

Predicting Voluntary Union Membership with Personality and Attitudes

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THE ISSUE

As many restaurant industry stakeholders are aware, the likelihood of unionization is an increasing possibility in the near future. With the March 10th introduction into Congress of the misleadingly labeled “Employee Free Choice Act,” the possibility of a rapid rise in union mobilization grows dramatically. The restaurant industry has been vigorously fighting this legislation and devoting significant resources to its defeat.

A critical question that should be asked is...

“What else can restaurant companies do to blunt the rise in union membership in their companies?”

The answer to this question is surprisingly simple...

“Hire Employees who are more likely to resist unionization.”

PREDICTING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR

Batrus Hollweg International has been researching the personalities and attitudes of hourly employees for more than 20 years. In the last few years we have dramatically intensified research of hourly employees and have been communicating the results of this research to our clients. BHI has pioneered the understanding of service-oriented employees and has recently released the results of four new predictors of hourly performance. In this group of performance predictors is a set of behavioral traits that we call “engageability.”

Engageability is a measurable trait that predicts job attitudes, job commitment, job satisfaction, and work initiative (i.e., job engagement). In a major client’s study we also found that this “engageability” trait was predictive of independent ratings of customer satisfaction at the store level. You can read more about this in the white paper “How Much Money is Your Company Wasting on Trying to Engage the Non-Engageable?” on our website.

“Employee engageability is directly related to union membership.”

The same factors that predict the propensity to be engaged in your job also predict voluntary non-union voting. In short, hiring a positive, optimistic, self confident employee helps insulate employers from a majority union vote. Negative, critical, and low self esteem employees are more likely to have problems at work and are more likely to want an outside force (unions) to solve their problems. We know this from the study, **Personality and Attitudinal Variables as Predictors of Voluntary Union Membership** by K. R. Parkes & T. D. Razavi of the University of Oxford. The results clearly indicate that the characteristics of voluntary union voters are the same as the characteristics measured by the BHI Engageability Index™.

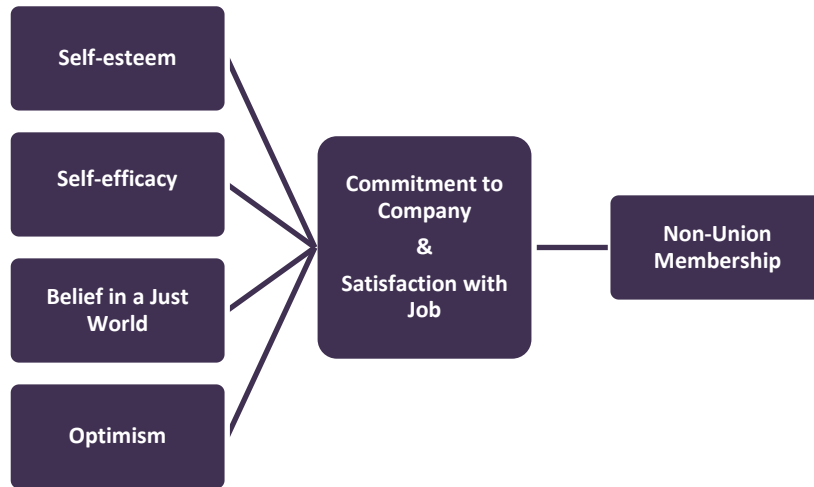


Today’s HR problems demand new solutions and “doing more with less.” Consequently, BHI has committed to thought leadership and is changing rapidly with the development of new ideas and services that help solve critical HR challenges and save money for our clients.



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RELATIONSHIP OF PERSONALITY TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTARY UNION CHOICE



From the research literature and BHI's own extensive studies, we know that a group of personality variables described as "Core Self Evaluations" (Judge & Hurst, 2007) are largely predictive of these types of attitudes. These core self evaluations consist of self-esteem (one's confidence), self-efficacy (belief in one's abilities), belief in a just world (trust in others), and optimism (positive outlook). By assessing an individual's core self evaluations, we can not only predict the likelihood that they will be engaged in their job, demonstrate commitment to their organization, and be satisfied with their work, but also the person's susceptibility to union membership.

SUMMARY

Incorporating personality measures into hiring decisions not only allows a company to select for the kinds of attributes they believe to be successful in a role, but it provides a legally defensible approach to identifying and avoiding candidates that are more likely to work against the company's mission, vision, and goals. By assessing personality variables such as locus of control, emotional stability, self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, etc., companies can be proactive in the fight against unionized workforces by building a more engaged, highly motivated work force.

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