

Approaching Non-Union Employees About Joining The Teamsters in Right to Work (*for less*) States



Non-union workers are more likely to join the Teamsters if they think it will make a difference. Most non-union workers in Right To Work (*for less*) states do not join because they receive the same benefits as their union counterparts without having to pay high union dues. Others believe the employer has workers' best interest in mind and would treat them even better without the union or that they can fend for themselves when dealing with the employer.

Non-union employees are most likely to join the union once these non-union concepts are exposed for what they are: harmful to all workers. It is vital to communicate a positive union image to non-union workers and answer their objections with information that points out the value of joining the union. There are common objections that arise from non-union workers when approached about joining the Teamsters. The following lists some of those objections and suggested responses that have proved effective to internal organizing.

Objection:

“Why should I join the Teamsters when I get exactly the same wages and benefits without joining?”

- 1) “There never was a truer statement. We both receive less than we are entitled to since all employees are not members.”
- 2) “Right, you get the same as the rest of us, but we could get so much more if we didn't have non-members. We can only win further gains if enough of us want them and are willing to work to get them.”
- 3) “If every worker felt that way, there would be no union at all. We wouldn't have the opportunity to bargain with the employer, and we wouldn't have the grievance procedure to help solve problems that happen. The longer

we have non-union employees, the less power we have to improve our wages and working conditions.”

- 4) “Non-members give the employer leverage as they face the union at the bargaining table. If they know that not all employees are willing to stand up for the issues we are negotiating, they are less likely to agree to improvements that we deserve. The more non-union workers we have, the less we get.”
- 5) “Right. But don’t you want to do your share and not have your way paid by the rest of the workers? Without you, Teamster members make less and still pay dues on your behalf.”
- 6) “Each person should feel obligated to share the cost of winning the wages and benefits we all enjoy. It’s unfair to accept benefits others are paying for.”
- 7) “Do you think it’s right for anyone to accept benefits and not contribute to the cost of securing them? What if your next-door neighbor paid no taxes and yet sent their children to public schools and used the roads and other public services? Would that be right? Of course not. Nor is it fair for a person to enjoy the benefits of unionism and not do their share to gain them.”
- 8) “Non-members don’t have a voice on whether or not to strike; they have no say in contract ratification or in elections of union representatives. Don’t you want your interests to be heard too?”

Objection:

“I don’t need a union; the employer is fair. The employer will take care of us without a union. I get along fine. What has the union gained for us that we wouldn’t have anyway?”

- 1) “You’re right. This is a good place to work now, and the union played a big part in making it that way. This is no reason why we shouldn’t try to make it even better. Your job is more pleasant and secure because of the union representation afforded you on the job. Your supervisor has to treat you fairly because the contract requires it. The employer is fair because the union is always looking over its shoulder. Even so, almost every employee at one time or another has a grievance or complaint. That’s where the union comes in.”
- 2) Rely on history, and point out the job security clause in the contract including the final step of the grievance procedure, arbitration. Explain

that working conditions, including wages, before the Teamsters. You could ask an older worker to give a first hand account. Discuss the history of bargaining in your bargaining unit. Contrast the first offers of the employer with the final settlement, show the difference in terms of cents per hour or dollars per year. Show that the employer often admits that union members ensured they grant more than they would like to. You might want to use a prepared sheet showing the union gains over the years. Also point out grievances the union has won.

- 3) “An individual can’t possibly adequately represent himself or herself. One person is much too vulnerable, and often doesn’t understand their rights under law and the contract. In today’s complex world, organizations of all sorts are necessary to bargain with strength in order to protect employees from arbitrary treatment, to get better wages and pensions or more vacation and so on.”

Objection:

“The dues are too high.”

- 1) “You should think of dues as insurance premiums to ensure a job and a wage that permits you to enjoy a good standard of living for yourself and your family. Look at dues in relation to what you receive in return – higher wages, better benefits, job security, and better working conditions.”
- 2) “It may seem like the dues are high, but let me explain where the dues money goes. Maybe this information will make it clear why the union needs the dues it gets.” (Use the booklet “Welcome to the Teamsters” for this information. Try to throw in specific examples from your workplace and local.)

Objection:

“The union doesn’t do anything for me (grievances are not settled satisfactorily). Or “I don’t like the people who are running things in the union.”

- 1) Ask for the specifics, the specific grievance in mind. Check out the problem, obtain the facts and report back to the non-member. Concede that the union can make mistakes, but point out the many grievances that have been won. Be specific.
- 2) “Each officer and steward does the best job possible. If you, or someone you know, aren’t treated fairly, tell us about it so that we can take care of

it. We admit we make mistakes, but we're working hard to do our best to improve. We need your help."

- 3) Enumerate the contract benefits such as choice of hours, vacations, sick benefits. Remind the non-member that those don't come automatically.

Objection:

"I'm not interested. I just don't want to join."

- 1) "You can't afford not to be interested in the union. What happens in the union and between the union and the employer affects you; it affects all employees. Contract negotiations, grievances, etc. concern everyone in one way or another."
- 2) "You work on this job a good part of your day, a good part of your life. What happens on the job should be of interest to you."
- 3) It might be necessary to educate the non-member of why people join unions if the non-member is not familiar with unionism.

Objection:

"I'll think about it. Maybe I'll join someday."

- 1) "Let's do it right now. There's no time like the present. What makes you apprehensive?"
- 2) "Here's a card. Why don't you sign it and come to the next membership meeting. That's the way you can get involved and really make a difference."
- 3) "Our business agent is having a meeting during our lunch break next week to talk about some issues at work. You could come to that and decide if you want to join."