

Root out pro-union staff with smart hiring process

By DINA BERTA



Lewis Hollweg

(March 16, 2009) *Union membership is on the rise after years of decline. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that union members accounted for 12.4 percent of the workforce last year, up from 12.1 percent in 2007. The Employee Free Choice Act, often referred to as “card check,” is a measure intended to make it easier to form unions by eliminating secret-ballot elections. Observers say that the proposal, which was passed in the House last year but defeated narrowly in the Senate, may finally make its way through the Democrat-controlled Congress this year.*

But there may be another way to deter unionization besides writing a letter to one’s congressman. Pay attention to the character of the people you hire, advised Lewis Hollweg, president of BatrusHollweg International, a Dallas-based human resources consulting firm. Familiarity with research that has been conducted on the characteristics of union members shows operators what to look for when staffing restaurants, he said. One such prominent study is “Personality and Attitudinal Variables as Predictors of Voluntary Union Membership,” Parkes et al, University of Oxford, 2003.

What does the research show?

There is a wonderful study from the U.K. of a company that happened to have personality profiles on every one of its employees. Later, when they were unionized, they knew who had voted for the union and who didn’t.

What were the common denominators among those who voted for a union?

They were more likely to be unengaged, pessimistic, negative, fault finding and attribute control to other people. They also tended to be more extroverted.

How can operators weed out people with those attributes?

When you go through the hiring process, make sure you are hiring positive, optimistic and competent people. They are less likely to vote for a union if a unionization effort comes to pass in the organization.