

EIGHT THINGS EMPLOYERS DO TO BLOCK UNIONS

1 HIRE A UNION-BUSTING CONSULTANT

Lawyers and “labor-management” consulting firms get paid to help employers keep workers from exercising their right to form a union. Companies also send managers and supervisors to union-busting seminars and follow consultant-prepared “scripts” for keeping unions at bay. They often pay thousands of dollars per employee to keep the union out — instead of putting that money into better pay, benefits and working conditions for employees. They bank on the idea that if they defeat a union once, following the script, they won’t have to do it again.

2 Tell You To Wait and See

The Wait and See argument is very common when employers hire union busting attorneys. Often when workers try to form a union, management will make some improvement to convince people that we don’t need to join together into a union. And when the union talk dies down, management eventually goes back to their old ways. Without a written legally binding contract, any improvements can be taken away. Management only takes our concerns seriously when we talk about forming a union. If they want to bribe us now to keep out a union, can you imagine what we could win with a union?

3 Get a few employees to campaign against the union.

In many campaigns, “Vote No” or “No Union” committees spring up. The material they circulate presents the employer’s perspective, even though it generally has a “homemade” appearance so it won’t look like the employer is paying for it (which is against the law). Frequently, members of anti-union committees are recruited from among workers who are friends or relatives of someone in management, are politically opposed to unions, or had a bad experience with some other union. Oftentimes, workers who lead an anti-union effort get rewarded (and sometimes are even promised) with promotions.

4 Send letters to you and your family.

After ignoring employees’ concerns for years, your employer may take a sudden interest in you. This is designed to mislead or divide the organizing committee and other workers, and to play on your emotions and natural desire to be a good employee. It’s manipulation, plain and simple.

5 Hold meetings to sweet-talk — or browbeat — you.

You may be required to attend “captive audience” meetings in which managers make empty promises or try to scare you. Management doesn’t tell you they’re worried having a union will mean having to treat workers better; instead, they say they’re worried about “what will happen to you.” If you hear about a captive-audience meeting, do some research, and prepare to ask good questions. See if you get straight answers — and if management continues taking questions. Companies often try to keep union support out of these meetings.

6 Deny your rights through delays and law-breaking.

Union-busting consultants often advise employers to delay every step of the way, and find loopholes in the law to delay union elections or contract negotiations. Sometimes they cross legal lines. Since employers are trying to do everything they can to reduce union support, potential penalties are viewed as worth the risk. The best way to defeat illegal employer tactics is to expect them and let your employer know these tactics will only make you more determined to get union representation. OPCMIA organizers and lawyers will assist you.

7 Spring a last-minute surprise on you.

Just before workers are scheduled to vote on the union, union-busting consultants often urge employers to hold a special event or go on the attack because it will be too late for union supporters to respond. These can include a captive-audience meeting with a company executive who flies in from out of town, an unfounded charge about the union, or anything else designed to place doubts in workers’ minds about the union. Expect it, and plan for it.

8 Pressure supervisors to pressure you

Employers usually order supervisors to take the lead in campaigns against unions. Supervisors typically hold one-on-one meetings with workers, often because their employers have pressured the first-line supervisors to do all they can to eliminate any talk of unions.