



# GUIDE TO ORGANIZING PROFESSIONALS

2018 EDITION





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## ABOUT DPE

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) is a coalition of 23 national unions that represent professional and technical employees. DPE affiliates represent millions of professionals in:

- ▶ Education and healthcare;
- ▶ Science, engineering, and technology;
- ▶ Legal, business, and management;
- ▶ Media, entertainment, and the arts; and
- ▶ Public administration.

Professionals are essential to the future of the labor movement. DPE organizing materials, research, programs, and presentations help its affiliate unions organize more professional and technical employees and effectively represent current members.

## DPE MISSION

The DPE mission is to assist its affiliated unions in achieving their objectives. DPE does this by:

- ▶ Providing a forum for its affiliates to collaborate, connect, and act;
- ▶ Assisting affiliates in their efforts to organize, represent, and bargain on behalf of professional and technical employees;
- ▶ Communicating the value of union membership to professional and technical employees and the public;
- ▶ Advancing the interests of professional and technical employees through public policy and legislative advocacy;
- ▶ Building alliances with professional associations and societies to promote the interests of professional and technical employees; and
- ▶ Encouraging diversity in the professional and technical workforce.

DPE is an AFL-CIO trade department and as such is independent from the AFL-CIO allowing DPE to focus solely on advancing the interests of its affiliated unions.

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Photo courtesy of AFT

## INTRODUCTION

Professionals are an important part of the labor movement. Membership is increasing and union professionals can be found in nearly every profession and across all sectors. Long-term commitment to their professions and power in the workplace derived from their expertise makes it possible to build strong bargaining units of professionals.

Building and sustaining an organizing program that motivates professionals to join together to improve the workplace is the objective of all unions organizing professionals. *DPE's Guide to Organizing Professionals* seeks to give organizers the information they need to develop a campaign that will resonate with professionals. The strategies included herein are applicable to new organizing, internal organizing, and new hire orientations.

The 2018 edition of *DPE's Guide to Organizing Professionals* includes new data from DPE's October 2016 survey of 1,004 non-union professionals. Survey respondents were selected randomly from across the country and employed in most professions. DPE's 2016 survey gathered information to help its affiliates organize professionals by learning about non-union professionals' attitudes toward unions.

While support for a union varied among respondents based on demographic, political, and economic factors, the survey showed that in all cases there was the ability to increase support. Specifically, DPE's

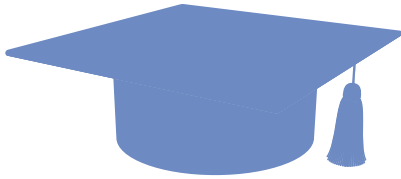
survey asked twice, once at the beginning of the survey and again at the end of the survey, whether the respondents would support a proposal to have a union in their workplace to represent them and other professionals. When asked initially, 56 percent of all professionals would support a union at work, which increased to 60 percent when asked the same question at the conclusion of the survey. Typically, there were only small percentages of professionals who were strongly opposed to a proposal for a union at work.

*DPE's Guide to Organizing Professionals* provides information to help organizers build strong, majority support. The *Guide* details issue strategies needed to build support within a bargaining unit as well as the campaign strategies necessary to make an organizing campaign successful.

Suggestions are made for developing messages that are tailored to potential members based on their age, work sector, political party, gender, race and ethnicity, and earnings. Reaching all potential bargaining unit members with messages that speak to their needs and values will help to build and solidify support for a union at work.

The *Guide* also provides information on: generating organizing leads; building support among professionals who are persuadable or undecided; and addressing frequently asked questions by potential bargaining unit members.

## PROFESSIONALS ARE DEFINED AS



Those with at least  
an academic  
associate's degree

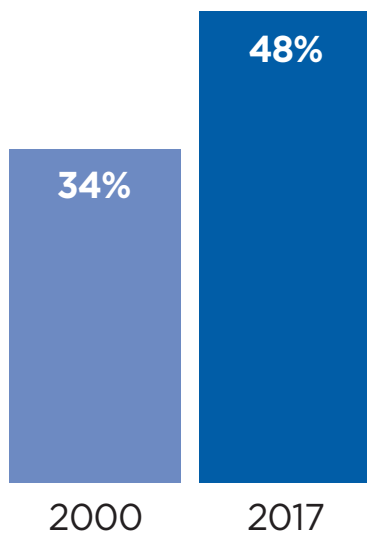
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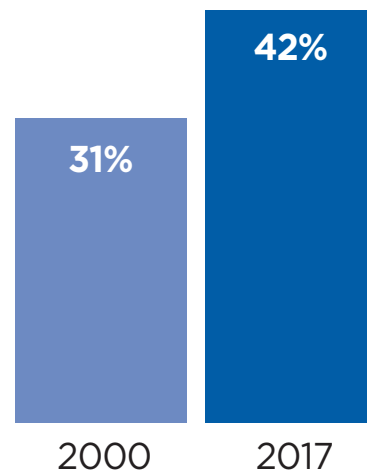
Those employed  
in a professional or  
technical occupation

## PROFESSIONALS HAVE INCREASED THEIR DENSITY AMONG UNION MEMBERS

**Union members with  
at least an  
academic associate's degree**



**Union members who were  
employed in a professional  
or technical occupation**







## UNIONS AND PROFESSIONALS

When many people think of union members, images of traditional blue-collar workers employed in a trade come to mind. Many may be surprised to learn that professionals, those in a professional occupation<sup>1</sup> or with advanced education, are actually a growing segment of the labor movement. Professionals have power in the workplace and are increasingly joining together to take a stand to advance their personal and professional interests. DPE's survey of professionals revealed that professionals are largely pro-union and organizing opportunities exist in a diverse array of occupations and sectors. DPE affiliates interested in analysis of specific industries, occupations, and sectors can request DPE research assistance to identify where organizing opportunities may exist. DPE has completed reports analyzing the healthcare and utility industries.

