



## **Left of Boom**

Best Practices for Proactive Companies in a Changing Labor Environment



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*By Phillip Wilson, President and General Counsel, LRI<sup>1</sup>*

You've seen the video on TV or YouTube.

A patrol of U.S. military vehicles rumbles along a mountainous road. Suddenly the road erupts. A bubble of earth and debris is hurled upward. The huge armored vehicle is tossed like a toy into a ditch, engulfed in a ball of flames.

The rest of the patrol screeches to a halt. Soldiers spill out in a desperate effort to try to catch the renegade insurgent who triggered the road-side bomb (the military calls them "improvised explosive devices" or "IEDs" for short).

The tug-of-war between U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and the insurgents bent on disrupting U.S. patrols with IEDs has been a constant game of "move, counter-move."



- Our military finds ways to defeat the early microwave triggering devices for the bombs - the insurgents create more sophisticated triggers.
- We figure out how to defeat the new cell-phone driven triggers – the enemy starts employing infrared triggers.
- We begin using thermal detonation devices extended in front of vehicles to set off the IEDs' infrared triggers before the vehicle is upon them – the insurgents begin separating the triggers from the explosives so they explode under the intended vehicle.
- We are effective at jamming most radio-driven triggers – the enemy begins "dumbing down" the triggers by using pressure plates or simple wires strung under the rocks and debris of the landscape.
- We begin to place heavier armor on our vehicles – the insurgents increase the explosive power of the IEDs.

**"You can't armor your way out of this problem."**

**Army Brigadier General**

It became apparent early in the Iraqi conflict that this cat-and-mouse game could go on indefinitely. In the words of one General, "you can't armor your way out of this problem." To deal more effectively with the problem, the military created the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO in the typical military "shorthand").

In analyzing the problem, a terminology was created to label the sequence of events leading up to an IED encounter, through the results of the explosion, and to the actions and reactions after the explosion. All of the timeline leading up

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<sup>1</sup> I'd like to thank Nadir Muwwakkil who first introduced me to the concept of "Left of Boom" and its application as a business idea. In addition, this paper is dedicated to the thousands of men and women around the world who put their lives at risk for their country every single day. I'd especially like to thank John Olson (our very talented "quant" guy and resident Excel Jockey) and my Nephew Eliot Carmichael who each served multiple tours in the Middle East. Thank you.

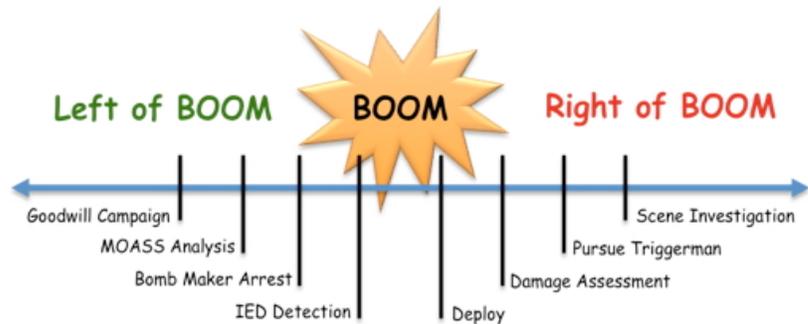


to the actual explosion is called “Left of Boom,” the explosion itself of course being the “Boom,” and all of the post-explosion actions being “Right of Boom.”<sup>2</sup>

Early strategies dealt with the explosion of the device and the immediate actions and responses to each incident, from “Boom” to “Right of Boom.” The cat-and-mouse game described above focused on that small window in the timeline from just before “Boom” (when a convoy or patrol arrived near the location of the emplaced IED) and the immediate aftermath, or “Right of Boom”.

It quickly became apparent that in order to effectively defeat the enemy, they had to turn “Left of Boom,” moving backwards in time from:

- who planted and/or triggered the bomb, to
- who recruited the person who planted the bomb, to
- who built the bomb, to
- where did the bomb-making parts come from, etc.



In other words, “Left of Boom” focuses on disrupting the bomb chain long before it can be emplaced and detonated.

While it is important to the lives of American soldiers to focus on “Right of Boom” issues, such as more heavily armored vehicles and better detection and trigger-jamming techniques, the only way to diminish and eradicate the threat is to focus on attacking the network that produces the bombs and the bombers. “We should focus less on the bomb than on the bomb maker,” stated Brigadier General Joseph Votel, the first JIEDDO Director, arguing that the effort had to move “Left of Boom.”

