



Amazon workers begin to gather in front of the company's headquarters during September's climate strike. Photograph: Elaine Thompson/AP

www.collectiveaction.tech

Collective Action in Tech

Organizing in the tech industry

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Agenda

1. The rise of tech organizing in the late 2010s
2. Why are tech workers organizing?
3. Tactics for organizing tech workers

Collective action in tech is a project to advance the tech workers movement

Archive

Collective Action in Tech

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Unionizing is a tried and true way for workers to build and maintain power in the workplace. Each union is a reflection of the needs and circumstances of the workers who build it. This is a collection of all publicly documented tech unions in the US— [36](#) and growing. We hope this collection clarifies approaches that might work well for your union drive and inspires even more creativity across the tech labor movement.

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Collective Action in Tech

This project attempts to document all collective action from workers in the tech industry. [Contribute](#) to our archive.

Currently, there are [506](#) collective actions documented.

Q Search..

Friday, April 29, 2022

About 100 Amazon warehouse workers at Shakopee, Minnesota staged a walkout. They protested the low wages and lack of time off for Eid. Their demands include to bring back a \$3/hour pay raise and unlimited volunteer time off for religious events. Members of The Awood Center joined them in solidarity.

[amazon](#) [protest](#) [strike](#) [pay and benefits](#) [working conditions](#) [shakopee-minnesota-usa](#) [inhouse workers](#) [blue collar workers](#)

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

Separate from the unionizing employees in New York, retail workers at an Atlanta Apple Store have filed with the NLRB for a union election, with wages being the main reason for unionization. The organizers say that they don't make a living wage. Over 70% of the 100 eligible workers have signed union authorization cards, and they would be represented by the CWA.

[cwa](#) [apple](#) [union drive](#) [pay and benefits](#) [working conditions](#) [atlanta-georgia-usa](#) [inhouse workers](#)

divided legal recognition remain unions in the sense of the
ity in the workplace— and deserve to be recognized as part

[tract](#) [defunct](#) [voluntary recognition](#) [NLRB election](#) [CWA](#) [OPEIU](#)

Workers Union

: [Unknown](#)

Legally recognized

Amazon Labor Union

National: [Unknown](#), Size: [Unknown](#)



<https://data.collectiveaction.tech/>

What is a collective action?

(1) "Collective"

- Must involve a minimum of two employees
- The cause and/or issue should be relevant to a broader public