### GROWTH OF THE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE AND UNION MEMBERS

From 2008 to 2017, employment in professional and technical occupations grew faster than the U.S. workforce as a whole.

- ▶ From 2008 to 2017, the wage and salary workforce in the U.S. grew six percent, while employment in professional and technical occupations increased 17 percent.
- ▶ In 2017, there were over 53 million professional and technical jobs in the U.S. workforce.
- ▶ From 2008 to 2017, employment of those with at least an associate's degree in an academic program increased 22 percent.

- ▶ In 2017, there were over 65 million employees in the U.S. workforce with at least an associate's degree in an academic program.

### PROFILE OF UNION PROFESSIONALS

Union member professionals were more diverse than non-union members in 2017, including greater concentrations of women and racial and ethnic minorities. Among advanced degree holding union members, 58 percent were women in 2017. Among union members in professional and technical occupations, 66 percent were women in 2017. Union members in professional and technical occupations were more likely than their non-union counterparts to be a racial or ethnic minority. Improvements in minority representation among professionals between 2008 and 2017 was largely due to increases in Asian and Hispanic union professionals.

One area where unions can focus on making improvements is among young professionals. In 2017, just nine percent of professionals aged 34 years and younger employed in a professional or technical occupation were union members. Among professionals aged 35 and older, 12 percent were union members.

As discussed below, DPE's 2016 survey of non-union professionals found that women, minorities, and young people were the most supportive of having union representation in their workplace.

<sup>1</sup> As defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, professional and technical occupations include: management; business and finance; computer and mathematical science; architecture and engineering; life, physical, and social science; community and social service; legal; education, training, and library; arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media; and healthcare practitioner and technical.




Photo courtesy of AFM

## GENERATING ORGANIZING LEADS

The following are suggestions for how unions can proactively reach out to professionals and raise their union's profile in an effort to generate organizing leads. Unions may be most effective if they develop separate materials and resources for specific professions they are organizing, like accountants, lawyers, or social workers.

**Publicize Organizing Victories.** Many professionals learn that a union is organizing people in their profession when they read about an organizing victory in the news or on social media. Unions should publicize every organizing victory and bargaining gain, including on social media. Publicizing organizing victories can help build momentum for future organizing.

**Professional Association Conventions and Meetings.** Many professionals are members of a professional association. Most professional associations allow unions to exhibit at their conventions and meetings for a modest sum. There are hundreds of professional associations and many have both national and state chapters. If you want to organize pharmacists in California, then consider exhibiting at the California Pharmacists Association meeting. If your union already represents pharmacists, engage current members by asking them to staff your union's exhibit space.

**Union Website Content.** Professionals searching for a union to join are more likely to discover your

union if you have content about their profession on your website. Your union can attract professionals to its website with content that is relevant to the professions it wants to organize. If your union wants to organize social workers, create a page on your website about social workers, which demonstrates your knowledge of the profession and the difference your union can make for its social worker members. Many professionals have a strong occupational identity and may feel more comfortable with a union that has demonstrated knowledge of their profession.

**Publications or Websites Aimed at Professionals.**

Professionals consume information about their profession. Advertising opportunities likely exist in professional association newsletters, magazines, and websites. Advertising the benefits of union membership can also be done using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. with targeted ads to people who work in specific professions.

**Professional Degree Programs.** Professionals can be reached before they enter the professional workforce by reaching out to students in professional degree programs, including juris doctor, medical doctor, master's of library science, master's of social work, engineering, and pharmacy. Outreach can be done at school-sponsored job fairs, in publications, or on websites that offer services and resources to students or recent graduates.





Photo courtesy of WGAE

## ISSUE AND CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

A campaign to organize professionals will likely involve two strategies: an issue strategy and a campaign strategy. The issue strategy will focus on developing campaign messages that will help to build majority support in the unit. The campaign strategy will focus on the tactics necessary to get the organizing message out and build and maintain solidarity throughout the campaign.

### ISSUE STRATEGIES

Developing an issue strategy involves identifying and utilizing the personal, professional, and workplace issues that will persuade professionals to join together in union. The issues your campaign highlights are likely related to the factors that motivated the professionals to contact the union in the first place. Professionals are mostly satisfied with their jobs and employer, so a campaign will have to do more than speak to outstanding grievances. DPE's attitudinal survey of professionals found the below issues were compelling reasons for professionals to join together.

**Make Pocketbook Improvements.** An organizing message that details how joining together in union can help professionals improve their pay, healthcare, and retirement benefits is likely to be persuasive. In DPE's survey of professionals, improving pay and benefits were the most convincing reasons for the majority of professionals to support a proposal for a union at work.

Combining self-interest issues (wages and benefits) with professional concerns (staffing, safety, access to resources, or quality standards) is likely to be even more persuasive. Identifying the personal interests and relevant professional concerns will help to craft an organizing message that wins majority support.

#### EXAMPLES:

- ▶ *We are standing together not only to receive the salaries we deserve, but to improve hospital staffing to ensure our patients receive the best care.*
- ▶ *We need to join together in union to receive fair pay and ensure management does not put the financial bottom line ahead of quality and service.*

#### Stand up to Management to Defend Employees.

Professionals want a union that will stand up to management and defend employees' interests. Inequity in the workplace, whether it is based on favoritism, gender, or race and ethnicity, is likely to cause professionals to push back and seek a remedy. Detail how joining together can help professionals stand unified to bring about workplace change.

