

**NINE SOLID  
(AND LEGAL)  
WAYS TO  
STAY  
UNION-FREE**

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## “WHY WOULD A UNION TARGET MY EMPLOYEES?”

If you ask workers seeking union representation why they feel it's necessary, you'd get all kinds of reasons. They might explain that they felt like their opinions weren't being listened to. They might have had concerns over fair treatment in the workplace, or they may feel under pressure from colleagues or union representatives. Whatever the reason, the real root of the problem is a lack of communication and a resulting [sense of powerlessness](#), the idea that the decisions that affect them are being made around them, and that they aren't “in on things.”

While it's true that fewer workers are joining unions these days, some still seek out membership, and it only takes a few people to get the attention of union organizers. Once a union gets involved (even before they represent employees), employers must spend time and money dealing with them as a third party. On top of that, indirect communication, misunderstanding and differing objectives can all negatively impact the relationship between employers and their employees. These factors can all lead to a drop in productivity, but the situation can be avoided if companies are proactive and intentionally work to create a UnionProof culture.

If you wanted to unionize a workforce, what should be put into doubt? The answer is trust. Unions will encourage employees to doubt their employer's motives, end goals, and sincerity. Essentially, the employer cannot be trusted to make decisions that are fair and have the employees' interests in mind. The union tries to convince employees that their employer's stated intentions are not genuine. Their ultimate goal is only to make more profits at their expense. The employer doesn't keep promises, doesn't appreciate employee contributions, and doesn't respect employees. It is a decades-old union approach designed to erode the direct connection between an employer and their workforce.

If your employees are being targeted by a union, what can you do? How can you address the situation legally and effectively to keep your workforce union-free? Here are 9 solid tips you can implement right now to keep your company union-free, without crossing a legal or moral line.



# 1 START EDUCATING PRE-HIRES ON YOUR UNION-FREE PHILOSOPHY

Are you hiring right now? Even before you fill new positions, let prospective employees know where you stand when it comes to unions. During the interview or pre-hire orientation, share your company's union-free operating philosophy and the reasons behind it. Your pre-hire orientation video should include:

- A detailed company history, including points of pride
- The “why” behind what you do and how you do it, including your union-free operating philosophy
- Expectations for all employees
- The company's mission, vision and values

# 2 EDUCATE EVERY EMPLOYEE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF YOUR UNION-FREE ENVIRONMENT

One of the most significant challenges in preventing union organizing is countering misinformation. The most effective path begins not when organizing does, but rather with the facts on each employee's own Day One. Make sure your onboarding journey includes the basics on unions and your company's union-free operating philosophy. Remember that there's no need to be heavy-handed right out of the gate; if you're doing this well, you'll have a long relationship with each and every employee.

As you adopt and implement your proactive strategy, you'll want to communicate this same message with existing team members. Consider the consistency of a video message that introduces the concept of maintaining a union-free environment and shares the reasons behind that philosophy. Be sure to discuss the positives of a direct relationship between employees and management, and touch on the challenges a third party can bring to that relationship. This training should be tailored to your company and resonate clearly with your team members.

## 3 TRAIN YOUR SUPERVISORS ON POSITIVE EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

There's a saying that employees don't quit companies, they quit [bosses](#). A poor supervisor can sour the employee experience even at the best companies. That discontent can manifest itself when union organizers start showing up at the front gate. You need to ensure that your supervisors are ready to lead and inspire team members.

Often, supervisors are promoted based on performance – not leadership skills. New supervisors need rigorous management [training](#) that emphasizes soft skills. They need to know how to connect with employees, manage interpersonal issues, and encourage a respectful work culture. Setting a broader goal of being an [employer of choice](#) can be the best defense against unions.

Consider interactive training designed to educate Supervisors on the reasons behind your union-free philosophy and their role in maintaining a direct relationship with employees. When your front-line leaders have the knowledge they need, they feel confident. They have the skills they need to act authentically in the event they're faced with employee relations challenges. You're empowering them to meet the needs of their team members – without the risk of legal missteps and unfair labor practice charges.