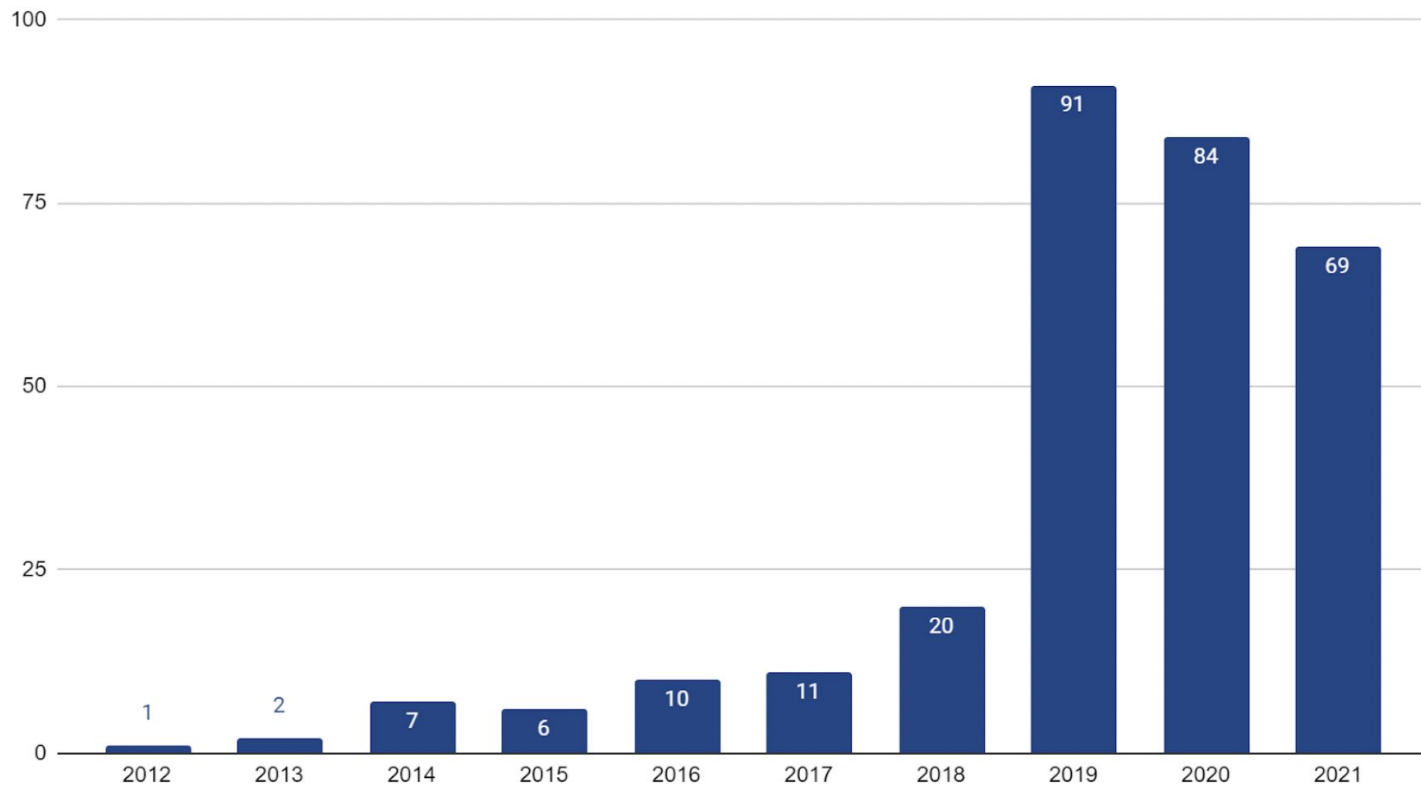
(2) "Evidence of action"

- Must involve an attempt to present the cause and/or issue outside of the immediate group and their managers
- Actions may be either internal (available or visible only to other employees) or external (available or visible to the broader public). Actions should not be initiated by company management.