#### EXAMPLES:

- ▶ *If we join together in union we will have the ability to push back against management's arbitrary changes to things like paid leave, health insurance coverage, and professional development reimbursement.*

- ▶ *Joining together in union means that if we see a manager behaving unprofessionally toward our colleague, we can intervene and ask for a transfer or some other remedy.*

**Gain a Voice at Work.** Professionals expect, based on their professional expertise, to be consulted by management when work functions, processes, strategies, or policies are changed. Exclusion from decision making motivates professionals to seek a formal system for achieving a voice at work and equal status with management.

**EXAMPLES:**

- ▶ *We need a voice at work because if we see a problem in the workplace we need to be able to speak up without fear of retaliation.*
- ▶ *We need a voice at work because management should not be allowed to change our sick leave policy without our input.*

**Defend Quality.** Professionals insist on delivering the highest quality service or product. They do not want barriers to doing their jobs well. Inadequate staffing, supplies, training, or management indifference are all likely to affect quality. When management actions prevent professionals from achieving the highest professional standards, it is likely to motivate professionals to join together and seek a union that speaks out on behalf of quality work and service.

**EXAMPLES:**

- ▶ *Management is understaffing our projects, which makes it nearly impossible to produce the highest quality programs. If we join together in union it will give us the best chance to have the resources we need to make the employer successful and do the job right.*
- ▶ *Management is not providing the resources we need to ensure our patients are receiving the highest quality of care. If we stand together in union we will be able to make a stronger case for getting the resources our patients need.*

**Improve the Labor-Management Relationship.**

Most professionals want to work cooperatively with management to develop solutions. A message that emphasizes how joining together in union can be a vehicle for effective labor-management cooperation

is likely to win over professionals. Unions may consider including examples or testimonials from current members that show how membership in the union has brought people together and improved labor-management relations.

**EXAMPLE:**

- ▶ *If we join together in union we will be able to negotiate for the right to have bi-weekly meetings with management to talk about workplace issues and how to resolve them.*

**CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES**

The campaign strategies below focus on the tactics needed to build and maintain solidarity among professionals in an organizing campaign. Not discussed below, but of central importance in an organizing campaign is the necessity of talking to every potential unit member and asking them to support the organizing effort.

**Demonstrate Your Union's Effectiveness.** Professionals want to belong to a union that is effective. Demonstrating to potential members that your union is effective in organizing, improving the workplace, and representing members will help to build support for the organizing drive. Providing tangible examples of past success is likely to be persuasive.

**Let Professionals Lead.** Professionals want reassurances that they will have a powerful voice in governing any organization that represents them. Organizers can demonstrate that this will be the case by allowing professionals to guide decision making during the campaign. In the case of mixed units, professionals should be proportionally represented on committees and given assurances that their workplace issues will be fully addressed.

**Present a Positive Message.** Professionals are more likely to be persuaded to join together in union if the campaign is being led with a positive, solution-driven message. The campaign should focus on how joining together in union will help make the workplace better and help professionals do their job more effectively.

**Avoid Attacks on Management.** Attacking management is not likely to benefit your campaign. Instead, campaign messages should emphasize

that by coming together in union, professionals are able to effectively and cooperatively negotiate with management on issues affecting the workplace.

**Address Misconceptions about Unions.** Professionals do not know a lot about unions representing professionals. DPE's survey of non-union professionals showed that less than one-third reported knowing a great deal or a fair amount about unions representing professionals. Thus, organizers will need to educate potential members about unions and collective bargaining, including addressing union myths. DPE's survey showed that majorities of professionals were concerned that: unions were too involved in politics; unions protect poorly performing employees; unions create conflict between employees and management; unions often work to benefit union leaders rather than members; and paying union dues is not worth what you get in return. Addressing concerns about unions in the workplace should be viewed as an opportunity to educate professionals about unions, talk about what unions actually do, and communicate the effectiveness of joining together to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions.

**Show Knowledge of and Commitment to the Profession.** An important message for organizers to convey is that the union is knowledgeable about the profession and understands the specific concerns of people working in the profession. Organizers that come from the profession they are organizing or have thorough knowledge of the profession are likely to gain trust and have greater credibility. For example, accountants organizing accountants or engineers organizing engineers. If it is a unit of mixed professions, then the organizer should have a professional background.

**Utilize a Comprehensive Campaign Strategy.** Research has shown that organizing campaigns that utilize five or more comprehensive campaign strategies are more likely to be successful. The same is true for organizing professionals. Comprehensive campaign strategies include:<sup>2</sup>

- ▶ **Adequate and appropriate staff and financial resources.** Organizing staff should reflect the education and diversity of the potential unit. As a guide, having one organizer for every one to two hundred employees ensures there is adequate staffing for a campaign.
- ▶ **Active and representative rank-and file organizing committee.** The organizing committee should be involved in the planning and execution of the campaign. The committee must also reflect the gender, racial, and ethnic makeup of the unit as well as be representative of the work that is produced.
- ▶ **Participation of union members from other workplaces as volunteer organizers.** The campaign should utilize at least five non-staff union members who are considered professionals to engage with members of the bargaining unit. The union members who are volunteer organizers should be seen as professionals by the employees they are helping to organize.
- ▶ **Person-to-person contact inside and outside the workplace.** The organizers should hold one-on-one meetings with a majority of the unit and have at least 10 small group meetings leading up to the election.
- ▶ **Assessment of union support.** The organizers should systematically evaluate support for the union and be able to demonstrate public support through a petition or other means with at least 60 percent of the employees.
- ▶ **Creative, escalating internal pressure tactics utilizing members in the workplace.** The campaign should utilize two or more of these tactics: five or more solidarity days, job actions, rallies, march for recognition, or union supporters on employee involvement committees.
- ▶ **Creative, escalating external pressure tactics.** These should involve members outside the workplace, locally, nationally, or internationally.
- ▶ **Build for the first contract before the election.** The union should create a bargaining committee; get employees involved in developing bargaining proposals; and/or survey at least 70 percent of the bargaining unit in one-on-one meetings on what should be in a contract.

