
When Management Says “No”

Since it is nearly always in the union’s best interest to reach a fair settlement early in the process, try to get as much information as possible about management’s position when they are refusing to settle a grievance. You may discover they don’t fully understand the grievance, or you might identify new settlement options.

The following are suggested questions for getting management to say more than “no” to your grievances:

- **Do you understand the problem we are trying to solve with our remedy? How do you see that problem?** Maybe the supervisor isn’t clear on the real issue. Getting the supervisor to state it may open the door to a resolution.
- **Can you explain how you arrived at that position?** If you understand management’s logic you may be able to more successfully counter their arguments. Perhaps a particular supervisor misunderstands or doesn’t know about a basic fact in the case.
- **What about our proposed remedy do you have a problem with?** Maybe the remedy’s fine with the supervisor but one element sticks in his/her craw. You might be able to modify the one point, as long as your basic issue is dealt with.
- **Do you have other suggestions for how we can resolve this?** Who knows, maybe management has an approach that will be acceptable or at least a place from which to start.
- **What are you concerned would happen if you agreed to our proposed remedy?** The answer may surprise you. It may be something you can assure management is not in the cards. They may be overestimating the impact or misunderstand the true nature of the remedy you’re seeking.
- **This is very important to us. Are you saying you have no flexibility at all?** If a supervisor indicates flexibility, you’ll know you’ve got some room to operate. If they don’t, at least you’ll know you’ve hit the wall and can prepare for the next step.