

Questions I'd Like to Ask Union Executives

According to the media, organized labor is pressuring Democratic Congressional leadership for payback in making it easier for unions to organize employees. Efforts to pass the so-called Employee Free Choice Act is being vigorously opposed by business owners, most of the Chambers of Commerce in the US, and other powerful lobbies.

Opposition to this legislation appears to be focused on the concept of removing the secret ballot from the organizing process. This focus misses a more fundamental and critical aspect of union participation in any organization. The right of employees to organize or not to organize has never been in question. The critical question is: does a union in the workplace add or subtract value to the organization, its customers and its stakeholders that will allow it to stay in and grow the business and thus improve job security for all of its employees.

Reports from the print media and the Internet suggest that the arguments for passage of the EFCA are reminiscent of activism appropriate for the 1940's and 1950's where the workplace and business landscape were vastly different and with no appreciable international competitive forces. Back then, union/management relations were typically adversarial, yet resulted in many positive outcomes. In today's hyper-competitive, global and technological business and political environment, industry leaders require productive partnership with all elements of an organization towards three common goals:

1. Sustainability and growth of the business
2. Achievement of the agreed upon business plan
3. Maintaining competitive advantage on an uneven global playing field

Thus, I would like hear some discussion from union executives on the following questions:

1. From a financial and job security perspective, I would like to know how your union will help me to increase my revenue, decrease my costs, and enhance my competitive advantage. Please provide detailed descriptions of successful experiences in these three areas.
2. Any company, large or small, must be able to re-deploy its assets immediately in order to take advantage of market opportunities. How will a contract with your union help me do this?
3. Competition for talent in my industry and marketplace is fierce. My younger employees are wired 24/7 and are demanding greater exposure to career enhancing work, experiences and networks. Please tell me how your union will allow me to manage these people within the constraints of your proposed negotiated contracts?

- 4. Benefit costs and taxes are crushing me with questionable help from state and federal governments. Please tell me how you will help me address these problems and what your solutions will cost me in hard dollars?**
- 5. Historically, American unions have had an adversarial relationship with management. This is no longer an appropriate business strategy. Please describe how you will partner with me to advance the business objectives of the company and keep all of my employees gainfully employed.**
- 6. Please describe for me how your union will sustain my competitive advantage so that my customers will continue to buy from me and at the prices that I need to charge in order to remain solvent.**
- 7. (Optional question) My client's organization is a health care provider and is heavily burdened by extensive regulatory requirements. We would eagerly consider partnering with any agency – including your unions – if you can show us how to master the complexities of current and proposed regulations and advancements in health care within our industry. Please describe for me how your unions will assist us in effecting full compliance and become more competent in providing the highest quality care that is affordable for more patients.**

Global competition provides by nature a very un-even playing field in which to do business. Absent any pro-active strategy, unions appear to be powerless to respond to the aggressive changes in the world marketplace. As a result, unions appear to be on the verge of complete irrelevancy.

If your union can help me stay in and grow my business against unrelenting competitive, financial and government pressures, I would gladly sit down with you and welcome your advice and participation.

I would be pleased to hear a panel of union executives address these questions in a public forum or on the Op-Ed pages of any newspaper. Is one forthcoming?

Word count: 697