2 Kate Bronfenbrenner and Robert Hickey, "Changing to Organize: A National Assessment of Union Organizing Strategies," Cornell University, 2004.





## TAILORED ISSUE STRATEGIES

DPE’s survey of non-union professionals showed that professionals’ attitudes toward unions can differ based on age, work sector, political party, gender, race and ethnicity, and earnings. This section provides information from DPE’s survey to help organizers tailor messages to potential members.

While national surveys of professionals are helpful in gaining an understanding about attitude differences, organizers should also survey potential members to ensure their campaign is addressing the specific needs of the members.

### AGE

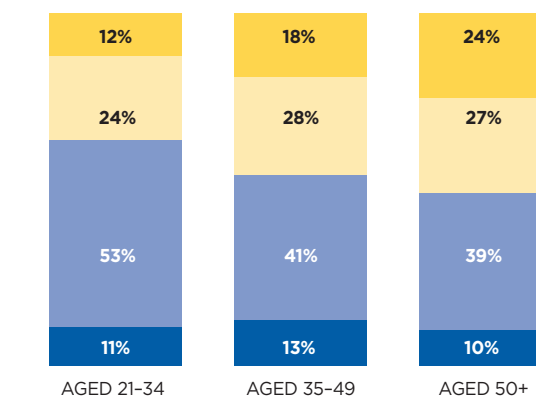
Younger and older professionals were similar in a number of ways, including their preference for a union that would improve their pay, be effective, and put members first. However, younger and older professionals had different priorities for workplace improvements and different attitudes toward unions.

Generally, older professionals were skeptical about the effectiveness of joining together in union. This is not to imply that organizers should assume all professionals under the age of 35 would vote to support a union at work or that all professionals 50 and older would vote to oppose. Organizers should have conversations with all potential members, but a potential member’s age may inform the substance of the conversation.

### Professionals aged 21-34

- ▶ For young professionals, an organizing message that communicates how a union can help them advance in their careers and improve work-life balance is likely to be persuasive.
- ▶ Young professionals were more concerned than older professionals that having a union would increase conflict between employees and management. Thus, providing more information about labor management cooperation may be helpful.

### LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR A UNION BY AGE



- Strongly disapprove
- Somewhat disapprove
- Somewhat approve
- Strongly approve

*Responses when asked if respondents would approve or disapprove of a proposal to have a union in their workplace to represent them and other professional employees in their position.*

### Professionals aged 50 and older

- ▶ Older professionals were more likely to be receptive to an organizing message that communicated how joining together in union could help improve retirement and healthcare benefits.
- ▶ Older professionals were more likely to be concerned that having a union would mean that poorly performing employees would receive protection in the workplace.
- ▶ Older professionals may require more information that demonstrates joining together in union will make workplace improvements, including paid leave and vacations, safety and health conditions in the workplace, job security, and healthcare and retirement benefits.

## WORK SECTOR

Attitudes towards unions and work differed among professionals working in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. All three sectors expressed majority support for a union in the workplace, but the degree of support varied. Professionals in all three sectors agreed that improving salaries and raises was the top priority for workplace improvement in the next couple of years. Benefits were also a big concern in the nonprofit sector.

### Public sector

- ▶ Public sector professionals were more likely to have strained relations with management, thus, organizing messages will likely need to address improving management relations.
- ▶ Public sector professionals were more likely to experience unfair treatment and feel undervalued. Organizers should emphasize that joining together in union can amplify voices and help ensure a fair and equitable workplace.

### Nonprofit sector

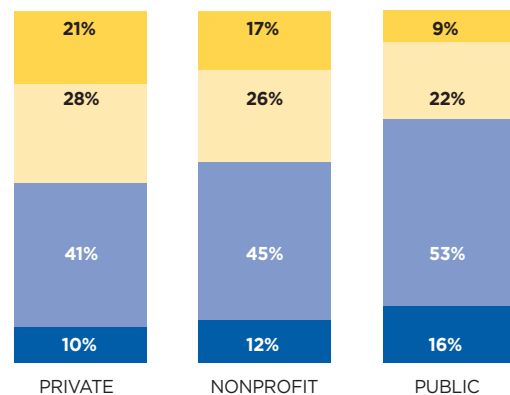
- ▶ Nonprofit sector professionals had the highest rates of job and employer satisfaction and were concerned that a union may negatively impact the relationship between employees and management.

- ▶ For nonprofit sector professionals, the most convincing reason to have a union was to receive better benefits, such as lower out-of-pocket healthcare costs and guaranteed pension plans for retirement.
- ▶ Organizers should consider organizing messages that focus on strengthening nonprofit employers while ensuring that nonprofit professionals are able to enjoy quality of life and a secure retirement.

### Private sector

- ▶ Private sector professionals wanted better pay without sacrificing work-life balance.
- ▶ Private sector professionals were the least likely to believe unions were effective these days at making wage, benefit, and working condition improvements for professionals.
- ▶ Private sector professionals were more likely to be concerned that having a union would mean individual achievement could not be rewarded. When necessary, organizers should explain that union contracts can provide for bonus and merit pay.

### LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR A UNION BY WORK SECTOR



- Strongly disapprove
- Somewhat disapprove
- Somewhat approve
- Strongly approve

*Responses when asked if respondents would approve or disapprove of a proposal to have a union in their workplace to represent them and other professional employees in their position.*



## POLITICAL PARTY

Professionals' attitudes toward unions largely fell along party lines with strong support from Democrats and strong opposition from Republicans. Organizers should be able to build strong majority support among Democrats.

Republicans, and to some extent Independents, are going to be harder to persuade. Organizers talking to Republicans and Independents will need to disseminate an organizing message with broad appeal and work to address union myths that tend to be widely held by Republicans and Independents. In many cases organizers may have to make educated guesses about potential members' political party affiliation.

### Democrats

- ▶ Democrats showed strong majority support for a union in the workplace, but their support should not be assumed since less than one-fifth were *strongly* supportive of a proposal for a union in their workplace.
- ▶ Democrats believed receiving better salaries and annual raises was the most convincing reason to have a union.

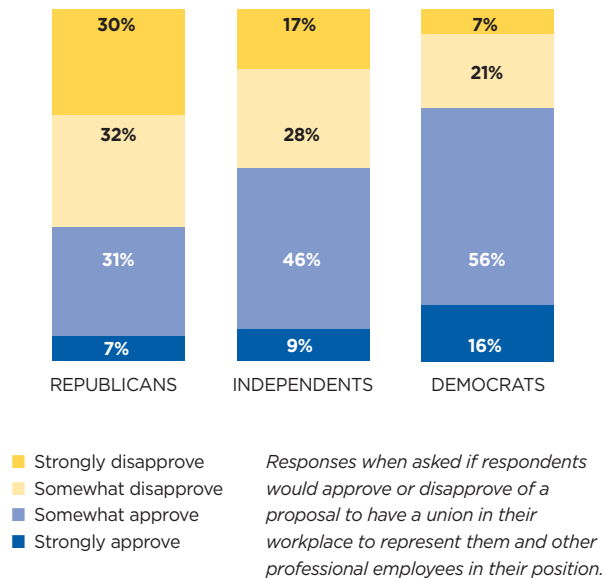
### Independents

- ▶ Independents were skeptical about the ability of unions to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for professionals.
- ▶ Independents were most likely to increase their support for a union at work—signaling the importance of educating these open-minded professionals. Providing basic information that demonstrates why joining together is the most effective way to improve the workplace is likely to be persuasive to Independents.
- ▶ Independents believed receiving better salaries and annual raises was the most convincing reason to have a union.

### Republicans

- ▶ Republicans had real doubts about whether unions were effective these days at improving wages, benefits, and working conditions for professionals.
- ▶ Seventy percent of Republican professionals were open to more information about the possibility of joining together in union.

## LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR A UNION BY POLITICAL PARTY



- ▶ Limited knowledge about unions and widely held anti-union sentiments likely fueled opposition. However, Republicans indicated that they wanted workplace improvements. Making a strong case that joining together is the most effective way to improve the workplace may be convincing.
- ▶ Republicans believed improving salaries and benefits were nearly equally convincing reasons to have a union at work.

## GENDER AND AGE

Women professionals were more likely than their male counterparts to be receptive to joining together in union. Organizers may face obstacles in organizing men who are aged 45 and older.

Organizers should work to build support among women and male professionals aged 44 and younger in an effort to inoculate against an anti-union campaign. Among older male professionals, organizers should be prepared to respond to questions about unions, including protecting poorly performing employees, involvement in politics, conflict between employees and management, and the cost of dues.

## Women

- ▶ Women were more likely to see the benefit of joining together to have a stronger voice in decisions on the job and stand united to negotiate with management to make workplace improvements.
- ▶ Women tended to be more concerned than men that having a union could result in workplace disruption, including conflict between employees and management, disruption of workplace relationships, and strikes.
- ▶ Women aged 44 and under reported knowing the least about unions representing professionals. Organizers should work to educate young professional women about unions and collective bargaining.

## Men

- ▶ Male professionals tended to be more concerned about union involvement in politics.
- ▶ Younger male professionals were concerned about the cost of dues and that having a union may prevent them from being rewarded for their individual efforts and achievements. Organizers, especially those in the private sector, should explain how a union contract can provide for merit and bonus pay.
- ▶ Male professionals aged 45 and older were least likely to believe that unions were effective these

days in making wage, benefit, and working condition improvements for professionals. Just 25 percent believed unions were effective.

- ▶ Older male professionals will likely need more convincing that joining together in union is in their best interest and will improve pay, benefits, voice in decisions, safety and health, job security, and respect for professionals.

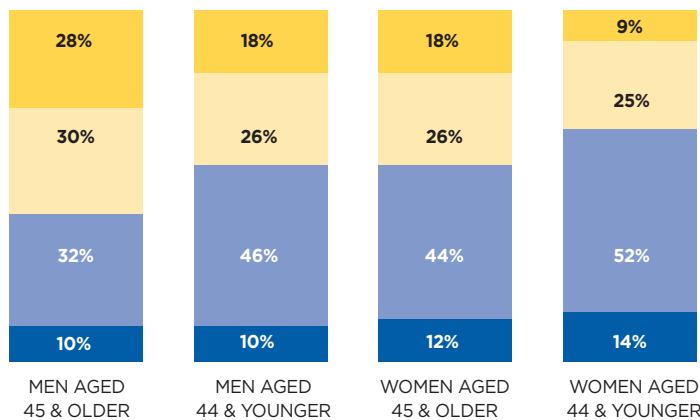
## RACE AND ETHNICITY

Professionals of color and White professionals had similar attitudes about their work, including pay, benefits, career advancement opportunities, and having a voice in decisions that affect them. However, they were divided in their support for a union in the workplace. Professionals of color, including Hispanic, Latino, Black, African American, and Asian professionals strongly favored joining together in union at work. White professionals were much more skeptical and in fact a majority did not favor joining together.