It became increasingly clear to those thinking about “Left of Boom” that the bomb maker was the “disproportionately valuable” person in the terrorist chain because of his technical skill. Taking out skilled bomb makers remains vitally important to stopping the IED network from emplacing IEDs. Bomb makers build the devices and troubleshoot emplacements that failed in an attempt to counter the military’s counter measures. Of course, the bomb makers are never near the actual detonation of a bomb, so waiting until the explosion is way too late to deal with the bomb maker.

It became obvious that the network had to be attacked long before the bombs were in place if deterrence was to be effective. The strategies that were (and still are) effective in Iraq and Afghanistan include:

- Investigation: There is now a large group of essentially “crime scene investigators” who conduct complete investigations of every bomb blast, including finger print analysis, study of the detonators, study of the circuitry used and the chemical makeup of weapons. The point of this research is not only to understand how the devices are being made but also to track down the bomb makers. These teams are responsible for

#### Key “Left of Boom” Tactics

- Investigation
- Pattern Recognition
- Disrupt the Network
- Engage the “Enablers”
- Reduce Leverage Points

<sup>2</sup> Much of the information about “Left of Boom” and the struggle with fighting IED attacks comes from a series of articles in the Washington Post written by Rick Atkinson. I highly encourage you to order the articles, which are now available as an electronic download on Amazon. You can find a link directly to the articles [here](#) and on our webpage <http://LRInstitute.com/leftofboom>.

numerous arrests and kills of bomb makers. They have tracked down the critical, “higher in the chain” bad guys instead of the less important emplacers of the IED devices.

- **Pattern recognition:** All data points possible are collected from each and every IED detonation in the theater into what is called “MOASS” or Mother of all Spread Sheets. That spreadsheet is what the military uses to recognize patterns of where bombs are emplaced, what times they are emplaced, how they are detonated and other data points. This creates a robust database to help predict and potentially interdict IEDs before they go off.
- **Disrupt the network:** The military monitors, arrests, interrogates, and then turns over any members of the network to the Iraqi or Afghani governments for criminal prosecution. This allows them to know where to watch and how to interdict emplacers. Finally, it helps the military to stop and destroy delivery of key bomb making components.
- **Engage the “enablers”:** The military has learned so much about how and where emplacements happen they can target and engage community leaders in areas most likely to produce bombs or emplacers. This reduces the capacity of the bombing network to deploy devices and increases the likelihood that emplacers or bomb makers will expose themselves to the military out of stress or frustration.
- **Reduce leverage points:** Winning “hearts and minds” in the community is not only critical to getting the community to turn over insurgents to the U.S. military, but also encourages them to directly attack insurgents in their own community.

By focusing more heavily on “Left of Boom” the military has made it much more difficult for the bomb-making networks to do their dirty work. But it has not stopped the attacks. This is a very important lesson about Left of Boom. No “silver bullet” will stop these insurgent networks from doing damage. A holistic strategic approach is key.

“Right of Boom” is easy. Every fiber of human nature wants to respond to the “Boom.” The problem with “Right of Boom” is that it allows the networks to become effective in the first place.

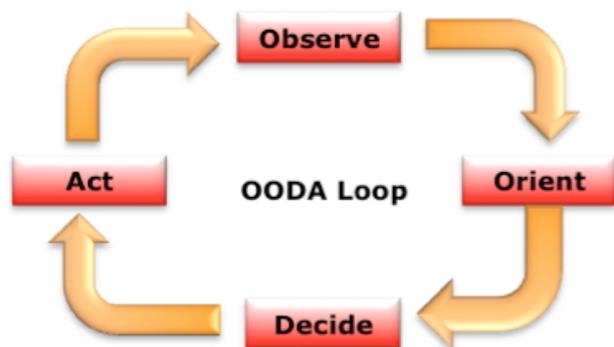
Hindsight is 20/20. During the initial invasion of Iraq, the U.S. military could have substantially reduced the impact of IED attacks today. Substantial amounts of bomb material were buried – and in some cases even ignored - in the rush to take Baghdad. This material is being used today to kill American soldiers.

The American military was really not planning for an insurgency. Instead it planned for a more traditional battle against an organized military force. Much of the initial planning failed to attack the real enemy. In many ways the initial attack gave the “real” enemy heavy advantages over the U.S.

