

UNDERSTANDING MANAGERIAL JOB CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS OF UNION-BUSTING PRACTICES IN US CORPORATIONS COMMITTED TO CSR

Popular science abstract

US labor unions are seeing a small but noticeable comeback. These efforts to form unions have also revealed that American bosses will go to great lengths to prevent workers from organizing. Their opposition to unions is rooted in the view that unions represent outside interference in a company's private matters, thereby limiting the freedom of employers and employees to negotiate employment terms and creating a divide between the two. At the same time, most US corporations claim to be committed to corporate social responsibility (CSR), which involves, apart from protecting the environment and helping local communities, upholding high labor standards and ensuring employee well-being. Given that the right of American workers to form unions is protected by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) passed in 1935 and that freedom of association is a fundamental human right, union-busting efforts bear all the hallmark of corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). Therefore, it seems contradictory and hypocritical for a company committed to CSR and ethical business practices to employ anti-union strategies. All of this has significant implications for individuals applying for managerial positions in the US, in particular for mid-level managerial positions. Mid-level managers have a vital role in companies. They are responsible for implementing senior management's policies, act as the "face" of a company, and oversee employees in their day-to-day work, influencing their workplace experiences. It is crucial for managers to adhere to ethical principles, as they have power over their subordinates and can engage in abusive behavior. Therefore, it is strategically important for companies to recruit suitable candidates for these positions, especially considering the increasing competition for talent. Companies cannot afford to alienate talented job applicants. At the same time, some job applicants for managerial positions may be discouraged by organizational controversies, such as a company's involvement in union-busting or other CSI practices. This is particularly true if applicants hew to ethical values and believe in workers' right to organize. In fact, they may be sensitive to CSI and corporate hypocrisy, thereby brushing aside the idea of working for a company that claims to be committed to CSR but fails to uphold high labor standards and opposes unions.

The purpose of this research proposal is to investigate job candidates' reactions to company practices of union busting in the context of managerial positions. This proposal outlines two studies, including a questionnaire survey divided into four stages conducted at three points in time and four controlled online experiments. The project's originality lies in the following. First, unlike most existing studies, this project aims to explore whether and to what extent union-busting can result in a loss of talent for a corporation. Second, it distinguishes itself from previous research by employing a combination of questionnaire surveys and controlled online experiments. Third, this research project aims to investigate the differences between candidates' reactions to union-busting practices and other CSI-related controversies.

Accordingly, studying the perceptions of US job applicants for managerial positions regarding anti-unionism and their attitudes toward working for companies engaged in union-busting can provide valuable theoretical contributions, insights into managerial practices, and a better understanding of the reality of worksite unionism in the US.