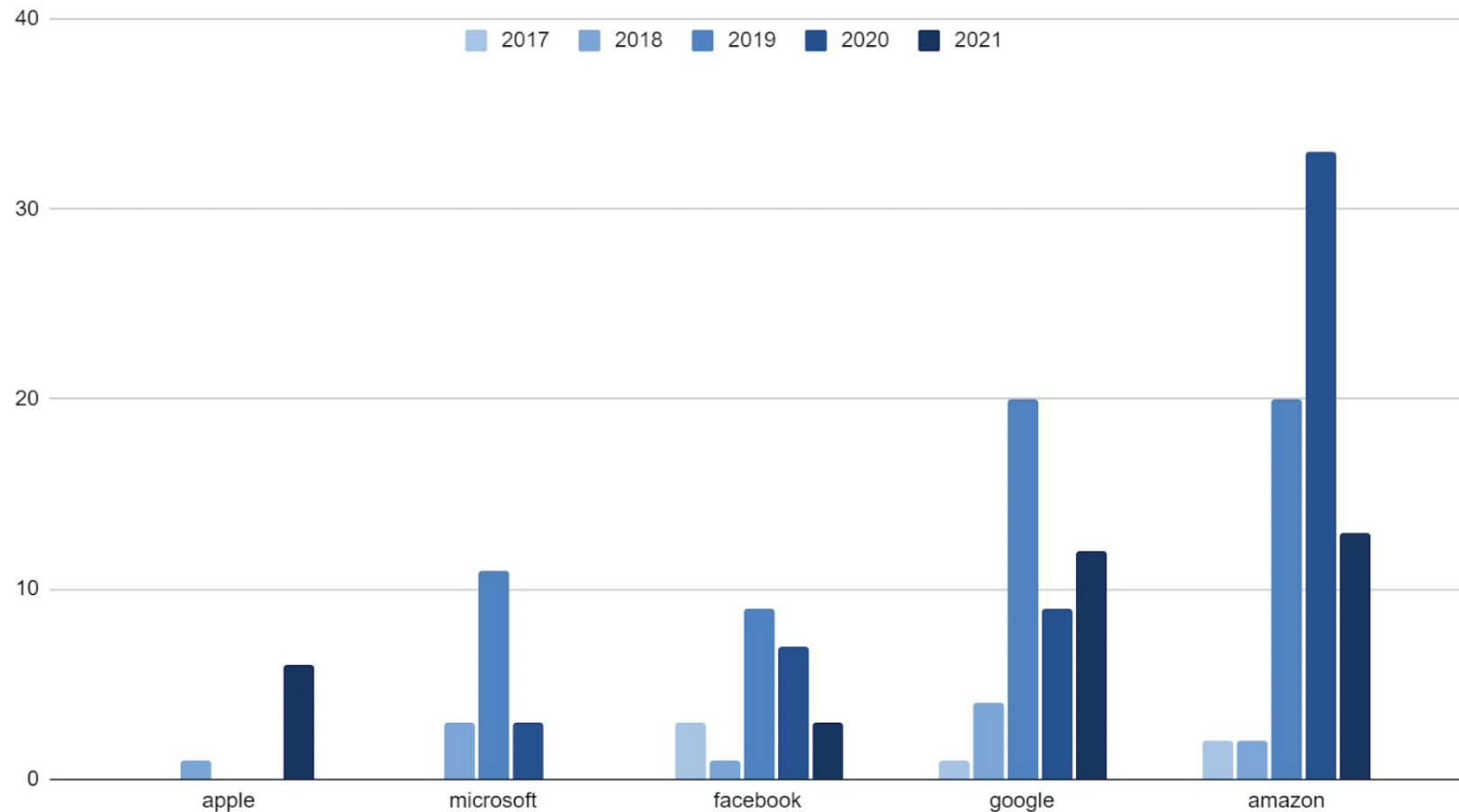
(3) "Tech workers".

- Defined as current or recently employed (within the last year) workers in the tech industry
- Tech industry includes but is not limited to information technology, Internet, hardware, software.
- Does not include: digital media or the video game industry. Does include online retailers.
- Academics whose research concerns technology and students or interns who are preparing to enter the tech industry can be considered tech workers.

