

BUILDING UNION POWER

**Handbook on strategic
corporate research and
campaigning**

Developed for
textile and garment
workers



INTRODUCTION

Unions all over the world struggle to defend workers' rights amid unprecedented employer opposition to unionism and complicated global supply chains. When circumstances change, unions need new tactics and strategies for organizing and bargaining with employers.

The textile and garment sector is highly globalized with millions of employees worldwide. It operates mainly through a buyer-driven supply chain where the sourcing brands and buying agencies hold power over their suppliers, who are the direct employers of the workers, making it difficult to track the complex supply chains. Corporate research is one possible approach, which will also help in developing comprehensive strategic campaigns for both organizing and collective bargaining.

This handbook aims to provide IndustriALL affiliates with a clear understanding of strategic corporate research and how it can be applied on apparel manufacturers, brands, retailers and buying houses. It will also provide useful insights on developing strategic campaigns on union organizing and on how to remedy unfair labour practices in the global supply chain.

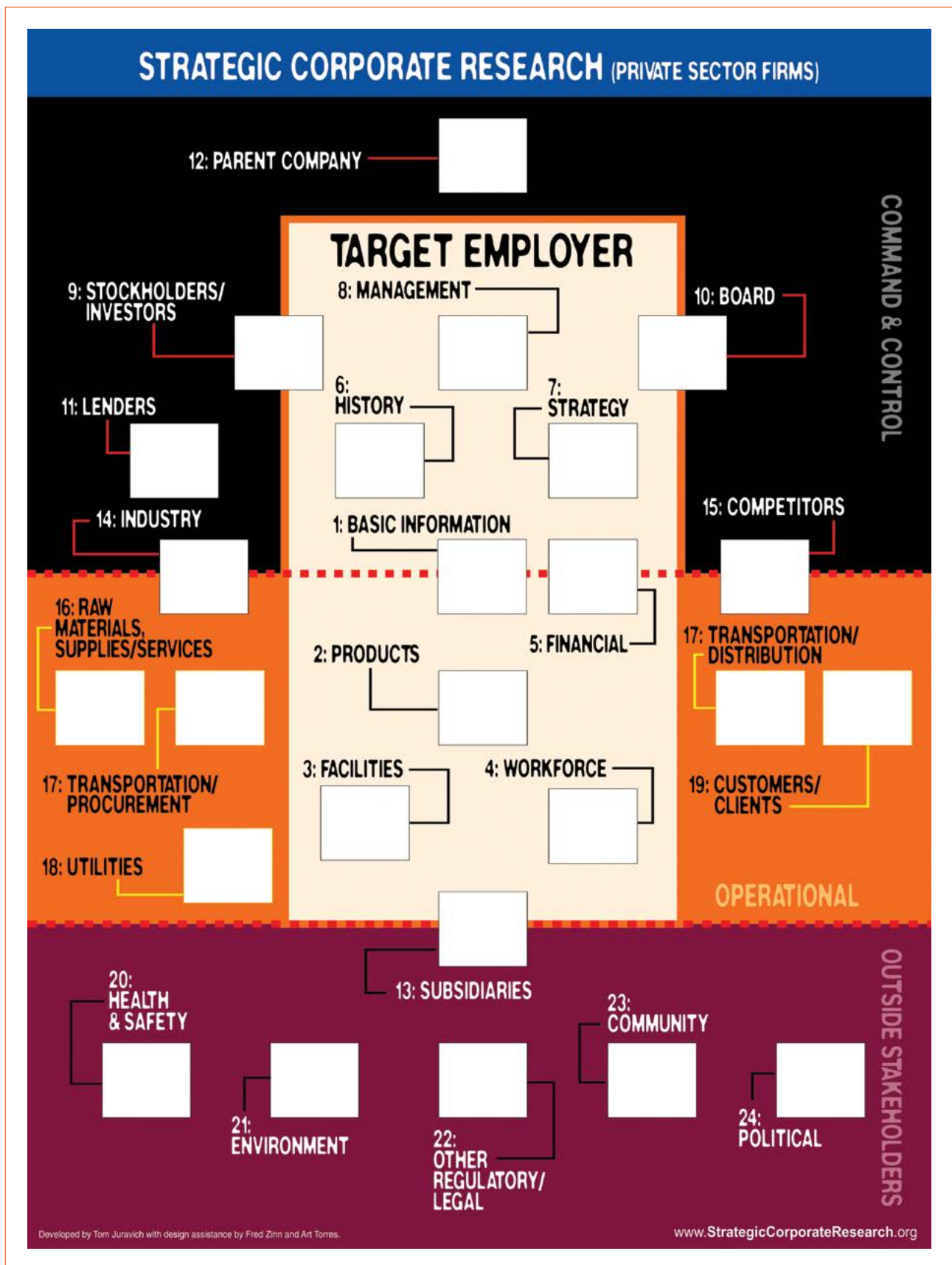
A model for strategic corporate research

