local?	Cons of using e-mail in your local?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Save money, time on mailings</li> <li>• Accessible and readable for members</li> <li>• Reaches people quickly; can encourage more activism</li> <li>• Can solicit instant feedback from members</li> <li>• Can work in conjunction with existing communication structures (newsletter, phone tree, leafleting, one-on-one, etc.) and with web sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of service; takes time to manage list</li> <li>• Hard to get everyone's e-mail address</li> <li>• Information overload</li> <li>• E-mail taken less seriously than print</li> <li>• Can take emphasis away from other important communication structures (newsletter, leafleting, one-on-one, etc.)?</li> </ul>

### The Simple Route: Using your existing e-mail program

You don't necessarily need special software to begin communicating with members on e-mail (especially if your local is relatively small). All you need to set up a basic local union e-mail list is your existing e-mail program (Eudora, Outlook Express, etc.).

Basic steps to a simple e-mail list using existing e-mail software:

- **Get addresses:** If you don't already have them, collect e-mail addresses from members (the process of collecting addresses could be a good communication opportunity in itself – give stewards cards to collect addresses on while they tell members about what the list will be used for, send a clip board around at meetings, publicize the list and how to join in your newsletter, add a space for e-mail address on your union's membership card, etc.)
- **Make the list:** Follow your e-mail program's instructions for entering addresses into the address book under one group or one "Nickname." If you're lucky and already have e-mail addresses in a database, you can just copy and paste them in. If not, you'll have to type them all into the address book.
- **Send messages to the list:** Once addresses are entered, whenever you type the group name or "Nickname" (e.g., "Local 25") into a message, the program will send a message to the entire group.

The only drawback to using a basic e-mail program for a large list of people is that these programs are not set up for list management, so each time a change is needed in someone's address, you will need to search for that person in the list and manually make the change.

### Using List-Management Software

There are many programs designed specifically for managing e-mail lists and groups.

If you want to go this route and money is an issue, you can set up lists using free systems available at sites like yahoo.com, topica.com, or riseup.net, or npogroups.org. These systems are easy to use, BUT be warned they have serious limitations (some like yahoo and topica include ads in messages, some can be slow if servers are overloaded, etc.) and may not be especially secure.

You can also have your union buy list management software. The most well-known software available for managing e-mail lists is called "LISTSERV"—full details and purchase information is at [www.lsoft.com](http://www.lsoft.com)

## Types of E-mail Lists

### **“Opt-out” mailing list**

**Use: regular communication from the union to entire membership**

Here you automatically subscribe all members to the list (though people who don't want to get e-mail from the union can ask to be removed); only union list moderators can send mail to the list.

### **“Opt-in” mailing list:**

**Use: communication from the union to those interested in higher levels of leadership involvement or activism**

List joined voluntarily only by interested members; only union list moderators can send mail to the list. Often a form exists on web site where members can type in e-mail address to join list (see the free program for setting this up at <http://www.bravenet.com/webtools/elist/index.php>) or members can get a one-time e-mail “invitation” to sign themselves up. Note that not everyone will be on this type of list, so you can't rely on it as a primary form of membership communication.

### **Unmoderated list (often called a “listserv” or discussion forum/group):**

**Use: communication among union members/leaders**

Anyone can send mail to this type of list. Pros: fosters input, discussion, seems democratic. Cons: no way to control content of what gets posted, not everyone wants lots of e-mail so some people unlikely to join this type of list so it doesn't work for communicating with the whole membership; small number of people highly comfortable with e-mail may seem to “dominate” discussion while other members unlikely to participate; can easily become a complaint forum; discussions of most difficult issues work better in person than on e-mail.

## Maintaining an E-mail List

- Update the list regularly to add new e-mail addresses and drop addresses of non-members or people who've asked to be removed (if your bargaining unit is large or has high turnover, update the list at least once a month)
- Keep addresses you collect in a database, ideally in the same database with membership records.
- Keep tabs on who is subscribed: if you don't have addresses for all members, don't start to rely on e-mail as the only form of communication
- If it's a voluntary/opt-in list, regularly publish information on how to join (in the newsletter, on the web site, at meetings, etc.), or regularly make efforts to collect new addresses.



## Communicating With Union Members via E-mail

An e-mail list is a powerful tool that can put your union in touch with all your members at once, and can help coordinate activities and increase member involvement. But if the list is overused or if e-mails to your list begin to seem unimportant, soon no one will be reading them. Think about what you want your list to accomplish, direct its use toward your local's key goals, and practice writing effective e-mails each time you post to the list.

### Some effective uses of union e-mail lists:

- **Announcements:** meetings, demonstrations, classes, social events, etc.
- **Mobilization:** political action alerts, calls for job actions, instructions on writing to representatives, etc.
- **Selected News Items:** features or links to new issues of newsletter, time-sensitive news flashes, updates from bargaining committee or stewards on ongoing struggles, reminders of employee rights at times when they are threatened, etc.
- **Surveys:** members can respond to e-mail surveys immediately just by replying to the e-mail message and typing in their responses.