### Professionals of color

- ▶ Professionals of color were more likely to identify problems with management as serious problems.
- ▶ Professionals of color were more likely than White professionals to believe their employer did not care about its professional employees and treat them fairly.

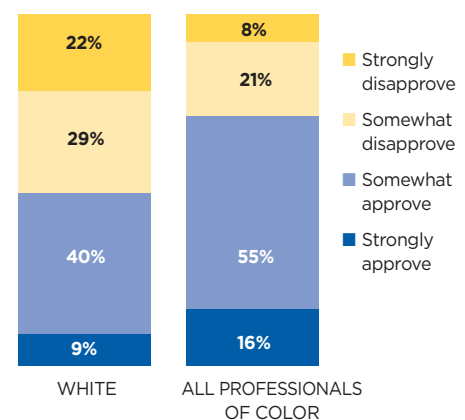
### LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR A UNION BY GENDER & AGE



■ Strongly disapprove  
■ Somewhat disapprove  
■ Somewhat approve  
■ Strongly approve

*Responses when asked if respondents would approve or disapprove of a proposal to have a union in their workplace to represent them and other professional employees in their position.*

### LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR A UNION BY RACE & ETHNICITY



■ Strongly disapprove  
■ Somewhat disapprove  
■ Somewhat approve  
■ Strongly approve

*Responses when asked if respondents would approve or disapprove of a proposal to have a union in their workplace to represent them and other professional employees in their position.*

- ▶ Professionals of color had a strong preference for a union that stood for equality.

### White professionals

- ▶ Large percentages of White professionals believed that having a union could make *no difference* in their pay, benefits, job security, and paid leave and vacations.
- ▶ White professionals were more likely to believe negative statements about unions were true as opposed to positive statements. For example, White professionals were more likely to believe unions were unreasonable as opposed to reasonable, old fashioned and backward-looking as opposed to innovative, and look out for their own agenda as opposed to the interests of members.
- ▶ White professionals wanted workplace improvements, including better pay, benefits, opportunities for advancement, and a voice at work. Organizing White professionals will likely require both making a clear case for how joining together in union can help improve their workplace and educating them about unions.

## EARNINGS

Earning levels among potential unit members will likely affect organizing messages. Lower earning professionals tended to be more focused on joining together to make pocketbook improvements, especially salary and annual raise improvements. Conversely, the highest earning professionals were less likely to be convinced to join together with a message focused on salaries and annual raises.

### Lower earning professionals

- ▶ Professionals earning \$50,000 or less per year were more likely to feel undervalued and unappreciated. As earnings increased, the feeling of being valued and respected for their skills and knowledge increased.
- ▶ Professionals earning \$50,000 or less per year were more likely to be concerned about the cost of union dues, in fact, it was their biggest concern with having a union.
- ▶ Professionals earning under \$75,001 per year tended to be less satisfied with particular aspects of their work, like opportunities for advancement, opportunities for continuing education and professional growth, and salaries and annual raises.

### Highest earning professionals

- ▶ Professionals earning over \$100,000 per year found improving annual salaries and raises a lower priority for workplace change. They were more likely to support joining together in union to improve their healthcare and retirement benefits.
- ▶ Other noneconomic workplace issues organizers may consider focusing on include improving work-life balance, career advancement opportunities, and specific professional concerns like staffing levels.
- ▶ Professionals earning over \$100,000 per year were more likely to believe unions discourage individual achievement. High earning professionals were not likely aware that a union contract can allow for merit pay, bonuses, or other compensation based on performance. Including this information in organizing materials and messages may be persuasive.

