



# Guidance for AFGE Local Leaders

on Addressing Objections,  
Criticism, and Tough  
Questions in E-Dues  
Conversion  
Conversations



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO





**Engaging in organizing conversations can present challenges when workers raise objections or express criticism.** Successfully addressing these concerns requires a blend of active listening, validation, redirection, and bringing the conversation back to the issues that matter most to the worker. Below is a framework that can help guide local leaders in navigating these conversations effectively.



## **1 Active Listening:** **Understand Before Responding**

Active listening is crucial in any organizing conversation. By fully listening to the worker's concerns, you show respect and allow them to feel heard. Avoid the temptation to immediately refute their objections or defend the union. Instead, focus on understanding their perspective.

- **Why It Works:** When people feel heard, they are more likely to remain open to what you have to say. Research shows that quickly refuting objections can shut down conversations, as people become defensive or feel dismissed. Active listening allows you to gather key information and ensures that your response will be more thoughtful and relevant to their concerns. Remember: this is about having a voice, being heard, and having ownership of the union.
- **Example:** If a worker says, "The union didn't help me last time I had a problem," rather than jumping into an explanation, you might respond: "I understand that you felt let down. Can you tell me more about what happened?"



## 2 Validation:

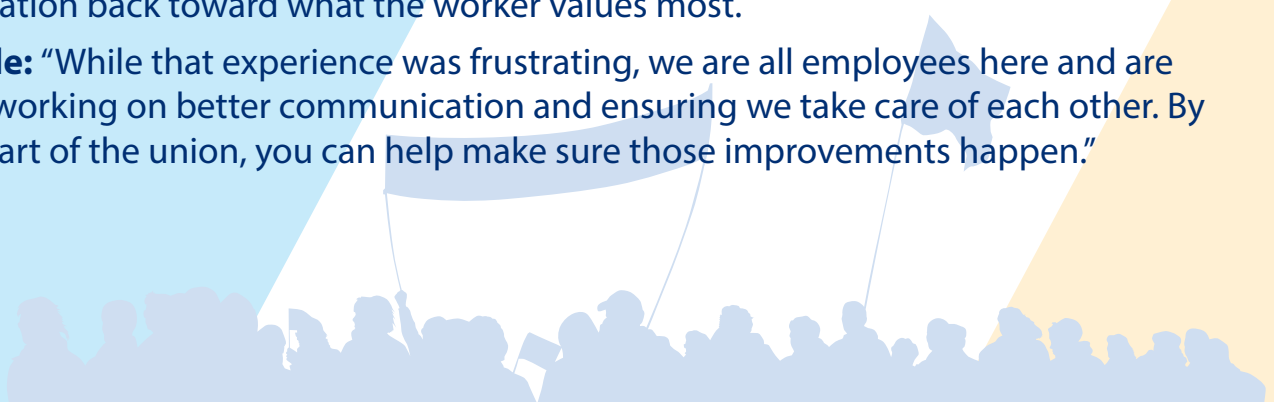
### Acknowledge Their Feelings

After actively listening, the next step is to validate the worker's feelings. This doesn't mean agreeing with their objection, but rather recognizing that their perspective is legitimate and important. Validation helps to build rapport and trust, and it keeps the conversation constructive.

- **Why It Works:** Validating someone's feelings can lower their defenses and make them more open to hearing your point of view. Psychological studies highlight the importance of acknowledging concerns in a compassionate and receptive manner. This helps move the conversation forward rather than getting stuck in disagreement.
- **Example:** "It sounds like you were frustrated with how that situation was handled. I can see why you'd feel that way."

## 3 Redirection: Refocus on Solutions

Once you've validated the worker's concerns, the next step is to redirect the conversation towards solutions. This often means reframing the objection in a way that highlights the union's role in addressing their concerns. The key is to acknowledge the issue but shift the focus to how our union can make a difference with the worker's involvement.

- **Why It Works:** Redirection allows you to focus on the positive aspects of union membership without minimizing the worker's objection. According to psychological experts, reframing objections helps individuals see how their concerns can be addressed through a solution-oriented approach. There is scientific evidence that having misinformation refuted can cause people to retreat into deeper defenses, but redirection or bypass is always psychologically effective. The key is to steer the conversation back toward what the worker values most.
  - **Example:** "While that experience was frustrating, we are all employees here and are always working on better communication and ensuring we take care of each other. By being part of the union, you can help make sure those improvements happen."
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## 4 Bring It Back to the Issues They Care About

Ultimately, it's important to connect the conversation back to the issues that matter most to the worker. Ask questions to understand their priorities—whether it's maintaining telework, addressing staffing, job security, or workplace safety—and demonstrate how their involvement in the union will help address these issues.

- **Why It Works:** People are more likely to stay engaged when the conversation focuses on the things they care about. What moves people to action is seeing how their involvement is connected to addressing the issues they care about. That is true whether it's joining the union or getting more involved. For union organizing, this means showing the worker how their involvement can lead to real improvements in the workplace.
- **Example:** "I hear that you're worried about losing telework. That's one of the reasons so many workers are involved in our union. The more people we have standing together, the stronger we are at protecting those rights and maintaining what we've won."

### General Tips:

- 1 **Avoid Refuting People:** Jumping in to refute objections immediately can shut down a worker's willingness to listen. Instead, take the time to fully hear and understand their concerns, and turn the conversation to the issues they care about.
- 2 **Use Examples and Social Proof:** Share stories or examples of how our union has helped others with similar concerns. This builds credibility and shows that their issues can be resolved through their engaging in union action.
- 3 **Ask Clarifying Questions:** To fully understand the worker's objection, ask follow-up questions that dig deeper into their concerns. This shows that you're engaged and committed to finding a solution and will help them see how the issue they care about is at the center of their union involvement.

By following these principles—active listening, validation, redirection, and focusing on the worker's concerns—AFGE local leaders can navigate objections and tough questions in a way that keeps conversations productive, respectful, and focused on building union strength.



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