

Best Practices in Union New Hire Orientations

Effective orientation programs can have a lasting and outsized impact on the future strength of unions. The following best practices offer simple, practical ways that union leaders and staff can develop and enhance their orientations for new bargaining unit members.



Orient New Hires As Soon As Possible

- Hold orientations as close to a new hire's start date as possible.
- Negotiate for the union's right to a structured time during the employer's orientation program.
- Delaying orientations will allow others, including management, to influence new hires' views of the union



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Use Intention When Selecting Facilitators

- Pay attention to the race, gender and age of new hires when choosing union orientation facilitators and informal representatives.
- Convey that the union is knowledgeable and diverse by selecting an experienced leader and a younger member to co-facilitate orientations.

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Make a Positive First Impression



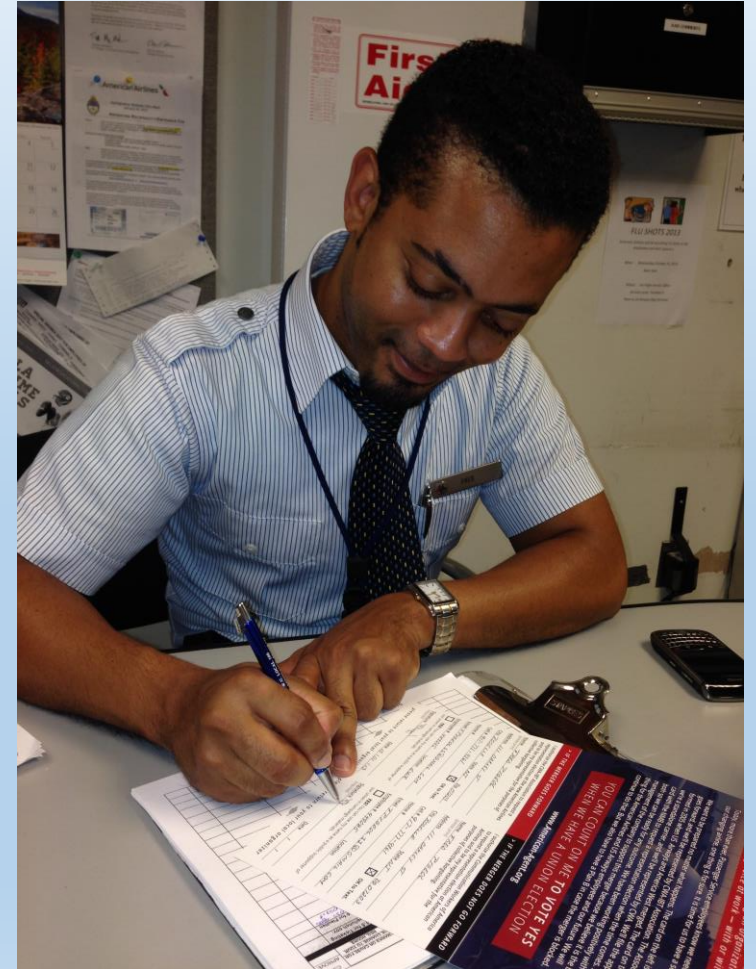
- First impressions matter.
- Develop a formal presentation that is informative, substantive and convincing.
- Remain mindful of the real-world issues new hires face, and avoid the temptation to oversell what the union can do.

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Encourage New Hires To Join the Union

- Explain how being a part of the union advances member's interests both inside and outside of the workplace.
- Ask new hires to join the union and actively encourage their participation in union events and activities.

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Provide Quality Handouts and Freebies

- Present information in multiple ways to improve participant comprehension.
- Professional-grade materials and an understanding of how new hires prefer to communicate can encourage sign ups and commitment.
- Free union swag can build new hires' identity with the union, and contribute to longer-term commitment.



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Strive for Excellence



- The quality of the union's orientation, both in substance and style, influences commitment to the union.
- Train orientation presenters and people tasked with follow-up.
- Shoddy presentations, typos, outdated information, and poor presenters can cast doubt about the union.

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Follow Up with New Hires

- Union commitment is strongest in new members who experience both formal and informal introductions.
- Union leaders, stewards, and other representatives should reach out to new employees in their first days on the job and establish the union as a trusted resource.



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Be Systematic

- Track orientation participants to assess their engagement in the union.
- Provide checklists for accountability.
- Take time to celebrate new members.
- Regularly evaluate and adjust orientations as needed.



Checklist for effective New Employee Orientations

_____ Be positive, proud and welcoming!

_____ Talk about bargaining power, political power, and power in our communities.

_____ Have an agenda.

_____ Explain what CWA is – in basics terms, without union “jargon”.

_____ Share contract highlights (if there is one), and focus on how stewards enforce it.

_____ Presenters should include at least one employee from the company you are addressing.

_____ Have more than one person in the orientation—after initial presentation, one can answer questions while the other person hands out cards, helps people fill the card out, deals with problem people, etc.

_____ Expect people to join on the spot.

_____ Whether referring to the grievance procedure or going to a march, talk about what CWA members do together – “with” not “for” each other.

_____ Ask people to sign up for PAF and explain what it is. Give examples of legislative issue victories and current threats, focusing on issues relevant to this group of workers.

_____ If there are new employees in the class who are not from your local's area, go ahead and ask them to join, then send the application and a few notes about the person to their local.

_____ Remember, the very best time to ask an employee to join CWA is their first day on the job!

_____ Pass out an information packet to each new member.

_____ Remember, this is just the first conversation – make plans to talk with all employees in the group at least twice more during their first 6 months on the job. Follow up with anyone who didn't join yet. With others, focus on how they can get involved.

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