### Some not-so-effective uses of union e-mail lists:

- Meeting minutes
- Entire newsletters
- Pleas for volunteers
- Long personal statements from officers

What would be other good uses for an e-mail list in your local?

What would you avoid putting in e-mails to your local list?

## **Sending Effective E-mail Messages**

Writing an effective e-mail is a lot like designing a good leaflet. Most people won't read an overly long message, or a message that doesn't seem to have a purpose, so:

**Keep it short:** like a leaflet, ideally an e-mail should focus on one topic.

**Make it important:** use the subject line and put key points first in the message.

If it's not important, don't clutter the e-mail list with a message about it.

**Make it easy to read:** use headers, spaces between paragraphs, capital letters, etc. to organize information. Don't rely on fonts and graphics that won't show up in some people's home computers.

**Include links:** this can help keep the message short while still allowing those who are interested to find more information on a web site. If you have a local web site, you should include a link to it in every e-mail message you send out.

### **Some tips for writing common types of messages:**

#### **Announcements:**

- Include what, where, when.
- Set off the time and place information in the message so it stands out.
- If announcing a meeting, include key agenda topics that make it clear why it is important to attend.

#### **Action Alerts:**

- Include what, why, what to do & by when (give a deadline).
- Include specific, clear directions for action. For example, if you want members to write to their legislators, include a short sample letter with an e-mail address to send it to, or include a link to a sample letter on your local web site that members can modify and send.

#### **News:**

- Keep it brief! Ideally focus on only one item per message (refer to a link if there's more information available on-line).
- Try to avoid duplicating everything already appearing in print newsletters or discussed at meetings (e-mail works great to remind people about meetings or to communicate breaking news, but if everything appears on the e-mail list, why come to meetings or read the newsletter?) Rather than posting the whole newsletter, publicize your on-line newsletter and local web site by providing a link.
- If possible, link the news item to an action, or ask for a response.

## What can we learn about e-mail from the Dean campaign?

Howard Dean's presidential campaign became well-known for its use of e-mail and internet organizing. How did they structure their e-mail messages?

### Effective E-mails<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing more important to a successful internet outreach operation than having effective e-mails. No matter what else you do, if you don't have good, inviting, and action-oriented e-mails, your operation will fail. The perfect e-mail is always elusive, and building a great e-mail is a science. Here are some pointers for how to make e-mails work for your group.

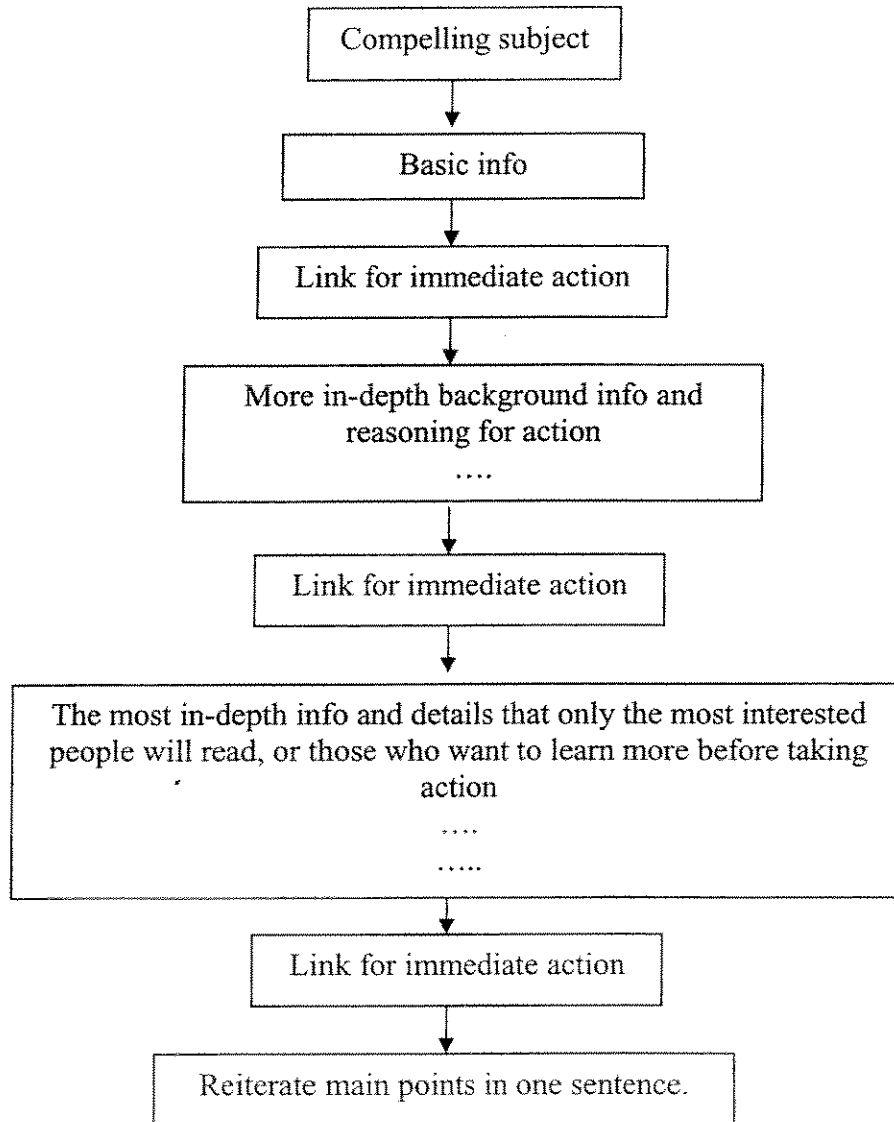
- ❖ **Don't make e-mails into newsletters** – Newsletters are inherently passive, dull, and boring. They also cram too much information into one message, confusing your membership and prompting them to delete an e-mail before they even see it.
- ❖ **Give each e-mail a specific goal and purpose** – Have an e-mail rally around a news item and relevant action, a greater campaign call to action, or an upcoming group activity. Even two subjects can be too many for an e-mail. Keep it focused.
- ❖ **Always include immediate action** - If you don't have something for your membership to immediately do right away after reading an e-mail, don't send it out. If you send out an e-mail about an upcoming meeting, direct people to the campaign's latest petition. Have them forward an entry to a friend. Direct them to our IT tools. Anything. Always ask people to do something.
- ❖ **Speak with a person, don't just talk at them.** It may seem obvious, but it's incredibly important to take note of tone and voice in your e-mail. If you're the slightly best condescending or uppity – even if it's unintentional – people will resent your e-mail and probably will unsubscribe. Make them feel important, essential, and needed. Use everyday language; stay away from long, complex sentences. Just be aware of how you're writing, not just what you're writing about.
- ❖ **Make group e-mails as individualized as possible** – You can do this by pretending you're writing to only one person, even though it's going to several people. This small step will greatly assist your message, and will increase the likelihood that your readers will act on your message.
- ❖ **Have a compelling subject line** – There should always be some sort of alert in your subject. If it's something as boring as "American University Generation Dean Update, 9/15," no one will read it. If it's something like, "Bush Cutting Financial Aid – Will You Be Next?", people will read to see what exactly's going on. Be creative.
- ❖ **Restate your message in one sentence at the end of the e-mail** to remind your readers of what you're asking them. One last mention can't hurt at all.