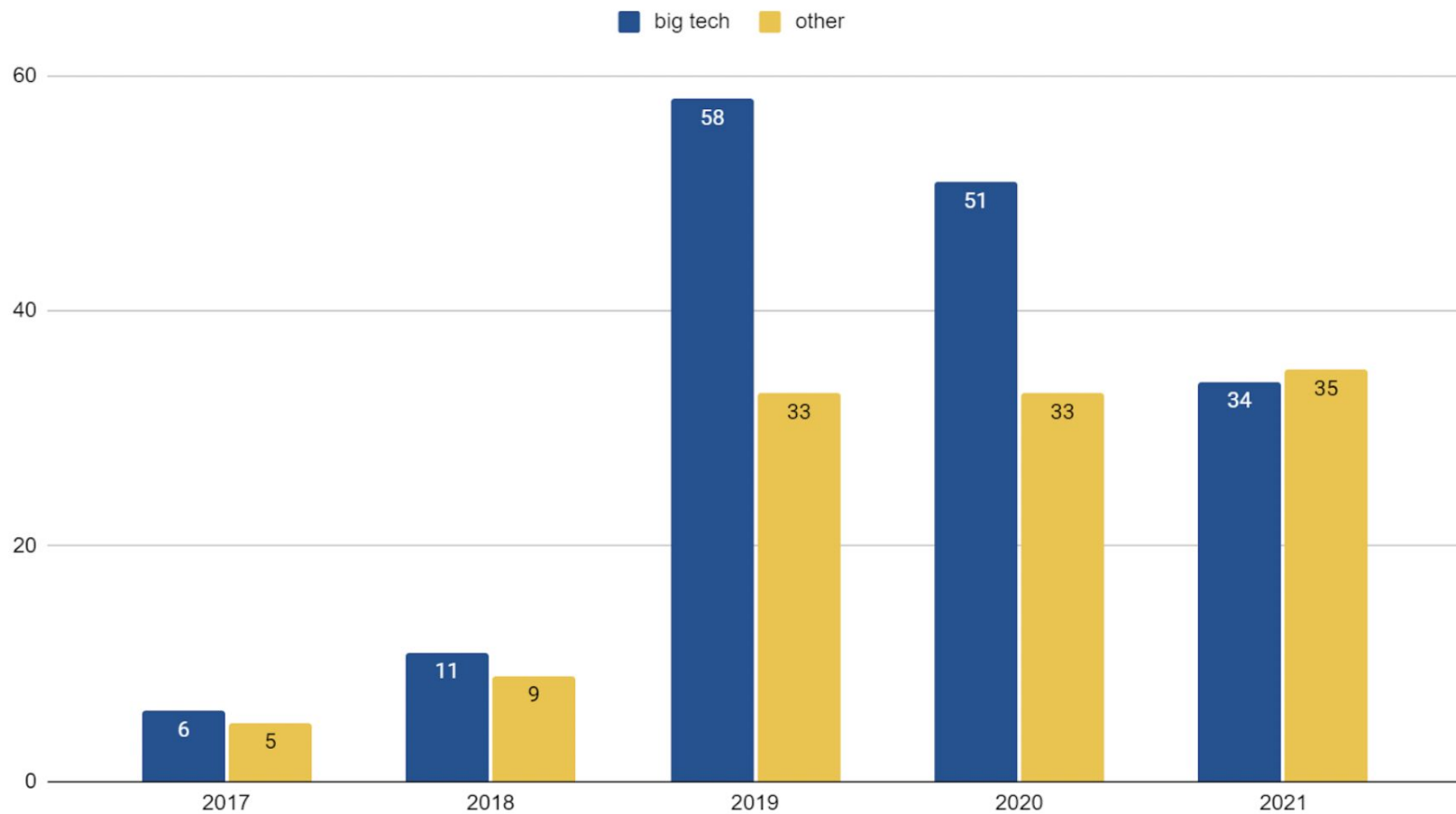
Total collective action in tech in the U.S.



