

Common anti-union arguments, debunked



Adrienne Teeley

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Some employers really, really don't want workers to unionize. The thought of an organized workforce is so threatening that companies collectively pay a whopping **\$340 million a year** in hiring anti-union consultants.

Sounds pretty desperate, right? Employers do have to be careful — there's a laundry list of things they're **not legally allowed to say or do** when persuading workers not to unionize. To keep from getting in hot water, employers will turn to a few common arguments in an attempt to sour you on the idea of collective action.

Some of those arguments are pretty convincing because they're designed to appeal to your emotions. Dig a little deeper, however, and it becomes easy to poke holes in these misinformation campaigns. That's why you won't need millions of dollars to build support for unionizing. You'll just need the facts.

Let's bust some common union-busting refrains.



Care of: [Mimi Thian](#) on [Unsplash](#)

“We already have a great workplace. Unionizing isn’t necessary.”

Unions aren’t exclusively formed when things are bad. In fact, they can be an effective tool in preserving the qualities that make a workplace special. For example, if there’s a sudden change in leadership, unionized workers can be confident that their company culture and important benefits will remain intact.

“You won’t get paid as much if you’re stuck in a union contract.”

Employers may put forth the notion that their workers are paid well in comparison to other companies, and [falsely assert](#) that a union contract will mean less pay.

Look at the data: Union members [enjoy a higher salary and better benefits](#) than non-union workers. Plus, to attract and keep talented workers, employers can't just offer everyone subpar wages and expect excellent returns.

If people in your unit are concerned about how collective bargaining will affect individual raises and salaries, you don't have to include compensation issues in your contract negotiation. That, or any other issue, can stay something that everyone handles on their own.

It's you and your coworkers' union. Together, you have the power to choose what you advocate for.

“Unions don't have your best interests in mind.”

You and your coworkers *are* the union – why wouldn't you have your best interests in mind?

While it would make for a juicy conspiracy theory, there are no dark, ulterior motives behind unions. Everything a union fights for is transparently stated because it has to be: The union (read: you and your coworkers) votes on what it wants to fight for and accept during contract negotiations.

“You'll lose your individual voice if you unionize.”

Not true! As we've stated, your union can decide to only bargain for certain changes. If the majority of your unit wants to leave some issues to the individual to navigate (like compensation packages) then your bargaining representative will have more time to negotiate on other topics instead.

Plus, it's not like union membership means you can't still offer ideas and solutions at work. A union just ensures that for issues that impact everyone, everyone has a say.

“Workers won't be as productive if they unionize.”

A [recent study](#) has found the opposite to be true.

Unions enhance the employee experience by giving workers increased ownership and equity. That means they feel more valued in their role and proud of the work they accomplish.

When workers don't feel appreciated, they're not going to hang around at a job for long. The company then has to spend time and money hiring and training new workers, which doesn't sound very productive to us. In contrast, unions contribute to [worker satisfaction and reduce turnover](#).

“You'll just be putting money into the pockets of politicians you don't agree with.”

Public and private sector unions have different rules for using money for political purposes. Some large national unions have political action committees that donate funds to politicians who further fair labor practices. And sometimes, union dues *can* be used for some political purposes. It really just depends on where you work and how you're unionizing.

Independent unions, however, like Unit unions, can decide if they'd like to raise money for political purposes. Some do, some don't. Simple enough, right?

“If workers unionize, we'll have to lay people off.”

This talking point might be walking a legal line. Under the [Ontario Labor Relations Act](#), employers can't threaten workers with layoffs if they plan to unionize. If the conversation starts veering in this direction, workers can [file a charge](#) against their employer for engaging in illegal practices.

If, however, an employer is simply touting its concern about the financial implications of paying workers more, remember that contract negotiations are just that — negotiations.

Unions don't have carte blanche to receive everything they ask for. Negotiation ensures better outcomes for everyone by working within a framework that treats workers with respect and doesn't bankrupt the employer.

“Union dues are too expensive.”

If employers were really concerned about workers' financial health, they'd applaud the move to unionize. We've said it before and we'll say it again: On average, those in unions get paid about [20 percent more](#) than those who aren't, compared to union dues, which are commonly about 1.5 percent of a worker's salary.

Plus, it's not like union dues get funneled to some cartoon-character union boss driving around in a Bentley. Your hard-earned money goes toward operating costs that cover

things like union representation, campaigns, and other costs associated with improving your workplace.

“Unions are effective tools in changing workplace conditions.”

Okay, that one's us talking. We can back that statement up with [real data](#). Can your boss do the same with their arguments?

Coming across more anti-union arguments? Check out more of our [rebuttals here](#).