

## EXERCISE 13.1: ORGANIZING A UNION\*

### Overview

Research shows that management often neither anticipates nor understands the motivation of employees to organize into unions. This exercise explores an organizing effort from the perspectives of labor and of management.

### Learning Objectives

After completing this exercise, you should be able to

1. Understand the process of starting a union organizing effort.
2. Know the steps involved in the certification process.
3. Be able to consider employee and employer reactions to a union organizing effort.
4. Know the laws and regulations that govern the process of union organizing from management's perspective.

### Procedure

#### *Part A: Individual Analysis*

- Step 1. Before class, read the scenario presented and follow the directions of the assignment.
- Step 2. Each student will be assigned to either the union organizer role or the general manager role. Each role requires you to write a letter to be used in your arguments. These arguments are described in Exhibit 13.1.1.
- Step 3. Also before class, answer the questions on Form 13.1.1.

#### *Part B: Group Analysis*

- Step 1. Form small groups in which members are grouped by like assignment (e.g., all union organizers together and all general managers together). The members should first review one another's letters and outlines. One letter should be selected as the most effective, then edited and submitted as the group response. Each group also should derive a chronology of steps to be taken by the union organizer to Mr. Cameron. Review

individual answers to Form 13.1.1 and reach a consensus position on each question.

- Step 2. A representative from each group should write the chronological steps on a blackboard or flip chart so that comparisons across groups can be made. The writer of the most effective letter from each group should then read the letter to the class. Discussion should center on the most important elements for each side and the legal implications of various strategies proposed.

### Scenario

You are a customer service representative for American Rental Car (ARC), a national rental car company. Recently, the employees at the three installations in the south-eastern United States, which are managed by the general manager, Scott Cameron, have experienced significant dissatisfaction with their jobs. No raises have been given in over a year; employee benefits are sparse; employees' preferences have not been considered in the assignment of work schedules or installations; and an automated employee monitoring system has been implemented.

Many of the 100 full-time employees have been talking about unionization, although many have yet to be convinced that unionization provides the best answer. The average age of the 100 employees is 29; there are 58 females and 41 minorities. Some employees strongly believe that a union can address some of the workers' concerns. Consequently, they have contacted the Customer Service Reps of America (CSRA) for help in organizing the southeastern region of ARC. Despite numerous attempts, the CSRA has been successful in organizing only three other ARC installations nationwide because the firm engages in a very tough (and often questionably legal) campaign to stop any union organizing efforts. Before the CSRA will send an organizer to your location, it wants to be persuaded that enough employees back the union to merit the expense. Thus, it has suggested that as a first step someone write a letter to the workers convincing them of the benefits of unionization and enlisting their support.

### Exhibit 13.1.1

#### UNION ORGANIZER ROLE

Write a letter to your co-workers about the factors involved in the case. You remember from the chapter why people join unions and the benefits of membership, and you want to be sure to include these factors in your letter. Yet you know that your fellow workers will still wonder why the possible costs of unionization (e.g., union dues, getting fired, being permanently assigned to the midnight shift, and being harassed by their supervisor) are worth the benefits. From your speech class you know the importance of providing answers to counterarguments if you wish to effectively persuade your co-workers to support the union.

Prepare a chronological outline for the union organizing effort covering what steps or procedures are to be followed, what data you should gather, what to look for in management's reaction, and what to do if management does not respond fairly. Also, prepare a chronological outline of what you anticipate to be management's reaction to the union organizing effort (i.e., the steps that management will take through the course of the organizing effort).

#### GENERAL MANAGER ROLE

Assume the role of Scott Cameron and draft a letter to your three supervisors and six assistant supervisors stipulating what can and cannot be done regarding the union organizing effort. For example, you were just informed that one of the supervisors, Meredith Sterrett, has already begun to establish a "paper trail" on one union sympathizer so he can be terminated for poor performance if "things get out of hand." She also told an employee that if a CSRA representative showed up at her installation, she would "call the cops and have him arrested for trespassing." She recently refused to hire a black female applicant because both of the applicant's parents were members of a union. She also fired an employee because she found out he was a paid union organizer. You will need to respond to Ms. Sterrett's actions. You should also prepare an outline of a meeting to be held regarding the union organizing effort and what the firm should do regarding worker concerns. Also, prepare a chronology of steps management should take in response to the organizing effort.

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**FORM 13.1.1 (Continued)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Group \_\_\_\_\_

3. You are told you are in a “right-to-work” state. What does this mean? Is the state in which you reside and/or work a right-to-work state? How could this affect you personally?

4. What if your job description required you to assign other employees to various work tasks or activities? Could you join a union? Explain your answer.