

MAINTAINING A UNION-FREE WORKPLACE

Countering a union organizing campaign is expensive; living with the effects of a unionized workplace can cost infinitely more. A much smaller amount spent on union avoidance, however, can preclude such outlays.

Why avoid unions in the workplace? The main reason is the constraints they place on management's operational flexibility. Work rules, compensation, hiring and staffing practices, conflict resolution procedures, sub-contracting, staffing levels and much more become part of collective bargaining. With a union contract in place, management can't act unilaterally on these and many other issues.

At IRI, we believe the best way to avoid unions is to get in front of the curve. Act before the threat materializes. Build an organization that meets the needs of both employees and leadership. Our methods not only help organizations stay union-free, they improve organizational performance in the process.

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS

Understanding an organization's vulnerabilities is the first step of union preparedness; only then can organizations develop a winning strategic response that targets and addresses weaknesses. IRI's preparedness assessments include:

- Executive, Management and Supervisor Interviews
- Electronic Vulnerability Assessment
- Corporate Campaign Vulnerability Assessment
- Organizational Communications Audit

EXECUTIVE, MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISOR INTERVIEWS

A Union Vulnerability Assessment provides an analysis of key vulnerabilities that could increase the probability of being targeted by a traditional union organizing campaign. Using a custom-designed, structured interview guide, we interview executives, key managers and select supervisors to obtain insight into employee perspectives about the organization's policies and practices, capture information about ongoing or suspected union activity and acquire views about the seriousness of a union organizing effort.

Through these one-on-one interviews, we explore the 12 key areas most often targeted by unions:

- Pay
- Benefits
- Training
- Communications
- Working conditions
- Workload
- Work satisfaction
- Professional opportunities
- Supervision/management
- Training & orientation
- Job security
- Policies & Procedures

ELECTRONIC UNION VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT (E-UVA)

Assessing factors that lead to employee discontent and understanding employee perceptions are important first steps to identify where the organization is vulnerable. Delivered via e-mail to a targeted manager population, IRI's e-UVA allows us to quickly collect information about likely union activity and employee relations issues that may trigger an organizing campaign.

CORPORATE CAMPAIGN VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

By repeatedly attacking an employer's reputation and undermining public confidence and stakeholder relationships, "corporate campaigns" pressure management into yielding to union demands. These range from greater access to employees in the workplace to forcing management to accept the union as employees' exclusive bargaining representative through a card-check process, a neutrality agreement or a "fair election" agreement that restricts an employer's ability to communicate with employees about union issues.

As part of our Corporate Campaign Vulnerability Assessment, we advise clients of their vulnerabilities ranked by risk (high, moderate or low), as well as propose strategies for operations, communications and employee engagement.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

A formal assessment of an organization's ability to communicate key messages effectively in a labor environment, IRI's Organizational Communications Audits highlight existing

practices that work well and identify opportunities for more robust, results-oriented communications with both internal and external audiences.

The results provide clear insight into critical issues that affect a client's direct working relationship with employees, and help incorporate communications into a comprehensive labor relations strategy.

COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Using our assessment data, IRI helps organizations develop the objectives, action plans, timetables and interventions necessary to deploy a sustainable avoidance strategy. Typically, the strategy includes changes in operations, management skill building and communications techniques proven to help organizations institutionalize best practices that fit their culture, mission and vision.

IRI's long-term avoidance initiatives are comprised of tools that help clients:

- Reduce major areas of employee discontent
- Increase employee work satisfaction, performance and engagement
- Create a workplace culture resistant to union organizing efforts
- Encourage a collaborative, team-based approach to performance and productivity
- Implement systems orientation in operational matters
- Improve operational action plans
- Improve manager skills through training

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Effective leadership and manager training is essential to a front-line defense against union organizing. Our comprehensive, engaging training programs feature:

- Role-plays, small-group discussion, behavior modeling, mock union organizing meetings and organization group issue identification
- A curriculum that includes knowledge- and skill-building sections about:
 - Promoting management's free-speech rights during an organizing drive
 - Initiating educational discussions with employees
 - Stopping union card-signing campaigns
 - Knowing and enforcing your solicitation & distribution policy
 - Developing the employer campaign

