

What to Expect From Management

Now that we're joining together, here's what we can expect to hear from management...

When workers form a union, they gain a voice in decisions that affect their jobs, their future and their families. Unfortunately, management doesn't always like the idea of sharing the decision making with employees. So management's first reaction may be to make a lot of misleading statements to try to convince you not to join together.

Knowing what to expect from management will help you stay focused on your real goal—winning a voice on the job and a say in your future.

THIS IS WHAT MANAGERS OFTEN SAY WHEN WORKERS FORM A UNION:

Management: "A union is a third party that will come between us."

Fact: Our union is a democratic, member-run organization. When you form a union, you'll work together to govern your own organization. And every contract will be reviewed and approved by a majority of the employees where you work.

Management: "The union will make you go on strike."

Fact: Strikes are a rare last resort in contract negotiations—more than 95 percent of Teamster contracts are negotiated without a strike. And no strike will happen unless a majority of workers vote to call one.

Management: "If you form a union, you risk losing the benefits and pay raises you already have."

Fact: It is illegal for a company to freeze or cut previously scheduled raises to discourage you from forming a union. Once you're organized, you'll lock in our current wages and benefits and then negotiate improvements from there. All of you will get an opportunity to review your proposed contract before you vote to approve it. Obviously, you're not going to approve a contract that cuts our wages or benefits.

Management: "The union just wants your dues money."

Fact: As newly organized Teamsters, you won't pay dues until you've negotiated and voted to approve your first contract—and decided for yourselves whether it's worth it. (Teamster pilot groups are the exception; in 1998, pilots requested that their dues begin the month after voting to become Teamsters.) Every serious organization—churches, clubs, sporting leagues, and similar organizations—has to have some kind of funding, and unions are no different. Dues pay for the costs of having an organization—contract negotiations, grievances and arbitrations, training for members, legal fees, and other things so no one has to go it alone.

Management: "With a union, you won't be allowed to talk to your supervisor—you'll have to go through the union."

Fact: Teamsters have found that having a union strengthens communication between employees and supervisors. Direct relationships with immediate supervisors continue and you can negotiate to retain any good policy and procedures already in place. The advantage of joining together in a union is that you're able to make your voices heard at the upper levels of management, where key decisions are made.

Management: "The improvements we're willing to make right now show that you don't need a union."

Fact: It's great that management is responding to your concerns. It shows that when you join together, your voices are heard. By forming a union, you can make sure this progress is not just short term—you'll build an ongoing dialogue with management on all your issues. You'll also have peace of mind with a union—since the improvements you agree on will be guaranteed in your union contract.

Keep in mind that it's normal for some tension to arise when workers start to build a union. But the tension is temporary. After you vote to form a union, management gets used to the idea of you having a voice on the job.

No matter what management says, stay focused on your shared goals—to make your workplace the best possible place to work.