

# Avoid & Advance

## WorkShift Toolkit

Avoid	Advance
Talking about the “job market” or working conditions as if they are the result of natural forces	Connect jobs and work to the wider economic system—designed by people and changeable through collective action.

### Why it Matters

*Individualistic and Naturalistic thinking* blocks structural explanations and support for systemic policy change.

Avoid	Advance
Relying on the word <i>equity</i> alone to build support for policies and programs that are responsive to differences in circumstances and starting points	Start with the value of <i>Fairness</i> to make the case for equity and why everyone should have the opportunities and resources they need, regardless of background or circumstances.

### Why it Matters

*Fairness* is a more successful entry point to structural explanations of why we all need access to good jobs that are responsive to where we start in life. *Equity* is both increasingly difficult to use in the current environment and is unfamiliar to most people.

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Avoid	Advance
Citing data on disparities without explaining <i>why</i> they exist	Pair data on inequities with causal explanations for patterns, such as laws, policies, and practices that channel certain groups (for example, women, people of color, or immigrants) into certain job sectors. Make sure historical explanations include clear, collective solutions.

### Why it Matters

Without explicit links between cause and effect, people fill in the gap with their default assumptions. Clear explanation opens the door to more structural thinking about work.

Avoid	Advance
Inadvertently reinforcing the idea that men and women are just naturally suited to different work by leaving out explanation	Explain how structural sexism steers workers into gendered occupations through laws, hiring practices, and norms.

### Why it Matters

*The Gender Essentialism* mindset reinforces naturalistic thinking about work. Explanation helps navigate around this unhelpful mindset.

Avoid	Advance
Reinforcing the idea that the economy is outside the control of people and inequality and exploitation are inevitable	Use the <i>Pyramid</i> metaphor to explain how the economy is being built on the backs of workers and how we can tear it down and build something new together.

### Why it Matters

The *Pyramid* metaphor helps people see that our economy is not natural or inevitable but actively designed and can be torn down to build an economy that works for everyone.

Avoid	Advance
Omitting race when describing workers as the foundation of the economy in the <i>Pyramid</i> metaphor	Be explicit that workers of every race are the foundation of the economy and share common interests in rebuilding it.

### Why it Matters

Being explicit about race prevents zero-sum thinking about competition among workers. This can preempt *Reverse Racism* thinking.

Avoid	Advance
Just describing how badly workers are being exploited.	Explain how the exploitative system works and talk about how workers can collectively stand up and redesign work to benefit them instead.

### Why it Matters

Focusing only on how badly workers are treated can backfire, creating fatalism. Naming who is profiting and how and what workers can do together to address it creates a sense of agency and solidarity.

Avoid	Advance
Naming individual executives or billionaires as the cause of workers' problems	Name a class or group of actors—large corporations, wealthy shareholders, or the powerful few—and explain the mechanisms by which the system allows them to benefit themselves.

### Why it Matters

Personalizing exploitation to specific individuals implies the solution is replacing *bad* leaders with *good* ones, instead of promoting systemic change.

Avoid	Advance
Framing the problem as <i>workers</i> versus <i>bosses</i> .	Make the case for collective action by talking about the 99 percent—workers of every race, background, and sector—working together against the 1 percent rigging the system.

### Why it Matters

When *bosses* are named as the villains of the economy, people think of specific, replaceable individuals and may identify with small business owners or others who are not necessarily exploiters but may be workers' allies. When the villain is the 1% the problem is located in a class of actors who have designed the system in their favor, building a sense of solidarity for structural change.

Avoid	Advance
Talking about worker power without specifics.	Show how unions and collective action unrig the system.

### Why it Matters

People have a general sense that unions can do something in response to corporate rigging, but they are not sure what. Offering specific mechanisms such as strikes is helpful for motivating support.

Avoid	Advance
Framing artificial intelligence's (AI's) negative impact on workers as inevitable.	Call for a <i>Fair Distribution of Power</i> in which workers have a strong voice when it comes to developing and using AI.

### Why it Matters

Treating the negative effects of AI on workers as inevitable triggers naturalistic and fatalistic thinking. This makes it harder to see workers' role in determining how AI is used and the need for them to demand that role.

Avoid	Advance
Making the ask only about workers deserving fair pay.	Talk about how we all need a <i>Fair Return</i> on our contributions to society, whether paid or unpaid.

### Why it Matters

Moving up from the workplace to the economy and making it about reciprocity shifts thinking in structural and collective directions and is more inclusive of people doing unpaid work who are otherwise left out of the conversation.

Avoid	Advance
Crisis framing about the future of work and the environment	Offer a vision of what a <i>Just Transition</i> looks like when we've <i>Rebalanced</i> the economic system.

### Why it Matters

Fatalism about the future of work and the climate is difficult to combat. Offering a positive vision of what a balanced future could be, coupled with a critique of today's unbalanced economic system, increases support for policies benefiting workers and the environment.