---

<sup>2</sup> This text was adapted from the Dean for America Campaign Student Organizing Manual, August, 2003

### E-mail Structure<sup>3</sup>

The first paragraph or two provides the most basic information about the subject, and then a call for action. This allows people who only glance through e-mails to get the gist of what you're writing, and then, tells them exactly how to respond. The next few paragraphs provide more detailed background information for those who weren't convinced right away, and then, gives another call for action. If there are still more details you haven't disclosed, create a third section with the most in-depth info, and then, provide yet another call for action. The following diagram documents the structure:



<sup>3</sup> This text was adapted from the Dean for America Campaign Student Organizing Manual, August, 2003

## ❖ Example<sup>4</sup>

Here's an example of an e-mail sent out to our full membership requesting their assistance with a survey. You'll notice several things about this email – first, it follows the above structure by giving basic survey info within the first two paragraphs, and then a link for action. The next section lays out exactly why we've become "Generation Dean" and why we need the input specifically. A link for action is then cleanly laid out.

And finally, note the personalization – terms like "I," "we," and "you" - are used throughout to create a sense of community. It's also signed by someone on staff with all contact information listed in case someone has a question or concern.

Study this email and others we send you to figure out what works best for you when writing emails. They're the most effective way to go about mobilization and action for your group. Use them wisely.

Subject: Welcome to Generation Dean.

Dear GenDeaner:

Welcome to Generation Dean.

I'm writing you today because we need your assistance. We here at The Movement Formerly known as Students for Dean are completely revamping the way we're reaching out to and organizing students who support Howard Dean for president. We're asking you to take a few moments to fill out a survey about what's important to you as a student, what you think of our prototype for a new website (to be located at [www.generationdean.com](http://www.generationdean.com)), and how we can better communicate with you as a student leader.

Take the survey here: [www.studentsfordean.org/survey.php](http://www.studentsfordean.org/survey.php)

Generation Dean is the second phase of Students for Dean, the nationwide movement that started in March 2003 on hundreds of college campuses across the country. Generation Dean is a movement run by and for young people who support Governor Howard Dean for President in 2004.

But this isn't just a name change. This is a change of focus, goals, message, and methods for empowering a generation of young Americans. One of the primary changes you're going to see is a focus on individual action, as well as group action. We want to empower each and every one of you to take action on your campus and in your community. But we need your help to make this happen.

Let us know what matters to you by filling out this survey: [www.studentsfordean.org/survey.php](http://www.studentsfordean.org/survey.php). Please do so by Wednesday at 9:00 PM EST.

Thank you for your time. Please fill out the survey and let us know how we can better help you organize in your area to elect President Dean in 2004!

Sincerely,  
Michael Whitney  
Generation Dean  
[mail@studentsfordean.org](mailto:mail@studentsfordean.org)  
802.651.3200 x153  
[www.studentsfordean.org](http://www.studentsfordean.org)

<sup>4</sup> This text was adapted from the Dean for America Campaign Student Organizing Manual, August, 2003