Strategic corporate research is a tool to design strategic campaigns to bring companies/ employers to the negotiation table, using knowledge to build workers' power.

Strategic corporate research is more than information gathering on employers, it is research directed both at understanding how power flows in companies and at identifying vulnerabilities and potential points of leverage. It helps to understand the risks and opportunities involved in engaging a targeted company. Strategic corporate research is not simply about digging up dirt on employers; it is the first step in developing the kinds of multifaceted strategic campaigns that are necessary to win today.

Figure 1 provides a basic model for strategic corporate research developed by Tom Juravich¹. It distinguishes what is inside and outside the target employer. It also distinguishes among three different levels of operation in the firm: command and control, operational and outside stakeholders. Rather than just providing a blank slate, the chart details an exhaustive list of basic areas for strategic corporate research. Figure 1 contains 24 boxes representing 24 areas that should be explored regardless of the particulars of the target company. For any specific firm, information for all 24 may not be available or relevant, but the listing provides an important baseline and a series of checks and balances to ensure a comprehensive corporate profile.

¹ Juravich; Tom (2007): BEATING GLOBAL CAPITAL: A Framework and Method for Union Strategic Corporate Research and Campaigns. Available Online: <https://strategiccorporateresearch.org/resources/>



Source: "Strategic Corporate Research" <https://strategiccorporateresearch.org/resources/>

Basic information

BOX 1

This includes the origin of the company, what it does, in which country it is registered and where it is headquartered. Other primary sources of information needed are contact details and whether the firm is privately or publicly owned, or a non-profit.

Products and services

BOX 2

It is important to know what products or services the company makes or provides. While we may know a firm because of a certain high-profile product, this may end up being a small, or an unprofitable, part of the business. It is important to gather as much information as possible about various business segments, and the income and profit generated by each segment.

Facilities/factories

BOX 3

It is essential to develop a comprehensive list of company facilities. Are they owned? Leased? How old are they? Facilities built with industrial development bonds or other public monies provide opportunities to broaden a dispute and bring it into the public sphere.

Equally important is to know if the facility is organized. If organized, what is the number of registered unions/work councils/participatory committees? Are they genuinely workers' representatives? How many workers are unionized, is there a Collective Bargaining Agreement, are there agreed grievance mechanisms etc?

Workforce

BOX 4

The next step is to gather information on the workforce. This includes how many workers are unionized, their demographics and whether they work full or part-time. Where is the workforce located, what opportunities does that provide and what kinds of linkages can be made? It is also important to know if there are any documented workers' rights violations according to national and international labour standards.

Financial information

BOX 5

We need to gather basic financial information. A working knowledge of income statement and balance sheet, along with some key figures on generated revenues and profit/loss statements of at least five to ten years will provide key insights for necessary campaigns.

Company history and business strategy

BOXES 6 | 7

It is important to understand both the company history and its strategy. In developing a strategic campaign, it is crucial to know where a company is heading from the time of its establishment, as well as its promises to shareholders and investors. Sometimes the business strategy is clearly articulated in company documents and websites, while in other cases it must be gleaned from press releases, quarterly conference calls, or other materials. If publicly listed, annual reports are an important source of information.

