

UNION PREVENTION

I. Why People Seek Union Representation

1. All organizations are vulnerable to union organizing drives, no matter how effective management has been.
2. Unions use carefully planned strategies and tactics to organize employees.
3. Adequate “preventive maintenance” can increase management’s probability of winning the election.

II. Early Warning Signs of Organizing Campaign

1. A significant increase in the number of grievances being filed.
2. Employees forming in groups that include individuals who do not normally associate with each other.
3. A large number of policy inquiries, particularly on pay, benefits and discipline.
4. Employees in work areas they do not normally visit.
5. Avoidance of supervision.
6. Argumentative questions being asked in departmental or sales meetings.
7. Exit interview information indicating that people are attempting to escape an unpleasant environment.
8. News items placed on bulletin boards about union settlements in local companies or industries.
9. Cartoons or graffiti which direct humorous hostility towards the organization, management or supervision.
10. A significant change in the rate of turnover, either upward or downward.

11. A number of people applying for jobs who do not have relevant experience and who appear to be willing to work for lower status and pay than their records qualify them for.
12. An unusual interest on the part of vendors and subcontractors in communicating with employees.
13. Any other factor which appears to be out of the ordinary and seems to be separating management from the work force.
14. Management should regularly audit personnel practices to see that supervisors are following company guidelines and conduct periodic opinion surveys to determine and evaluate employee morale and attitudes.

III. How to Make Union Unnecessary

A. Management Commitment

1. To remain non-union.
2. Management must adopt and practice progressive policies and practices to provide that unions are not necessary for fair treatment.
3. Employees must know that they have nothing to gain through union membership.
4. Management must convince employees that it is fairer, more reliable than a union and is better able to satisfy the employee's personal needs.

B. Meeting People's Needs

1. Management can't meet all needs all of the time.
2. Management must delineate which needs are fundamental, such as job security and recognition for going a good job and be responsive to different people with different value systems.
3. Where unionized companies wish to operate new facilities non-union, 50% of the companies become unionized within three (3) years because they are attempting to run the new plant the same way as it did in the union shop.

C. Voluntary Agreement to Fair Practice

Avoid implementing fair practices only when the union is attempting to organize, employees may view management's attention can only be gotten when union is present.

IV. Job Security and Due Process

1. Job security can be "guaranteed" on the basis of good attendance and performance – and availability of work.
2. Due process simply provides a procedure for dealing with employee grievances.
3. It offers the opportunity for the employee to move as high in the hierarchy as is necessary to get an answer or a resolution of his/her problem.
4. It is not always necessary or appropriate to find on behalf of employees in order to maintain non-union status. Decisions should be based on the merits of each case.
5. The security is in the process, not in the guarantee of never being terminated or disciplined.
6. Due process procedure can take the form of a written document or an open door policy where employees have access to a top manager, sales manager, the plant manager, or the personnel department.
7. Usually employees will first go to the supervisor, then beyond the supervisor to higher authority.
8. Or, supervisor will give the individual an oral warning or discussion of an impending problem and an opportunity to correct it.
9. Next, the issuance of a written warning which records the situation and specifies exactly what is necessary to improve or correct the counterproductive behavior.
10. Then, the employee is placed on probation for a specified time. A written document is prepared stating exactly what must be done to correct the problem. This becomes part of the employee's permanent file.

11. Where major infractions are involved such as fighting, drinking, theft, severe safety violations, and other things which cannot be tolerated, they are dealt with by immediate suspension followed by investigation.
12. If an individual is found guilty of the infraction, he/she is immediately terminated. If no violation is found, the worker is reinstated with back pay for time suspended.

V. Coping with Malcontent

1. Malcontents respond to powerful supervisors.
2. Use a very straightforward, honest but tough, approach on a one-to-one basis.
3. Very responsive to union appeals and often become the inside organizers to exercise their mental and physical muscle against any form of authority.
4. Supervisor's failure to contain malcontent disruption of work force indicates management's indecisiveness and lack of authority.
5. If the malcontent cannot or will not develop more cooperative, less disruptive practices, he/she should be asked to quit or be fired.
6. After unionization, coping with or removing malcontents is a much more difficult and time consuming problem.
7. Prevent malcontent from being spokesperson for employees, could become informal shop steward.
8. Evaluate if the spokesperson is trying to be helpful and alerting management to a problem or if he/she is attempting to stir trouble.
9. If helpful, management can use this opportunity to filter policies and procedures back to the employees.
10. Only allow this person to speak for himself/herself, not on behalf of others.

VI. Communication

1. Incorporate regular contact with the employees through group meetings, employee handbooks, employee newspapers, speeches, suggestion system, letters to the editor of the company newspaper, questions from the floor during group meetings, attitude surveys, small group meetings and the complaint handling system.

2. Organizations who have remained non-union have spent a great deal more time and money on employee communications than companies which become organized.
3. Most non-union organizations require regular departmental meetings where management and the entire department membership can discuss any aspect of the business.
4. The meetings serve as an excellent mechanism for recognizing achievement and service and for communicating the company's position about unions.
5. Direct communication and contact is usually more effective than the spoken word.

VII. Respecting People's Dignity

1. Good interpersonal relationships go a long way toward avoiding unionization.
2. Management that trusts its people has people that trust management.
3. Supervisors who are fair in their dealings with people may find the people are fair to them and with each other.
4. Suspiciousness and hostility have no place in any organization, particularly one that would like to remain non-union.
5. Treating people fairly, decently and as individuals is a way of according them the dignity and respect they merit and need.
6. The management that values machinery and money more than its employees is inviting unionization.
7. People seek union representation under conditions of conflict.
8. Unions organize people by creating conflicts or taking advantage of conflicts that exist.