

Singing a New Song in Bad Economic Times

Morale is an intangible term used to describe the capacity of people to maintain belief in an institution or a goal, or even in oneself and others.

Morale for workers is at an all time low. Workplace cuts, lost overtime, furloughs, layoffs, reduction in benefits, and mistreatment by management play a large role in diminishing employee morale.

How do we maintain belief in our workplaces, each other, and in ourselves when it seems like workers are under attack. When all systems are failing, we need to use the strength of our union community to design, transform, re-engineer and ultimately rebuild our workplaces so that we may innovate in the face of stagnation and breakdown.

Using our Skills Collectively

We have to find what motivates us, what ties us together as a community, and what our common goals are as union members. At Local 17, it is a union community of professionals—administrative specialists, information technology gurus, engineers, analysts, inspectors, meter readers, examiners, coordinators, cashiers, specialists, economists, planners, agents, assistants, marketers, and many more. We have all the tools and resources we need to define the type of workplaces we want. As individuals, we have our own set of skills, and when we put all those skills together and work together, we are stronger as a union.



Believe

We must re-establish our belief in our public systems, as an answer to the needs in the community, and our belief in our individual ability to work together to achieve better workplaces and communities.

In these difficult economic times, it is challenging to maintain the positive outlook necessary to cultivate community and workplace morale. Especially, when the very lives that we dreamed about and worked hard for are seemingly slipping away. In the face of this great sadness and

loss, we must not mourn, but instead we need to recharge and motivate around a vision.

Vision

We have to get bold and creative. In this time of change, everything is on the table. We must create a vision for our workplaces and work as a union community to bring this vision forward.

We must use this opportunity to work with one another and create community goals. We must rebuild with direction. We must lead.



Camaraderie

We must work as a team. Building a strong union community where we trust each other, advocate for our common goals, have the strength to stand for those goals, united against the odds, advocate for unions as a part of the solution, and develop the leadership we need to move through our current barriers together.

Value

We have to know our value and purpose. As a group dedicated to public service, we know that our value and motivation to perform does not come solely from monetary gain, but from our dedication to serving the public good. Knowing that our wages, benefits and terms and conditions of employment are fair secure, allows us to focus on our purpose.

Finally, we have to identify allies who share our vision and work with them. We must work to build trust and be open to new concepts and ways of doing things. Allies might also come in the form of management, supervisors, elected leaders, community leaders or other activists. With many allies working together, we can design the type of workplaces and communities that will be able to not only adapt to changes, but also define them.

— By *Guadalupe Perez*, Local 17 Union Representative

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