- ❑ Avoiding and eliminating unfair labor practices
- ❑ Enhancing the supervisor's role in small-group meetings and one-on-one discussions
- ❑ Understanding how union contracts affect the supervisor's role
- ❑ Learning how unions operate and the role of internal organizers
- ❑ The varied reasons employees seek union representation
- ❑ Profiles of key unions active in the industry
- ❑ Spotting early warning signs of union activity

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

IRI also offers a broad array of management development tools that equip clients to more effectively lead and engage employees. These include:

- **Leadership Development & Coaching.** Results, relationships and readiness are three qualities every successful leader possesses. IRI will help strengthen the skills of high-potential individuals who need further development.
- **Building Organizational Trust.** IRI partners with clients to enhance trust, credible leadership and employee motivation. This is achieved through programs that leverage effective dialogue and communications as well as remove barriers and resistance to change. The result is a workplace culture that empowers employees to take ownership of personal and organizational performance, make wise decisions and not feel the need to join a union.
- **Change Management Skills and Techniques.** Leaders must appreciate the importance of organizational change. They must know when revolutionary, not incremental, change is essential. Change, driven either by internal or external forces, prepares organizations for survival and success. Whether an organization is introducing such change, quality or productivity initiatives as Six Sigma or Lean Production, IRI can help management engage employees in the process and inspire a sense of ownership rather than view it as a threat.
- **Organizational Communications Training.** For decades, research has documented that a direct supervisor is employees' most-preferred source of information. This preference begins at the top and should cascade throughout the organization. On delicate topics such as unionization, it's essential that leaders initiate, guide and respond to dialogue. IRI works with leaders to help them with skills and tools to communicate effectively.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Generally, employees who are fully engaged with their employers don't want unions and are less receptive to the "us versus them" mentality common in unionized workplaces. Nothing forms a stronger barrier to unions than employees who are fully invested in the success of their organizations and who have a sense of ownership in that success.

IRI's proven employee engagement systems include Employee Advisory Groups. One of the most effective tools to promote engagement and manage difficult issues, Employee Advisory Groups can be used to provide focused, non-binding employee input. Proven "safety valves" for employee concerns and frustrations, EAGs are commonly used to help guide organizational decision making, improve problem solving, solicit ideas and anticipate and understand the effects of management's decisions on employees.

COMMUNICATIONS

READINESS RESPONSE TEAM

A Readiness Response Team (RRT) is a multi-disciplinary group of carefully selected leaders who receive in-depth training to prepare them to serve as internal labor relations and communications specialists.

RRT's can be utilized in numerous ways:

- As a SWAT team that goes into action at the first sign of union organizing, RRT members will have the skills necessary to support other managers and serve as a resource to management.
- In an advisory capacity, RRT members are trained to recognize early signs of organizing activity. If desired, members can provide feedback on campaign strategies, campaign communications and educational materials to be provided to management team members.
- As a cost-saving measure, RRT members may be utilized to participate in Train-the-Trainer educational sessions that fully prepare them to deliver labor relations training to the client's team members.

LABOR RELATIONS READINESS MANUAL

The Labor Relations Readiness Manual provides clients with a customized set of educational, communications and strategy materials that supports the organizational goal of remaining union-free. Designed to help leaders prepare for a potential union threat and respond effectively, it addresses the informational needs of essential players in that effort: supervisors and employees, executives and the communications staff.

The Readiness Manual provides a comprehensive overview of the recommended actions and responses organizations need to employ to successfully prepare for and manage a union organizing campaign, including:

- A full complement of supervisor/manager educational materials related to their role in maintaining a direct working relationship with employees
- Supervisor/manager communication strategies (conversation starters, how to talk about unions with employee, etc.)
- What do I say/do if? scenarios for managers, employees and executives
- Master messaging: Ready-to-use talking points about critical issues
- Customized talking points for executives, board members and managers about key issues
- Stakeholder outreach strategy: an action plan to identify key stakeholders, points of contact, communication initiatives and timeline
- Management and executive visibility strategy to build trust between employees and management
- Sample communications/letters (e.g. letter from CEO to staff about onsite card signing)



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