



Marketing Issues

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Don't Get Defeated by Anti-union Rhetoric

As we continue to exchange blows with the anti-union, we must find new ways to contest the fallacies they present to the public about us and improve our organizing tactics. Anti-union rhetoric—much of it misinformation—is becoming more and more prevalent during this election year, especially in the presidential race and in states such as Wisconsin and Indiana.

To combat this, it's important to share information with each other and stay up-to-date with what the anti-union folks are saying. Whether it is true or not, we need to be able to defend our position and our union.

Just to be clear: this article is not about non-union contractors. I am talking about anti-union. Anti-union folks will do and say anything they can to destroy the union movement.

Union Busters

In an organizing campaign, do not underestimate the ability of union-busting legal teams that many contractors hire. These attorneys are experts in keeping you from getting close to the workers or owner of the company you are trying to organize. They may even skirt some laws along the way (which is why there are so many lawsuits and unfair labor practices these days). They are professionals whose sole purpose is keeping the non-union contractor non-union. Be sure you understand your rights and those of the employees.

Anti-union Politicians

A good number of politicians today are strongly anti-union, and they use the media to convey this message. Many times they simply repeat what they have been told by some other anti-union organization. We rarely bother to refute



these statements, because they don't support us and we don't support them.

This should change. We need to contact our local politicians—including the ones we DON'T support—and let them know how we feel. They are elected to represent us. If we never tell them what matters to us, how will they know what we, their constituents, want? Write a letter or visit your elected official. They do want to hear from you. All unions are not alike, and we need to make that clear with politicians regardless of party affiliation.

The Uninformed Business Owner

Business owners are often anti-union because they don't understand the value of being union. Show them the value. Their mindset may change when you make the case that we are the best-trained and safest roofers in the industry, and that contractors are more profitable with the union.

Get every person on board, from your newest initiate to your most experienced journey person. Use your apprentice program to get this message across to those who are anti-union. Invite them to attend an active training class, such as a journey person upgrade or apprentice class. Don't keep the value of our training a secret—broadcast it!

There are still plenty of owners who are not aware of the training the union offers. Once they are enlightened about these training opportunities, they may not be as anti-union.

Our Public Image

We must change the mindset of the general public when it comes to our union. We are not what the conservative media portrays all unions to be—you and I know this as a fact. What we offer is the best training and the best roofers in the industry.

We can change our public image, but only if we are willing to do things that inform people we are not the same old union. We have got to believe in our union if we want others to believe in us. The task at hand is not easy, but you can do it, and the Marketing Department stands ready and willing to help you. ■