

# IPRPN Special Report

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## Ten Things We've Learned About Employee Communication in a Unionized Environment

From the Research Desk of the IPRPN  
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1. Immediately define the issues, and weave that definition into everything you communicate. If you allow the union to define what the issues are in a dispute, you always lose.
2. Seize every opportunity to talk and listen to your employees and treat them with respect. Don't pitch the union; pitch your employees.
3. Learn how to debate; unions know how to already.
4. Don't wait for the union to strike the first blow; understand that they'll always try.
5. Lawyers are wonderful people, but do not allow them to dictate employee communication strategy.
6. Likewise for negotiators.
7. Don't fall for the myth that there is a distinction between "media" and "employee" communication. The union uses the media to communicate to its members and its members to communicate to the media; so must you.
8. The dictum, "don't negotiate through the media", is a union ruse designed to unilaterally disarm management in the struggle for employee and public support. The unions negotiate through the media more or less continually. If you don't use the media, you'll be the only party that isn't.



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*The ideas and energy of each;  
the strength of many.*

9. It's usually a safe assumption that reporters will tend to sympathize with the union, especially reporters. Stay in their faces and always call them if they show bias.
10. Don't be afraid to communicate out of fear that the union will claim "foul" or hit you with an unfair labour practice complaint. They'll do both. Almost always. No matter what you do.

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