

ADVICE FOR NEW OFFICERS AND STEWARDS

- Always act professionally; resist the temptation to lower your standard of conduct to match that of some of your counterparts in management.
- Be honest in all of your dealings. (But do not **volunteer** harmful information.) Credibility is an invaluable asset.
- Do not place your trust blindly. Trustworthiness must be earned through consistent follow-through on commitments.
- Take advantage of the knowledgeable, experienced people in the Union. They are very familiar with many of the situations you will encounter, and can save you the pains and troubles that often result from the “reinvention of the wheel.”
- Surround yourself with all types of people, including those who disagree with your views. The consideration of different points of view is an important part of the decision-making process.
- Confide only in those you feel you can trust. Remember that anything you say can come back to haunt you.
- Do not make decisions in anger.
- Be suspicious of management; thoroughly analyze their possible motivation.
- Most new Union leaders undergo a “honeymoon” period where management tries to convince them that their Union predecessors were unreasonable. Use this to your advantage, and secure as many benefits as possible.
- Frequently remind employees that their statements and memos are frequently used against them, and to constantly be on their guard in their dealings with management.
- Keep a copy of all correspondence that you generate and receive. Whenever you hand-deliver anything, have a copy stamped or signed for your files, proving delivery.
- Copy all policy memoranda that the Agency issues, and keep them in your filing system. These often prove very useful.
- Never meet with management by yourself. “Two heads are better than one, even if one is a cabbage head.” The recollections of two or more witnesses is far more persuasive than that of an individual.
- Never underestimate internal Union politics. Beware of persons who volunteer

“out of the blue.”

- Regardless of your personal feelings, remember that you represent the interests of the entire bargaining unit.
- Pay attention to everyone who speaks up at a Union meeting. Most people are there only to listen. Those who speak up may be willing to get involved.
- Delegate. Ask for help. The natural tendency is to let someone else handle the work. Don't be shy about admitting that there is too much work for one person. There are any number of things that people can do to help, not all of which involve confrontation with management. Take advantage of the skills and talents of the membership.
- Recognize those who assist. All of us are volunteers. Praise and encouragement are often the only motivational tools we can offer. Dispense them liberally.
- Keep meticulous records of all of your dealings with management and of internal Union business.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Do not be intimidated by management's fear tactics.
- If you are not sure about whether management's actions violate the contract or law, ASK someone who knows.
- Beware of divide and conquer tactics. We are a Union, and must stay united.
- Ensure that the Local President receives **all** notices concerning changes in conditions of employment.
- The Local President should also coordinate all of the bargaining in the Sector.
- Record and keep contemporaneous notes of all conversations or encounters with management. Include names, dates, times, places, and verbatim quotations, if possible. These notes will add immensely to your credibility if a matter is presented to a third party.
- Don't be bashful about requesting sufficient official time to perform representational functions. If the Agency refuses to grant the requests, coordinate the filing of a grievance with your Local.

Excerpted from Chapter 12 of the 2001 National Border Patrol Council Stewards and Officers Training Manual