Corporate management, ownership structure and board of directors

BOXES 8 | 9 | 10

A comprehensive understanding of management is needed. Do they serve on other boards? Are they involved in philanthropic activities? Do they have associations with governmental bodies? Knowing as much as possible about the CEO is important, yet there may be other top managers who may be both powerful and vulnerable. Finishing up the information about the target employer is information on stockholders/investors and the board of directors. Note that they straddle the line, since to some extent they are in the firm, yet they are also outsiders. For publicly held firms in the United States and Canada, stockholder information is readily available, and it is important to identify the largest shareholders. While major stockholders are often mutual funds and financial institutions, the unexpected does happen.

Lenders, parent company and subsidiaries

BOXES 11 | 12 | 13

Lenders may have a very strong influence on the direction of the company. Particularly in the case of leveraged buyouts, or where the company is highly indebted, lenders may play a stronger role in the firm than upper management does. It is important to determine whether there is a larger parent company or, in some cases, a series of parent companies and the role the immediate and/or ultimate parent company plays in operations, decision making, and control. In some instances, the parent plays little or no role; in others the parent may have placed a majority of the board. It is important to identify any subsidiaries and their relationships to the target company. For publicly held companies, finding the parent company or subsidiaries is fairly straightforward. For private companies, this can be a challenging task where connections may be well hidden.

Industry and major competitors

BOXES 14 | 15

Gaining a larger understanding of the industry and the major competitors is crucial. Industry publications can be helpful. Identifying major competitors is important. While time and resources may not allow for a complete corporate profile on competitors, it is important to gather as much comparative information as possible.

Suppliers, transportation/procurement and utilities

BOXES 16 | 17 | 18

The operational level of a firm can provide numerous opportunities for leverage. It is important to identify suppliers of goods or services. Are there more than one? Is there more than one source for the same supplies? Following the supply chain has been instrumental for the global garment industry. How those goods or services are transported and the utilities used may also provide important sources of leverage.

Customers (brands and buyers)

BOX 19

On the output side, identifying customers is vital. Are there only a few customers or is the product or service available to the general public? While general consumer boycotts are difficult to build and sustain, in many situations firms supply a limited number of industrial consumers, making end-user campaigns very feasible. This kind of information is the most difficult to find online. However, rank-and-file workers often know for which brands or buyers they make the products.

Occupational health and safety

BOX 20

Researching health and safety is crucial in building a strategic campaign. Workplace safety is of great concern for the global garment industry, as many garment factories lack workplace safety and major accidents happen. ILO has now adopted a [Code of Practice](#) on safety and health in textiles, clothing, footwear and leather.



Environmental impacts

BOX 21

Environmental issues can be incredibly powerful in developing a critique of the company and in building community campaigns and is an important area of concern in the garment industry.

Other regulatory or legal

BOX 22

Depending on the industry and its location, there can be other regulatory or legal agencies that have jurisdiction over the target firm. For example, the wage board or labour courts, where record of violations can be found.

Community issues

BOX 23

Researching community issues is a way to discover what kinds of leverage can be developed at the stakeholder level. Community issues include not only the official community relations of the company, but also how community members view the firm and its operations. Not to be ignored here are community connections the union and rank-and-file members have made locally, nationally, and internationally.

Political

BOX 24

We need to examine the political connections of the firm. Does the firm, its management or its board donate regularly to the political process? To which political party or leader? Do they play at the local, regional, state or federal level? Particularly when connected to other issues, this may be an important way of leveraging firms. Unions around the globe often have very different relationships to the political process, and international bodies can also play significant roles in campaigns.

Where to start?

1. Company website
2. Documents from inside the factory
3. Company's customers, business partners
4. Labels, annual reports, code of conducts, letters, letterheads, salary rolls
5. Contact with workers
6. IndustriALL's website, newsletter, networks
7. Google
8. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc
9. Databases for example Panjiva, Hoover's Database, Thomas Net Registry, Import Key etc.
10. Government sources, like ministry of manpower, labour, statistics office

Who can help?

