



Are Tech Workers Considering Unionizing In The Wake Of COVID-19?

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**David J.
Pryzbylski**
Partner

Big tech companies by and large have remained union-free over the years unlike their peers in other industries such as retail and manufacturing. However, earlier this year – and before the COVID-19 pandemic upended workplaces across America – unions scored their first major organizing victory in the tech sector when employees at [Kickstarter voted to form a union](#). According to at least one recent report, [more tech company workers](#) may soon be following suit.

The Teamsters, Communications Workers of America, and the Office and Professional Employees International Union all reported an uptick in inquiries from non-union employees about prospects of unionizing the companies they work for, including in the tech and gig economy sectors. One of the reasons cited by these workers was a feeling that not enough is being done to protect employees against the spread of COVID-19, particularly those who work in e-commerce fulfillment centers or drive for ride-sharing apps. There also was concern by employees who were, at least at one point, denied remote work arrangements when they believed their jobs were suited for such an arrangement.

It remains to be seen whether organized labor will be able to [augment its numbers](#) based on these workers' concerns. Several things may complicate any such efforts, including unprecedented layoffs and an almost singular focus by people across the nation on the ongoing pandemic itself.

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To the extent unions try to capitalize on the unrest, there are many reasons employers facing organizing attempts should be concerned. For example, one of the most effective tools a company can consider to stave off a unionization attempt are large, all-employee meetings where leaders of the organization communicate directly to the workforce why forming a union isn't in the company's or employees' best interests. In an era where social distancing is a necessity, such meeting – at least in-person – likely won't be a viable option. In addition, [mail-in ballot union elections](#) may become the standard as long as social distancing requirements remain in effect, which are less preferred than live secret-ballot voting booths.

Accordingly, employers desiring to remain union-free should give thought to what talking points, materials, and strategies – as well as communications channels – they have available to them now around this issue. Waiting to do so until after a union petition hits may place them at a significant disadvantage.