## 4 FOSTER A POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Your company's culture plays a significant role in keeping employees union-free. Creating a positive working environment isn't a one-time event but an ongoing effort at every level of the company. From the C-suite's ability to take action, to HR's listening skills, to front-line leaders addressing everyday concerns, to the way co-workers treat one another - every aspect of personal interaction matters.

Communication is key in understanding between a company and its workforce. Regular, planned meetings between employees and management to discuss both potential and present problems are vital. Equally important is the ability to [discuss issues](#)

[that come up unexpectedly](#). This kind of “planned connection” (as opposed to a formal meeting) is an excellent opportunity for workers to raise immediate concerns with those in a position to act on the information. When workers feel like their voices are being heard, it gives them a sense of control, essentially taking the power from the unions and putting it into the hands of employees and their employers.

Make sure every team member is aware of the company’s desire to create a positive working environment. Nothing helps a team pull together like a common goal. Over at SnackNation, they shared their [favorite motivational videos for teams](#), and those are just a few good ones. Creating custom-produced team videos can convey your company’s most important messages in a memorable way!

## 5 CELEBRATE THE WINS AND REWARD EXTRA EFFORT

A powerful way to foster a sense of achievement as a team is to make sure you [celebrate significant wins](#) and reward those who take initiative. Innovation, hard work, teamwork and company growth milestones are all worthy of celebration. Each employee’s contribution to the bigger vision matters and when their efforts are acknowledged (even in [small ways](#)), you’re creating a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves.

Remember that these wins and milestones are something a union organizer can’t tarnish. Hold [team celebrations](#) for achievements or milestones. Be sure to mention any special achievements and give credit to employees who really exceeded expectations. Not every employee is going to excel all the time. But if you never communicate with them about their strengths and weaknesses, they won’t know what success looks like, and a union organizer can quickly convince them they’re working too hard for too little acknowledgement.



## 6 DEVELOP TRANSPARENT AND FAIR DISPUTE RESOLUTION PRACTICES

Crucial in making employees feel that they have the ability to positively impact their working conditions is a clear path to dispute resolution. Implementing a pro-worker [alternative dispute resolution \(ADR\) policy](#) now will go a long way toward creating an environment where a union simply isn't necessary.

Be clear about how your program works, including how and when to use it – and when necessary, don't be afraid to compare your process with the excessive amount of red tape a [union grievance procedure](#) often includes. Make your ADR simple, do your best to make sure your policies don't cause time delays, and once it's in place, make sure employees know it's working. Video testimonials from employees who have resolved issues through your company's ADR process can be a strong reinforcement for the program itself (even without talking about their specific dispute or challenge).

Even if you're only just beginning to create [your ADR policy](#), or you have just begun to make substantial changes to a pre-existing one, let team members know the progress you're making as soon as possible. Communicate simply, in the way most familiar to your employees, so that while the approach or a formalized system may be new, the mode of communication is trusted. If you do regular video updates and distribute them via an email link, don't suddenly start using social media to talk about your dispute resolution process – even if you plan to use that new channel to educate employees on the program going forward.

## 7 MAINTAIN YOUR OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Cut arteries that feed union misinformation by creating and actively maintaining your [open door policy](#). To achieve this, establish clear communication channels. If employees trust that leaders are listening, providing feedback, and addressing employee concerns, then promises made by union organizers seem hollow compared to what team members can achieve by working together.

Companies that implement a true [open-door policy](#) find that it's a highly successful way of empowering employees to raise concerns and grievances. Having a written policy that invites interaction ensures that all workers are treated equally and fairly –



and it makes sure leaders are effective, approachable and in the loop. When a union organizer attempts to stir up a rallying cry of gaining a voice on the job, your employees know they already have a voice and don't need a union.

Consider providing employees the option of voicing concerns or making suggestions anonymously. This option is likely to encourage workers to raise concerns they feel uncomfortable voicing in person, but on which they might turn to a third party for resolution. Even more importantly, managers and employers will be made aware of important issues that no one is vocalizing.

To this end, train your leaders on the [soft skills needed to handle employee concerns](#). It is imperative that every team member feels comfortable talking to any supervisor or manager (even if they don't report to that person) to have their concerns heard and acted upon when appropriate.