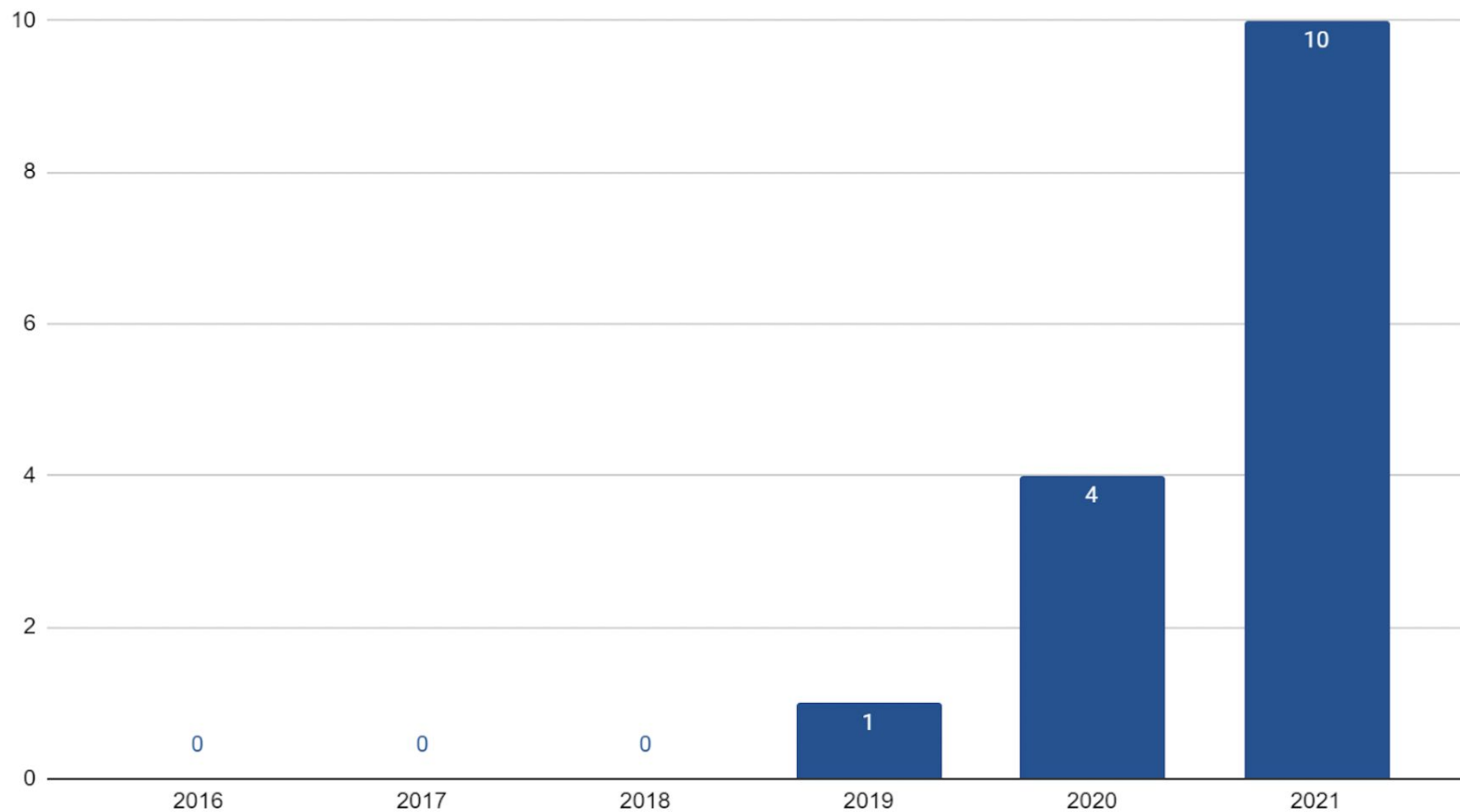
Actions within Big Tech



Big tech VS Other



Unionization by office workers



Key issues in the tech industry

Perceptions

Tech workers:

- Make six-figure salaries,
- Have flexible work schedules,
- Are often provided free dining,
- Entered the industry to *change the world*

What could they be organizing for?

Some fundamental causes

Tech workers are workers!

- Limited agency in their work (what they build, who they build for)
- Disillusioned with what their company claims to represent

2016-2020 — Ethics-based demands

Tech workers engaged in collective action to:

- **Oppose unethical contracts** (eg. Google open letter against Project Maven, Microsoft protest against collaboration with ICE)
- **Lift up other communities/workers** (eg. contract workers, workers in another country, less privileged workers in the same company)
- **Demand greater accountability of company products** (eg. racist algorithms)

Note: the harm that workers are protesting is *external* to their working conditions

2021-present — Workplace demands

Tech workers engaged in collective action to:

- **Protest layoffs** (eg. Google NYC protest against latest wave of layoffs)
- **Unreasonable management** (eg. NYTimes Tech workers 1-day strike against management union-busting behavior)
- **Improve working conditions** (eg. NPR Tech workers, Mapbox, Kickstarter union campaigns)

Note: the harm that workers are protesting is *internal* to their working conditions

Changes in the kind of collective action

~2016-2020, Ethics-based demands	~2021-present, Workplace demands
Types of collective action <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open letters• Protest strategy is reliant on media• Few workers involved• Walkouts and high visibility action• “Flash in the pan” organizing	Types of collective action <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unionization• Base-building
Employer response <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media-centric• Pacify workers• Defensive	Employer response <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anti-union playbook• Firing employees• Greater management control• Offensive

Resources For Tech Worker Organizers

- Tech workers are workers
- Most organizing tactics common the US labor movement work for them too!
- Material, positional differences do create some particular hurdles
 - Remote Work
 - Several decades of abundance (for some)
 - Wall-to-wall organizing
 - Product of one worker's labor is a tool to surveil another

Resources- Layoff Guide




What To Expect

- Don't rely on fair or reasonable treatment from the company. Hope for the best but plan for the worst.
- You will likely lose access to all company systems before being notified that you are terminated.
- Assume everything you do on work accounts and work devices is traceable and monitored.
- Your manager is obligated and incentivized to follow instructions from leadership. Do not assume your manager will be willing or able to help you, even if they want to.

