

How can unions increase sense of belonging in members?

It is very important that union members feel a sense of belonging so that they feel secure in their jobs and personal lives. It will also help to make them feel secure with their whole work environment, giving them a sense of purpose and being part of something bigger. Unions are committed to protecting and improving the interests and lives of its members. Unions ensure the health and safety of work environments and make sure working conditions are ideal for the job duties. When workers unite and have a sense of belonging it is better for everyone and makes it easier for the union to stand up for their members and negotiate on their behalf.

Other benefits of unions that help to provide inclusiveness are that they promote equality and diversity in the workplace. Unions encourage safe workspaces and provide opportunities to be inclusive by supporting training and formal procedures for complaints and disputes. Unions will advocate for human rights in the workplace, health and safety and environment issues, which may not be addressed otherwise. Health and safety benefits allow for workers to gain access to possible life and health preserving services, which can not only benefit workers and their families, but can also benefit the community by contributing to someone else's salary.

There are many ways for a union to provide a sense of belonging to its members and these can even help change the atmosphere of the workplace into a more productive and positive environment. One of the most efficient ways to make a new union member feel included is for a union representative to reach out to the new member to welcome them, provide an informational session, explain what unions are about and their purpose and benefits. The union representative should be able to answer any question the new union member has. The union representative should be able to keep the staff informed of new events, union issues and outcomes and be dependable.

Another way unions can increase a sense of belonging is to help transform the workplace to feel like a community. This can be accomplished by bringing the workers and their families together by offering various opportunities for get togethers outside of work hours. Some examples of gathering events can be to hold quarterly functions such as summer barbeques, potluck lunches, a Christmas lunch or visit with Santa for the kids, or for a little bit of competition, they could create a company sport team to compete against other unions or companies in a similar industry. There could also be 50/50 draws on pay days, raffles and contests to win tickets to concerts, sporting events or gift cards. Organizing and participating in activities with other workers outside of the workplace can help to create good times, memories and bonds. A positive aspect to having a "community feel" in the workplace will often result in bringing people of all walks of life together with the same objectives and will also allow the workers to get to know each other on a personal level. They will be exposed to and get to know other cultures, their food, ways of living and traditions.

Additional ways the union can open minds and bring others together is by offering courses to grow the union member's knowledge on equal rights and issues that are affecting society and people at this point in time. Society is everchanging and the fight for equal rights is evident.

Running fundraisers, supporting and helping union members by volunteering with them at farmers markets or food banks for example, can open people up to new cultures, opportunities and ways of living. Doing this would not only prove the union stands by its workers, but it would also benefit the community by providing fresh produce, goods and services, enrich the lives of the members, their families, and volunteers. Union representatives and members would get to know their communities on a deeper level while doing something positive to sustain it and keep it viable.

The union can use technology to try to make members feel a sense of belonging by holding bi-annual zoom calls to touch base and provide updates. These meetings could include discussing new and upcoming events, issues and negotiations. These will help to provide information while bringing people together.

Finally, ask the members what they want to change, experience and what they may need help with. Knowing how to actively and efficiently engage with team members in the future leads to a better understanding with all parties, allows for unions to push ahead in making workplaces a better environment and make sure they know they can trust what the union is saying and that they will follow through on their promises, guidance and helping employees in need.

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