1. Local partners - workers (they know their company), trade unions
2. National trade union federations
3. International partners/NGOs, other global union federations, ILO, OECD, ITUC
4. Supply chain – unionized suppliers to customers
5. Politicians – national labour law experts etc

Research guides



IndustriALL



Researching brand labels

A label is a piece of paper, plastic film, cloth, metal, or other material affixed to a product, with information or symbols about the item. The label is used to provide information on a product's origin, manufacturer (e.g., brand name), use, shelf-life and disposal, methods of production etc.

LABEL EXAMPLES



Open Apparel Registry (OAR)

The [Open Apparel Registry](#) (OAR) is an open-source tool mapping garment facilities worldwide and assigning a unique ID number to each. The goal of the OAR is to make supply chain data accessible for everyone. It transforms messy, inconsistent data on apparel facilities into structured datasets, made freely available to all stakeholders under an open data license. Anyone with an interest in apparel supply chains can search, contribute to and download data from the OAR for free.



Information can include brands and buyers for whom the factory supplies and multi-stakeholder initiatives with whom the factory is listed. For case studies and step-by-step instructions on how civil society organizations make use of the OAR, read this guide.

Visit the OAR Translated Resources for non-English resources.

How does the Open Apparel Registry work?
For users: any person searching the Open Apparel Registry

- SEARCH A FACILITY**
Search by facility name or OAR ID
- FILTER BY DATA CONTRIBUTOR**
Identify all facilities listed by a data contributor, or multiple contributors – including overlap
- FILTER BY COUNTRY OR SEVERAL COUNTRIES**
Search a country or multiple countries in combination
- EXPLORE FACILITY CONNECTIONS & ADDITIONAL DATA POINTS**
Search by additional filter criteria or click through a facility profile to discover the variety of organizations connected to a facility

ILO Better Work transparency portal

The Better Work transparency portal discloses the names of the apparel factories registered with Better Work country programmes and their compliance with key national and international labour standards. Currently information is available from factories in Haiti, Indonesia, Jordan, Nicaragua and Vietnam. Factory information for Bangladesh and Egypt will be added.

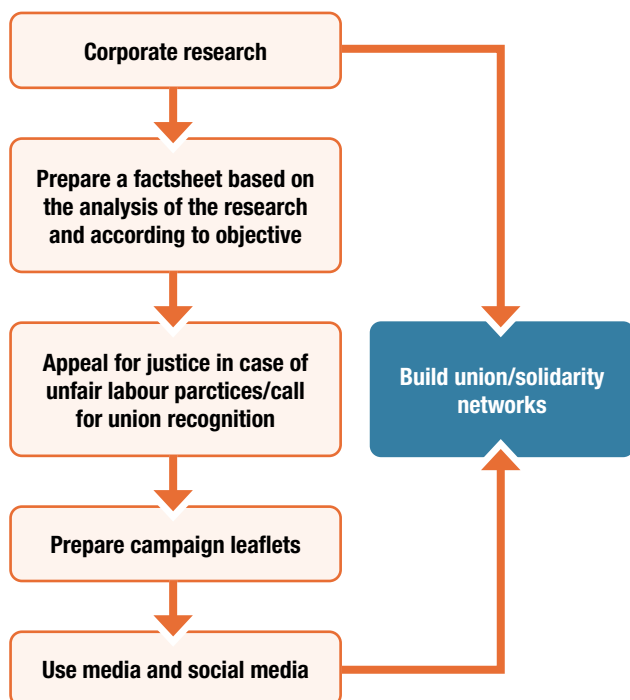


Developing strategic campaigns

Six basic principles to bear in mind:

1. Everything starts with the workers
2. Develop a global picture of your opponent
3. PITCH the campaign as a struggle for social justice (which it is as workers rights are all about social justice) and include the broader community
4. Impact the company's public image and create real financial and electoral costs
5. Start small and increase with intensity
6. Never stop! Keep the pressure constant and changing

Steps of a strategic campaign



Appeal

An appeal is a specific type of letter, addressed to a campaign target and signed by strategically chosen individuals who will have the most impact on the target.