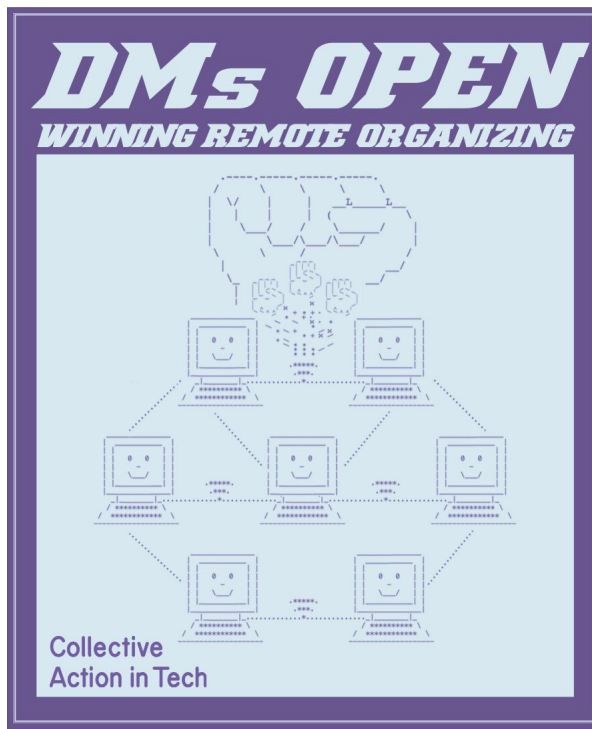
Know Your Rights

- Some states require employers with over 100 employees to give 60-90 days advance notice. Check if your state has adopted the WARN Act (aka min-WARN act).
- Some states have single party consent laws that allow you to legally record audio. You are acting as the single consenting party. If you can, record your meetings so you have evidence if you need it in the event of a wrongful termination. If you're not in a single party consent state, get creative. Have a friend in one of these states hop on the phone to help you record and document any layoff conversations.

Notes on Surveillance

- At no point should you plug any type of  **External storage** (SD card, HD, thumb drive) into your work device. This is traceable and monitored.
- Sending  **Google Docs** from Gmail to personal accounts *probably* violates your agreement with the company, even if those documents do not contain sensitive information. Downloads and sharing to other accounts or creating links is monitored and can be used to justify "for cause" termination.
- Twitter is analyzing  **Google Drive** data and looking for anomalies. Downloading or sharing in bulk will trigger an investigation.
- One of the safest ways to capture documentation is to simply snap a pic from your personal phone.

Resources- Remote Organizing



against organizers.

"Don't have union Slack on your work computer, don't open your outreach spreadsheet on your work-computer."

—Kathy (New York Times Tech Guild)

"After a while, we got confirmation from our GSuite admin in the office that our Google Hangouts are end-to-end encrypted. We decided that was safe enough. Once we got that confirmation, we just started having those organizing calls on the work Google Hangout. And then on the video call, we would ask for their personal cell phone number and email address where we'd send our FAQ document and Union Slack invite links. Sometimes, before we got off the call, we would drop those links in the chat box in the Google Hangout itself."

—Angela (New York Times Tech Guild)



REACHING OUT TO YOUR COWORKERS

"As we went remote, everyone's experience became drastically atomized."

—Ben (Code for America: CFA Workers United)

It is important to keep your efforts out of sight of management until you have the strength in numbers to all publicly stand together. Real security comes from a super majority of union supporters. Keeping your efforts a secret from your bosses for as long as possible gives you more time to talk to your coworkers on your own terms, without anti-union propaganda flooding the workplace

Once workers are united, anything is possible. For instance, a few unions are already negotiating groundbreaking anti-surveillance clauses into their first contracts.

