

What is a union buster? A union buster is a firm or individual hired by an employer to thwart a union organizing drive by employees.

Why do companies hire union busters? One simple word . . . control. With a union, employers lose the ability to totally control the workforce, since employees collectively gain rights with a union.

Why don't we hear about the union buster? This is one of the ways a union buster operates - behind the scenes. If you get letters signed by management that imply bad things happening with a union, you can bet that letter was written by a union buster. Also, if a union buster is engaged in direct dealing with employees, the union buster has to file financial reports with the U.S. Department of Labor. Employers do not want public knowledge of their expenditures going to the union busters.

How does the union buster operate? A union buster seeks to achieve two things: one, to create a sense of dissention and division among employees during an organizing campaign; and, two, to spread the greatest amount of misinformation about the union as possible before an NLRB election.

What are some of the tactics used by the union buster?

- **Use of Supervisors** - Supervisors are the employer's de-organizing committee in the workplace. Supervisors are made to feel personally responsible if the employees in their department vote for the union. Since in most unorganized companies, employees have no knowledge about unions, the union buster puts fear into the supervisor by implying that his job will be impossible with a union, and if he doesn't do everything possible to keep the union out, his job may be in jeopardy.
- **Delay** - A union buster will delay the NLRB election by legal maneuvers as long as possible. These tactics include contesting the voting unit sought by the employees, unwillingness to schedule a quick hearing, delay in giving the union the required list of employees until forced to, and opposing any settlement offered by the employees and their union. The union buster knows that the longer he can delay the election, the greater chance that he can place fear in employees, and can win the election for the employer.
- **One-on-One Meetings** - The union buster will have supervisors meet with employees one on one to seek out their union sentiments. The supervisors have the job of convincing employees that the union will be bad for the company.
- **Captive Audience Meetings** - A union buster will have the employer meet with large groups of employees to discredit the union, and create fear of the unknown. Usually, there will be plants in the meetings asking questions prepared in advance by the union buster to sow misinformation about the union.



- **Division** - The union buster will make employees feel that there is a tense division among employees concerning the employee election for a union. Employees will be led to believe that this tension will continue forever if a union is chosen by the employees.
- **Shadowing** - A union buster will target employees who he knows he can sway against the union. The union buster will then have supervisors shadowing or constantly overseeing that employee to cause fear in that employee about his or her job.

What can I do about the union buster's tactics? Remember, the union buster plays off of an employee's lack of knowledge about a union. Employees can do several things to counter the union buster:

- **Ask the company if they have hired a union buster** - Ask the employer's representative whether they have hired a "consultant" to work for them to "educate" employees about the union. Ask the employer how much they are paying the consultant. Employers don't want you to know that they have hired someone to interfere with your rights to organize a union, and you will make them nervous if they have to answer this question. Most union busters charge anywhere from \$750 to \$2,000 per day plus expenses for their services.
- **Document** - Have as many employees as possible document everything that a supervisor or manager says to employees, whether to a group of employees or to an individual employee. A union buster will often violate the law in what he says about the union.
- **Ask questions** - If a supervisor makes an implied threat, ask the supervisor or manager point blank what he or she is trying to say. The employer cannot legally make direct threats to employees about union organization.
- **Ask for the information the union buster presents in writing** - Remember, in general, vague information that supervisors and managers are giving you comes directly from the union buster. Ask management for the information that they are presenting to you in writing.
- **Protect and support each other** - If a supervisor is shadowing an employee, band together for support. A union buster can only be effective in creating fear if the employees let him. If employees stand up to the union buster, he cannot be effective.
- **Ask the union** - If you have questions about what the union buster is having management say, contact the union for answers.

You can beat a union buster at his own game by sticking together!

