



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: DO YOUR EMPLOYEES WANT TO UNIONIZE?

Are your employees interested in unionizing? If so, how do you feel about it?

Does your senior management team consider employee demands for unionization as a wake-up call or the first salvo of a battle?

Companies that initially think of fighting their workers' desire for unionization may be well served to assess themselves, rather than fight with their workforce.

Meaningful communication and active listening, along with self-awareness—e.g., examining policies can go a long way when facing employee demands. Jim Collins, the renowned management guru, recommends that we look in the mirror rather than pointing fingers when trouble hits.

Consider two recent cases: Starbucks' management dug in its heels, insisting that they already provided superior benefits. Only after a protracted legal battle did Starbucks pivot, and is now embracing collective bargaining. In contrast, Costco's leadership readily acknowledged employees' right to be heard. All humans want to be listened to and to know that they have been heard.

Demonstrate your commitment to your employees. Here are four ways to show your employees that you are on their side.

1. **Foster open, two-way communication.** Clearly communicate about policies, values, and initiatives. Make sure employees have a meaningful way to communicate their needs to management without fear of retaliation.
2. **Champion equitable practices.** Ensure fair practices and competitive wages and benefits. Top-tier organizations offer flexibility, living wages, and pathways for advancement.
3. **Commit to dialogue and conflict-management processes.** Ensure that you have fair dispute resolution practices where divergent points of view can be aired and mediated.
4. **Empower effective managers.** Ensure processes are in place to assess management effectiveness. Recognize and empower good managers. Do not turn a blind eye to managers who please upper-management but do not create an environment where teams and direct reports are engaged and satisfied with the environment.

Do your employees know that management is on their side? Are there any changes you may want to pursue to ensure that your best people are not looking for better situations?

Additional resources:

- [Costco employees vote to unionize -- company response remarkable | inc.com](#)
- [A better way to recognize your employees | hbr.org](#)
- [How to really listen to your employees | hbr.org](#)
- [The misguided mix-up of celebrity and leadership | jimcollins.com](#)