## 8 COMMUNICATE COMMON GOALS

As a part of regular meetings, you need to be clear about the [goals and motivations](#) that drive the company – including a union-free operating philosophy. Working toward a common objective allows employees to feel like they are part of something, not just a means to an end for the company.

Fostering understanding of [common goals](#) – like zero defects, improvements in customer service ratings, even productivity goals – means the entire team is more likely to identify with culture of the organization, removing any idea of an “us vs. them” mentality.

Making the company's core values a living and vibrant part of what your team members do every day can also be a strong deterrent against unionization. Shared core values [create a strong sense of belonging](#). Think about how you can fully integrate those values into the goals you set for team members, and as they work together to fulfill those goals, they'll be less susceptible to promises from someone outside the company.



## 9 EXPOSE EMPLOYEES TO THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH JOINING UNIONS

Sometimes [unionization drives occur](#), despite your best efforts at taking care of employees. Unions target successful companies, so staying off union activity requires proactive research and intelligence. Employees are often hesitant when it comes to discussing issues related to unionization, afraid they'll be looked upon differently by their supervisor if they bring up the subject. As a business leader, you must be willing to keep the lines of communication open so that employees understand the truth of what happens during union organizing drives.

It's vital to educate employees on what it truly means to be unionized. Begin with your front-line supervisors and be sure to [open their eyes to the impact a union would have](#) on their ability to do their job and manage their team directly. Then, make sure employees know the financial impact and risks that can come with unionization – and that they understand the path that leads to those challenges. Include [educating all employees about protecting their signature and not signing a union authorization card](#). Employees need to be educated about what a union authorization card is, what it does, what it means and that they shouldn't sign one without full knowledge of why a union organizer would want their signature so badly.

Fortunately, it's easier to collect information than ever before. During an organizing campaign, at a minimum you can expect the union to set up a dedicated website or page, a Facebook page (or even a private group), Instagram account, and a Twitter feed. Rather than fearing these things, use the knowledge you gain to educate employees on the strategy or approach the union may use to target them. Even if your company is not the target of a current unionization effort, you can still collect actionable intelligence on these platforms. Union tactics against peer companies set the pattern and expectation for future campaigns, so staying one step ahead of gives your employees an advantage over the escalation strategy of a union organizer.

## NOW, PREPARE YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The important takeaway is that preventing unionization takes preparation. The union will work hard to convince your employees that they are being treated unfairly and need protection. Be prepared to refute union messaging line-by-line, preferably with data. If the union argues employees are underpaid, illustrate how your wages compare to competitors in your industry. You can also

clarify the financial value of the benefits you offer. If the union states that employees are unhappy, publish testimonials proving otherwise. You need to communicate well and often to counter a unionization drive.

Your communications strategy should:

- Be timely and organized
- Clearly refute union arguments with facts
- Be memorable and easy to understand
- Rely on third-party data



## ARE YOU **UNIONPROOF**?

UnionProof companies are proactive when it comes to countering unions. They don't wait for union representatives to show up and then devise a strategy. Educating supervisors and employees can make it more difficult for unions to find pain points to exploit. Proactive intelligence and a clear communication game plan are critical when a union has your company in its sights. Don't let a union control the conversation. You need an organized, consistent communications game plan. Preparing your game plan in advance can help you more quickly respond to a unionization drive.

Every company has the power to offer employees the things that ensure a good working relationship. In the end, your company needs to genuinely connect with team members. Make it your mission to be an employer of choice and encourage unions to pick an easier target.

Even the best organizations can still be vulnerable to union organizing. Take the proper steps: from the pre-hiring process to supervisor training to ongoing communication. Consider your union-free operating philosophy as a lifetime strategy toward a positive corporate culture. Incorporating your [UnionProof communication strategy](#) is a game-changer. To keep your business union-free, focus not on one-time inoculation but on long-term preventive measures, caring for employee needs and creating an environment where a union just isn't necessary.



## ABOUT THE INSIDER NETWORK

The Insider Network is a Projections resource, a community where those dedicated to maintaining a direct and positive relationship with employees come to get ideas on:

Coaching Leaders  
Addressing Union Organizing,  
and...  
Getting UnionProof!

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