



# 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.



## 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.



## 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.



## Encourage new hires to join the union

- Explain how being a part of the union advances members' 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.



## 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 contributes to longer-term commitment.



## 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- Shoddy presentations, typos, outdated information, and poor presenters can cast doubt about the union.



## 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.



## 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.