APPEAL FOR JUSTICE

Address

- Name, title, company and abbreviated address of the target

Bodytext (main campaign message with demand)

- 150-200 words

Signature area

- Only leaders of strategically important groups sign
- Make sure names and organisations are spelled correctly

Instructions for returning the signed form

- Contact details for the union

Factsheet

A factsheet is a brief description of the issue that needs to be addressed through:

FIRST HALF

- Basic information about the company (name, address, telephone number and email)
- Type of company or entity
- Employer services, products and business strategy
- Relevant general statistics and issue-oriented statistics, such as profits, rank within the industry, regulatory violations, list of key customers

SECOND HALF

- What the dispute is about (anti-labour practices/anti-union harassment/organizing obstacles)
- Description of the workforce (gender, ethnicity, number of years with the employer, unfair labour practices, worker injury statistics, if relevant)
- History of the relationship between workers and management
- Union/proposed union name, address, principal officer, phone number, email

Campaign leaflets

Campaign leaflets challenge the image, product or service of the target and help focus public outrage in a meaningful way. They put pressure on a specific target and are different from educational or informational leaflets.

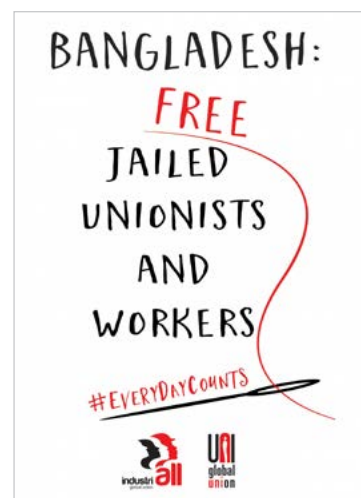
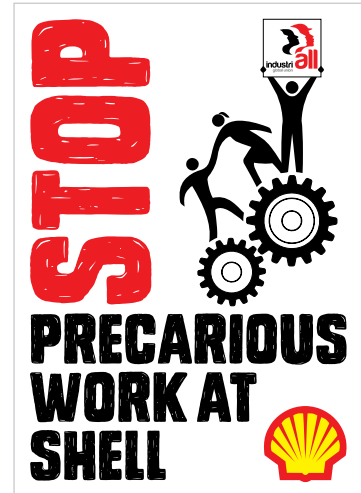
CREATING CAMPAIGN LEAFLET/ POSTER

Select a direct or indirect target and a good location

Follow the format

- Attention-grabbing headline
- Graphic
- Short description of the problem and link to the direct target (150 words)
- Name of union or coalition
- A legal disclaimer, if needed

CAMPAIGNS



Media

Both traditional media - radio, TV, newspapers, magazines - and social media provide important outlets for campaigns.

FORMAT FOR A MEDIA RELEASE

- Letterhead
- Date
- Headline
- Opening sentences should include who, what, where, when and why

BODY TEXT

- Be concise
- Include key facts
- Avoid jargon or technical words
- Use short, clear sentences
- Include quotes from workers and leaders
- Make sure everything is accurate and legal
- Contact details: name, phone, email address

CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Identify the top one or two social media sites most of your members and allies use.

- Attention-grabbing headline
- Graphic
- Short description of the problem and link to the direct target
- What is the demand?
- Name of union or coalition

Social media sites require interaction. You want participants to respond and share the post. Engage in online conversation and respond to comments.

SOCIAL MEDIA



Building union/solidarity networks

1. After the strategic research, a union/solidarity network across the targeted company's supply chain must be built. Use all assistance possible from IndustriALL head office in Geneva, IndustriALL's regional offices, local federations etc.
2. Building networks is key to a campaign strategy
3. Issues and concerns generated by the networks can then be used for outward facing campaigning



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