



# Mind Your Business

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## Three steps to recruiting businesses to support paid sick days legislation

Engaging businesses can be time intensive and often requires utilizing and developing personal relationships. It is worth it in the end, as businesses can support your work and neutralize opposition. They can testify in favor of bills, write op-eds and letters of support, speak to the media, and counter or neutralize business association opposition. Here are three simple steps to recruiting a business to support paid sick days.

### STEP 1: Do your research

#### Who is the business?

Large businesses require a different outreach strategy than small ones, and vice versa. It is important to know what size and type of business you are approaching.

- Is the business large or small? Does it have a human resources department, a marketing department, or other bureaucratic structures? Does the owner physically work in the store?
- Is the business involved in other similar causes or issues? Is the business “socially responsible” generally?
- You can find out more about a business through word-of-mouth, connections, business groups or associations, media, the internet, etc. You can find a state-by-state list of award-winning businesses on CLASP’s website.

#### Who are you speaking to and who speaks for the business?

Each of type of business representative will have different goals and interests, and it is important to feed into his/her needs or goals.

- The “good guys” who are socially conscious and activists – these businesses theoretically should not take as much convincing; however, it is never a given that a business that, for example is eco-conscious is equally focused on employee needs.
- The human resources department who wants decreased costs and the least possible administrative burden.

- The marketing department who wants good press.
- The owner/CEO/company leadership who wants profits (and good press).

## STEP 2: Find out its policy on paid sick days

### Does the employer offer paid sick days?

At this stage, you find out whether you need to dedicate your time to explaining the benefits of paid sick days to the business, or whether you can skip this step and move right to the ask – to support your campaign. It is an important distinction because even if a business offers paid sick days, they might not be interested in engaging in public policy.

**If the business does not offer paid sick days:** Explore why not. If the business owner is amenable, discuss facts and ways paid sick days would benefit the business and society. To put it in business terms, there is a low cost to offering paid sick days and they will receive a high return on the investment. Following are some statistics.

**Low cost:** The average cost for sick leave per employee in the service industry is 8 cents per hour worked. The average cost per employee in the private sector as a whole is 23 cents per hour worked.<sup>1</sup>

**Satisfied employees:** While quantifying costs and benefits of workplace flexibility is difficult, a recent White House report notes that one-third of workers consider work-life balance and flexibility to be the most important factor in a job. A study conducted by the University of Minnesota found that workplace intervention (supervision by family supportive managers) resulted in employees less likely to say that they felt forced to go to work when they were sick or not see a doctor when they felt they should. The workers had increased energy, improved sleep quality, and reduced psychological stress.

**Reduces turnover, thereby lowering recruitment costs.** One study found that hiring costs account for more than \$2,500 per hire in large firms. The results of a survey conducted in New York showed that employers who offered flexible sick leave and child care had significantly lower rates of turnover.

**Increased productivity:** If workers come to work sick, they are less productive and risk infecting other workers.<sup>2</sup>

**If the business already offers paid sick days:** Explore why, briefly, to better inform your “ask.”

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [\*Program Perspectives on Paid Sick Leave\*](#)

<sup>2</sup> Source: [\*Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility\*](#)

### STEP 3: The “ask”: Find out whether the business will support your campaign

Does the business think that all businesses should provide paid sick days? Would it support a law providing a minimum number of paid sick days that every business would have to offer?

A socially responsible business owner may care about other industries or workers who are not offered paid sick days. Or they may care about public health.

But maybe the answer is that they simply care about their business and not public policy. In that case, find other ways you can fulfill the business’s own self-interest:

- Can you give them good publicity (in an article, a list, a speaking opportunity)?
- Can you send consumers to their business?
- Do you have the power to influence another cause that they do care about?

**Conclusion:** Even if the business does not initially decide to support your work, do not give up. Offer to be a resource in the future for the business on paid sick days. If appropriate, maintain contact and develop a relationship – you never know if future developments may change a business’s position.

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