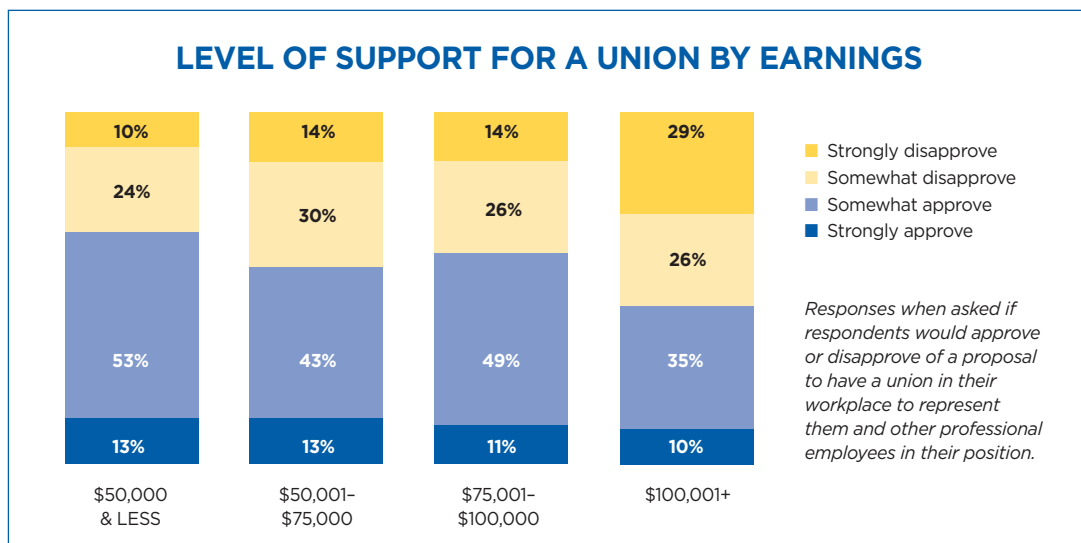




Photo courtesy of IBEW

## BUILDING UNION SUPPORT AMONG PROFESSIONALS OPEN TO PERSUASION


An alternative to tailoring messages based on demographic, political, and economic factors is to craft messages based on a potential members' level of support or opposition for a union. Organizers commonly classify potential members based on their likely support for joining together in union. In such a system, a "one" is a solidly pro-union employee, and a "four" is a decidedly anti-union employee. Between these extremes are "twos" and "threes," the fence-sitters who must be convinced that supporting a union is in their self-interest.

The unit members classified as "ones" are likely the potential organizers that initiate conversations with "twos," "threes," and "fours." Although "fours" may be strongly anti-union, they should nevertheless

be asked to support the union effort. "Fours" may be convinced to join the effort if they see that the campaign is being led by their colleagues in a professional manner.

In DPE's survey of non-union professionals, 31 percent of respondents were strongly pro-union and could be classified as "ones." Respondents classified as "fours" were 20 percent of respondents.

An organizing campaign's success will hinge on winning over the "twos" and "threes." Understanding the characteristics that define "twos" and "threes" can help organizers craft targeted, strategic messages that will help persuade these professionals to support having a union in their workplace.

	"ONES"	"TWOS"	"THREES"	"FOURS"
POTENTIAL MEMBER CLASSIFICATION 	Strongly pro-union and tend to believe that a union could make workplace improvements.	Majority would approve of a union at work. Majority believed having a union would not make things much better at work.	Majority leaned against having a union at work. Divided on whether having a union would make things better or worse.	Strongly anti-union and will likely be very resistant to a union in their workplace.

Results from DPE’s survey of non-union professionals showed that 26 percent of respondents were “twos.” These professionals would tend to approve of a union at work, but the majority also believed having a union would not make things much better at work. DPE’s survey also found that 23 percent of respondents were “threes,” and held mixed feelings about unions. “Threes” were likely to lean against having a union at work, and they were divided on whether having a union would make things better or worse.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH “TWOS:” PROFESSIONALS WHO LEAN PRO-UNION**

“Twos” were more likely to fit the demographic profile of a union supporter—professional of color and Democrat—but questioned union effectiveness. Organizers must demonstrate to “twos” that unions are effective in improving professionals’ wages, benefits, and working conditions.

- ▶ Provide tangible examples of your union’s prior success in achieving workplace gains on behalf of the same or similar types of professionals.
- ▶ Make the case for your union. Communicate the qualities your union possess like effectiveness and putting members first as well as the values it stands for like fairness, opportunity, and equality.

- ▶ Consider engaging “twos” by showing the extra benefits of joining together in union—networking, participation in social events, participation on sports teams, political activism, or any other activity that your union may utilize to engage members inside and outside the workplace.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH “THREES:” PROFESSIONALS WHO LEAN ANTI-UNION**

“Threes” were more likely to be White and Republicans, with a political ideology that leaned toward moderate as opposed to conservative. Organizers must demonstrate to “threes” that unions are effective in improving professionals’ wages, benefits, and working conditions *and* address concerns about having a union at work.

- ▶ Provide tangible examples of your union’s prior success in achieving workplace gains on behalf of the same or similar types of professionals.
- ▶ Proactively address concerns about having a union at work, specifically the notion that a union would worsen the quality of work and productivity and the relationship between professionals and management.
- ▶ Demonstrate that joining together could make a difference in respect for professional employees, flexible work schedules, and professionals’ voice in decisions on the job.





Photo by Susan Barrows

## CONCLUSION

Professionals support joining together to create change in the workplace. However, they may be susceptible to an anti-union campaign by management because many professionals lack knowledge about unions representing professionals and question the effectiveness of unions. DPE's *Guide to Organizing Professionals* provides organizers with insights into how to build and maintain support among professionals in an organizing campaign.

Organizers can further build support by ensuring that their organizing messages appeal to potential unit members by understanding how demographic, political, and economic differences influence attitudes toward unions. Professionals will be more likely to join together if organizing messages speak to their outstanding needs and concerns.

Organizers interested in additional survey data from DPE's 2016 survey of non-union professionals should contact DPE.



Photo courtesy of UWUA

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY POTENTIAL UNIT MEMBERS

**Q: But isn't it "unprofessional" to join a union?**

**A:** Over six million doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, professors, news reporters, broadcasters, actors, engineers, accountants, school teachers, nurses, and people in nearly every other profession were union members in 2017. These skilled and highly trained professionals chose to work together through their unions to gain a voice in decisions that affect them and improve their workplace. Nothing could be more professional.

**Q: Don't unions just protect poorly performing employees?**

**A:** Union representation does not prevent management from disciplining or terminating poorly performing employees. Union representation only requires that management follow procedures outlined in the collective bargaining agreement pertaining to employee discipline or termination—procedures that management agreed to. Discipline and termination provisions exist solely to prevent arbitrary and unfair treatment by management.

No one benefits from poorly performing employees in the workplace, especially their colleagues.