"When the contract is concluded, we will have a legally binding agreement that our bosses can't key-log you and then be like, 'hey, you spent an hour doing union stuff during the work day.'"


—Bjorn, Digital Media United (NPR)

Resources- Role-Playing Game




FAccT 2022 (Seoul, South Korea)



Mozilla Festival (Online)
March 21, 2023


moz://aEnglishMy profile


ADDED TO 15 SCHEDULES

 EXTENDED WORKSHOP

Ethics on the Job: A Tech Worker's Role in Upholding Values in Computing Systems

 EN  Humans behind the Machine

 Movement Building, Developer Focused

 Not recorded

AICo has a major dilemma on their hands: they have been approached with a lucrative contract for their newly developed large language model. Join us for a group role-playing game that simulates what happens when a fictional tech company faces a major question of ethics and a potential uprising from workers. Will management be able to save face amidst public scrutiny? Will workers choose to protest, strike, unionize – or all of the above?

SCHEDULE

10:30 AM → 12:00 PM

March 21


America/Los_Angeles


ACTIONS

Register your interest

[Remove from My Schedule](#)

FACILITATORS

 **Kristen Sheets**
Collective Action in Tech

 **Nataliya Nedzhvetskaya**

Plaza

Schedule

My Schedule

Arts & Media

Lightning Talks

Fringe Events

Help Desk

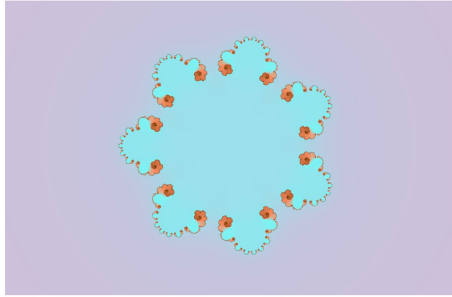
Resources- Editorial

April 5, 2022

A Worker Perspective with Christian Smalls (Amazon Labor Union)

The leader of the first union in Amazon's history gives his thoughts on what makes for a successful campaign.

Wynnie Chan



June 5, 2022

A Worker Perspective with Shay Culpepper (NY Times Tech Guild)

"Everyone should be organizing in tech."

Hyatt Dirbas



August 4, 2022

A Worker Perspective With Willy Solis

"It's really important for workers to gain back power and the only way to do that is to organize." (Gig Workers Collective)

Hyatt Dirbas



Supporting campaigns

- Embedded Organizer Program
- Ad-hoc trainings
- Collaboration with EWOC

The image is a screenshot of the Embedded Organizer Collective website. The background is a light pink color with faint, stylized purple and pink floral or cloud-like patterns. At the top, the title "Embedded Organizer Collective" is written in a large, bold, blue font. Below the title, a line of text in a smaller, black font reads "Mentorship from activists, organizers, and unionists for workers organizing across tech." Below this text is a blue rectangular button with the white text "Get support". At the bottom of the page, there are three white rectangular boxes with thin purple borders, each containing a heading and a paragraph of text. The first box is titled "Guidance." and describes finding guidance from fellow tech workers. The second box is titled "Resources." and describes getting tech-specific resources to strengthen organizing campaigns. The third box is titled "Experience." and describes connecting with fellow tech workers who have led collective action.

Embedded Organizer Collective

Mentorship from activists, organizers, and unionists for workers organizing across tech.

[Get support](#)

Guidance.

Find guidance from fellow tech workers to challenge the power structures exploiting, oppressing, and stifling our shared communities.

Resources.

Get tech-specific resources to strengthen your organizing campaign and draw insight from workers who share your passion for a more democratic, equitable, and cooperative future.

Experience.

Connect with fellow tech workers who've led collective action at their workplaces to get their seasoned perspectives and advice.

Questions?

Visit us at: collectiveaction.tech

Contact us at: hello@collectiveaction.tech

Support us at: patreon.com/collectiveaction