



## Shop stewards:

# The importance of building trust with members

**T**he term 'shop steward' refers to an employee at a workplace who is elected by union members to represent them in engagement with the employer. A shop steward has substantial influence over workers, including being mandated by union members to negotiate annual wage increases with the employer. Other union activities include attending to union members' grievances, representing employees at disciplinary hearings and arbitrations, and holding members' meetings.

The importance of trust in this relationship can be understood by its definition, which means to rely on someone else to do the right thing as the primary ingredient of any relationship. Trust holds the relationship together. Trust cannot be obtained other than being earned. Shop stewards must build solidarity and promote harmonious relationships amongst union members. Shop stewards must build trust in the workplace by aligning actions with words. There are certain qualities that a shop steward must possess to lead effectively and build a trust relationship with members and the union.

These include being trustworthy, confident, and respectful. A shop steward must be honest, supportive, consistent, available, accountable, brave, communicate effectively, compassionate, and competent.

For a shop steward to be trusted, it is necessary to be an effective leader, influential, give honest feedback and checking in on members about their concerns. Visibility is also crucial. Shop stewards must ensure that the union is marketed at the workplace and must be available and willing to assist union members with work-related matters.

The success of a union to retain and gain new members further depends on a healthy, trusting relationship between the union, shop stewards, and union members. In the absence of the trust relationship, chances of growth of the union are limited. A trust relationship will benefit the union and its members in many ways.

#### Sources

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