



RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE BRANCH

1. Map your network

- Work on creating and maintaining a safe work environment so that members feel comfortable admitting that something is wrong.
- Advocate for regular and ongoing union/management training to identify early warning signs and triggers.
- Reduce the stigma associated with tool removal so that members don't feel they have to hide a problem to avoid feeling marginalized.
- Actively work at eliminating gossip, rumours, and cyber-bullying (Facebook aggression) in the workplace.
- Touch base with your members and ask them how they're feeling if you suspect someone is experiencing undue stress or anxiety. Don't be afraid to address the issue of mental health head-on. Establish who is responsible for which tasks within your Branch structure (Executive and steward body).
- Establish who you represent and where they work. Identify your active members.
- Establish who fits where within the CBSA structure. This includes both managers and regional/national Labour Relations Advisors responsible for your region.
- Establish who will provide you with immediate support at CIU. This includes members of the National Executive and the Labour Relations Officer (LRO) responsible for your Branch.

2. Familiarize yourself with available resources

- Branch Rules (your bible on union processes and responsibilities)
- The Collective Agreement (your other bible)
- Other Branch Presidents. Build your network of peer support.

- The CIU National Executive, National Office staff and your LRO
- The PSAC Regional Office (bargaining meetings, Benefits, Worker's Comp, etc)
- The Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board website
- PSAC training (any member in good standing can attend)

3. Understand All of Your Redress Options

- Grievances (individual/group/policy)
- Staffing Complaints
- Privacy Complaints
- Violence in the Workplace Complaints (Canada Labour Code)
- Human Rights Complaints
- Consultation with management (lowest level resolutions)
- Health and Safety

4. Build your pool of active members

- Provide an orientation session for new members.
- Alternate where you hold union meetings if your workplaces are far apart.
- Build Branch identity with local swag.
- Actively work with your workplace Health and Safety Committees and pick the right members for the committee and especially the Employee CoChair. Learn how OHS works, the internal complaint process, Committee Referrals, Refusals, etc.
- Establish a social media group for your Branch (WhatsApp, FB group, Messenger etc.)
- Emphasize teamwork. Hold regular meetings (AGM, Stewards, Executive) and use the Rules of Order so that your members are familiar with the format when they attend larger union events.
- Focus on recruitment, especially where POEs are far apart (and make sure to reach out to members who don't have a local steward). Make regular site visits if possible. Actively try to sign on RANDS.
- Keep a comprehensive membership list with accurate contact information. Provide members with regular union updates through social media and/or union boards.

- Make sure your members know who to contact if they have issues or questions. Make contact sheets available and keep them updated.
- Work with the local PSAC representative to craft a development plan if you are having trouble building your Branch.

5. Be a leader

- The more you know, the more confident you'll feel and the better equipped you will be to represent your members. Everything is a learning opportunity.
- Manage the expectations of your members. You can't always get people what they want, and there's no point in pretending you can.
- Try to build good relationships with management. You don't have to always agree, but you do have to work together to effectively represent your members.
- Ensure your union/management meetings are regular and effective. Talk to the member of the CIU National Executive responsible for your region if they're not.
- Don't try to do it all yourself. Establish portfolios for your Executive and ensure responsibilities are clearly identified. Advise of available PSAC training for each representative (e.g., Young Worker, Human Rights, Health & Safety etc.)
- Make succession planning a constant priority to ensure an easy transition to the next Branch President

6. Avoid potential pitfalls

- Respect your member's right to privacy. Use personal information only for the reason it was provided and maintain strict levels of confidentiality. Save documents securely with need-to-know access. Push for a private and secure union office.
- Respect stringent rules when it comes to finances. Have an effective audit process by members who are not affiliated with the Branch leadership.
- Keep good records. Maintain an efficient grievance filing system that will outlive your time in office.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Delegate, learn to say "no", and protect your personal time. You can't help your members if you're stressed, burnt-out and overworked. You are never alone, so understand and use your support systems.