**Q: How effective are unions at improving wages and benefits?**

**A:** Women and men who are represented by unions bring home more money than non-union

employees. This "union advantage"—more money in union members' paychecks—exists in almost every occupation, from service and factory workers to clerical and professional employees.

Union members are also much more likely than non-union members to have an employer-provided healthcare and pension plan.

**Q: What can a union do on things like working conditions and hours of work?**

**A:** Union contracts often provide for fair and flexible working hours, better pay for overtime and work on evenings and weekends, more paid holidays, paid family and medical leave, and employer help with child care and elder care. With today's unions, professionals have a better chance to balance both their budgets and their schedules.

**Q: Won't a union stifle individual achievement with things like raises and promotions determined solely by seniority?**

**A:** With collective bargaining, management and the employees must agree on the mechanisms to be used and standards to be employed in determining pay and promotions. Professionals may bargain for any viable wage and promotion system they believe best suits their profession and employment, including minimum salaries, cost of living increases, performance increases, bonuses, and merit pay.

**Q: What guarantees do I have that my union leadership won't commit me to follow rules that I don't agree with?**

**A:** There are no guarantees that you will agree with everything contained in a union contract, just as there are no guarantees that you will agree with everything contained in the employee handbook. However, there are ways to ensure the union contract is serving members. First, a contract must be approved by a majority vote of the union members in the bargaining unit. Second, the union officers who negotiate the contracts that are voted upon by members are elected by the members they serve, with elections happening every three years.

**Q: As a professional, will I lose individual rights if I join a union?**

**A:** No and in fact you have more rights. In a non-union workplace, management retains the legal right to make all decisions regarding the workplace. Benefits—including pay, pensions, healthcare, severance, vacations, and holidays—can be arbitrarily cut without notice to the employees. With a union, benefits and other working conditions cannot be changed at the whim of a manager or upper management.

**Q: Will having a union make my employer less competitive?**

**A:** Unions do not ask for more in a contract than an employer can afford. They know that the worst disservice a union could do to its members is to make the employer less competitive. Many of the world's largest and most successful businesses are unionized.

**Q: As a professional, my training leads me to try to solve problems. Does the collective bargaining process always have to be adversarial?**

**A:** No, it doesn't and is often not adversarial. The vast majority of contracts between professionals and management are negotiated civilly and professionally. Labor-management cooperation is the norm and many successful examples exist. For example, national unions representing 150,000 front-line caregivers in 31 union locals bargained collectively with Kaiser Permanente, one of the nation's largest healthcare providers. Their agreement gives front-line healthcare workers a greater voice in the crucial decisions affecting the quality of patient care at Kaiser facilities.

**Q: Does being "pro-union" mean that you are "anti-management?"**

**A:** Being pro-union helps create stronger employers! Unions want the employer to be successful, and it is not ungrateful or disloyal to want a voice in our workplace.

If you work in the private sector—and increasingly in the nonprofit sector—your Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has a contract that spells out to the letter his or her salary, bonuses, severance package, and other benefits. No one questions the loyalty of the CEO to the organization, so why should it be any different for the professionals who work there?

**Q: Why are unions involved in politics?**

**A:** Today's unions help professionals make their voices heard in their communities and across the country. Through their unions, professionals are able to speak with a unified voice in Washington, D.C. and state and local government, so they can influence issues and legislation that impact their industry and profession. Unions listen to members about their concerns, inform members about current issues, and let members know whether their public officials are helping or hurting working people.

# DPE ORGANIZING RESOURCES



## 1. Extend the Invitation: A 10 Step Approach to Internal Organizing

- ▶ Released in August 2016, Extend the Invitation was designed so that anyone could pick it up and develop and launch an internal organizing campaign in their workplace.
- ▶ Extend the Invitation is applicable to professionals and non-professionals.



## 2. Growing Your Union: Engaging Professionals through New Hire Orientation

- ▶ Released in March 2017, best practices for new hires were identified based on interviews with union staff and leadership.
- ▶ This guide offers simple, practical ways for union leaders and staff to develop or enhance orientations for new potential bargaining unit members. An effective orientation program can have a lasting and outsized impact on the future strength of unions.

## 3. Attitudinal Survey of Professionals

- ▶ Survey of 1,004 non-union professional and technical workers was conducted by Hart Research Associates in October 2016.
- ▶ DPE utilized survey results to create analysis on the attitudes of:
  - Young professionals aged 21 to 34
  - Professionals aged 50 and older
  - Women professionals
  - Male professionals aged 21 to 44
  - Male professionals aged 45 and older
  - White professionals
  - Professionals of color
  - Private, for-profit sector professionals
  - Nonprofit sector professionals
  - Public sector professionals
  - Healthcare professionals
  - Professionals who disapprove of a union at work
  - Professionals by amount of earnings
  - Democrats and Republicans
  - Southerners, Westerners, Midwesterners, and Northeasterners
- ▶ DPE analysis includes: professionals' attitudes about unions; knowledge of unions and opinions on union effectiveness; advantages and benefits of union membership; disadvantages and concerns with having a union; preferred union qualities and values; perspectives on current job; and perspectives on their profession.

Print and electronic copies of DPE organizing resources are available for staff and members of DPE-affiliated unions. DPE staff can also make presentations on any of the above resources.





# DPE AFFILIATED UNIONS

Actors' Equity Association (AEA)

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)

American Federation of Musicians (AFM)

American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA)

American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA)

Federation of Professional Athletes (FPA)

Guild of Italian American Actors (GIAA)

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts (IATSE)

International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT)

Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU)

Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)

Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU)

SAG-AFTRA

Seafarers International Union of North America (SIU)

Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC)

United Steelworkers (USW)

Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA)

Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE)



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