

STRENGTHEN YOUR LOCAL VOICES FROM RIGHT TO WORK FOR LESS STATES



Below are comments from USW reps who have observed, engaged, and guided some of the best locals in Right to Work for Less states.

1. Free riders and new hires – and especially our members too – they’ve got to see the value in membership, so you’ve got to have the conversation. This means listening well and responding respectfully.
2. Especially in this era that is so impersonal, human-to-human contact is key. So go ahead and give each new hire important information that they’ll need. And explain again to the non-members what belonging means. But don’t forget to give each one of them your hand and a sincere smile.
3. We’re a collective of people, of brothers and sisters. This point is essential to our future. Besides, if we lose this fight, we lose the union.
4. Connecting with new hires is very important so right from the get-go, they need to understand what the union does for them – what union membership means in dollars, representation and rights.
5. Language is very important: It’s “your” union. We try to communicate that “You belong here. You’re family.”
6. Each local gets a list of non-members, we call it a “Potential Members” list, and we circulate it. Some members are surprised who’s on the list and therefore not paying dues. When raises come through, we reach out to those we have a connection to on that list and remind them that the union got that for them. We say that “We’re stronger, better together” and they should join or re-join.
7. Some locals have Facebook pages that’s “accepted friends only.” Sometimes a member will say “Hey, I friended the union on Facebook but you didn’t friend me back.” And we have to reply, “I went through your friends list and you have non-members workers as friends. We don’t want non-members seeing the union’s business on Facebook.”
8. Once a year we mail to non-members where we explain the benefits of union membership and the value of having everybody in.
9. People generally know what’s in the contract. BUT they’re often surprised to hear what the union does for them and their families through promoting and stopping legislation. We keep a list of the good things we’ve done and we tell ‘em. We say, “you got that because we fought for it.”
10. Do orientation on Day One. Get each new worker on a card. And get them together on that first day, if possible, at lunch hour and buy them lunch. First day, the union has done something for them even though they’re still on probation. Plus it’s an opportunity on the very first day for them to understand

union culture – we're all in this together. Check in with them during probation. And follow up afterwards -- after probation.

11. With those who are not new but not members, have a conversation. Understand why specifically they have not joined or joined and quit. I know it can sound crazy, but sometimes people who haven't joined will say, "Nobody asked me." Or they'll say, "I was just waiting for someone to ask."
12. We don't do a good job of communicating all the good the union does. We can correct this in lots of ways. One way is to have the face-to-face where we listen to their issues with the union and we point out the benefits we've already brought them.
13. If you treat free riders like members, they won't have any incentive to join. On the other hand, would you join if the members regularly called you "Scab"? It's a fine line. If you've got 90% or 95% membership, it probably doesn't matter. BUT if you have 60%, 50% or even lower, this could save your local
14. I think it's important to speak to and understand those who have failed to pay their dues. Some people are going to find a reason to not pay. Others, like some crazy uncle, are ideologically opposed. BUT some have legitimate concerns and haven't had the opportunity to talk and be heard. So our officers need to do that – to hear them and to respond to those concerns.
15. We've been doing leadership training on the sub-district level. We emphasize the importance of *connecting and reconnecting* with the membership in order to keep them on board and to get them back on board. But sometimes local officers sit on their hands. They don't come to the training and instead send their stewards.
16. The power to keep members on board and engaged depends on each local officer cultivating relationships by listening and understanding them. That takes both commitment and time on the job.