While it is hard to imagine a “successful” outcome for the insurgency, they have effectively disrupted U.S. military operations. If the U.S. forces had focused more heavily on “Left of Boom” strategies, particularly before the insurgency really got legs, the American military could have stopped the insurgency in its infancy. Instead, today it deals with a mature and deadly enemy.

**LESSONS FROM MILITARY STRATEGY**

Military strategy is a useful model for dealing with thorny, complex, and high-stakes situations. It informs our work. For example, the OODA Loop - developed by Colonel John Boyd during the Korean War - helps





us understand the importance of quick execution and getting “inside your opponent’s loop.” Success follows speed, an important lesson in military conflict and in life.

If there is any silver lining in war, it is that society can learn important lessons that it can apply in other fields. Hopefully we can learn ways to avoid war in the future.

One can take the comparison between negative employment events or union organizing and insurgent networks too far. After all, unions preposterously call consultants like me “corporate terrorists!” Nevertheless, from a strategic standpoint, there are similarities in the underlying strategies of a guerilla insurgency and a union organizing campaign. There is much to be learned from effective military strategies to develop business strategies to respond to attacks by outside “forces.”

### **“BOOM” IN THE WORKPLACE**

I define “Boom” in the business workplace as a significant negative event. This could mean a lawsuit, a regulatory complaint, a fight or other disruption. We will focus primarily on a union organizing drive as the “Boom” event.

The analogy with military forces and IEDs does break down with all but the most sophisticated employers at one crucial point. The military is a single organization with deep and wide experience dealing with IEDs. Every individual encounter is a learning experience. The lessons learned and strategies devised are dispersed across the network by the JIEDDO. Every military convoy or patrol benefits from these learnings. As General Votel put it, “I’ve got the greatest testing ground in the world in Iraq.”

Businesses rarely have similar opportunities to share experiences. Look at it this way: each business is like an individual military convoy or patrol of a different army. The experiences and difficulties faced by that patrol stay within the patrol, and are not spread to all other military units (i.e. businesses) across the country. Until a “Boom” event occurs within a company, its defenses (or lack thereof) are based more on theory than rooted in experience.

Sometimes a company has multiple locations or facilities spread across a wide geographical area. In these cases, it is possible that the experiences of dealing with “Boom” events happening at one location might be transferred across the company. But there are no guarantees that it will. Because “lives are not at stake” (as in the military), such experiences are often handled within a facility, and local managers may attempt to hide or diminish the scale of the problem, hoping to protect their reputation and job. This is just a reality of the “politics” of business.

There are two key lessons here.

First, companies that grow from negative experiences foster what Peter Senge calls a “learning organization.” If upper management nurtures an environment where middle-managers and front-line supervisors and employees are encouraged to bring mistakes and “failures” to light in a manner that protects each individual and promotes learning across the company, the company is protected from losing the value of lessons learned.

**LRI has been singularly focused on the “Boom” of union organizing events for over 25 years. Our methodologies, consulting services and tools are tested and have been constantly refined in over 10,000 organizing campaigns.**

Second, when you find a body of knowledge developed from hundreds or thousands of similar experiences, you should do all you can to tap into that resource. This is how to move beyond theory or limited experience and to tap into the deep and wide experiences of others. LRI has been intimately involved in all aspects of the “Boom” of union organizing events for over 25 years. Our methodologies, consulting services and tools are tested and have been constantly refined in over 10,000 organizing campaigns.



Workplace “Boom” events can be incredibly disruptive not only to the business, but also to the lives of the people that work inside that company. It’s not uncommon for people to experience a significant emotional impact, physical health impacts, and in extreme cases even violence (whether physical or psychological) due to the stress that occurs during union organizing events.

These “Boom” events can cause significant damage to a company. There are legal costs and consulting fees. These events often lead “Right of the Boom” to reduced productivity, quality problems, and customer service issues. Added up this can result in loss of business and – in today’s highly competitive marketplace - sometimes even business failure.

Because these “Boom” events are so important to a company, it is useful to think about them the same way that the military thinks about the IED attacks in Iraq. Union organizers are in many ways comparable to the insurgent networks that attempt to disrupt the U.S. military in Iraq.

Union organizers often describe their goal as to disrupt and create fear and a division between employees and their employer. If they cannot convince employees to organize internally, they will often engage in corporate campaign tactics to destroy a target company or cause such significant damage to that company that it will give in to union demands. These events can often seem to come out of nowhere and are purposefully intended to increase conflict and emotional stress in the workplace.

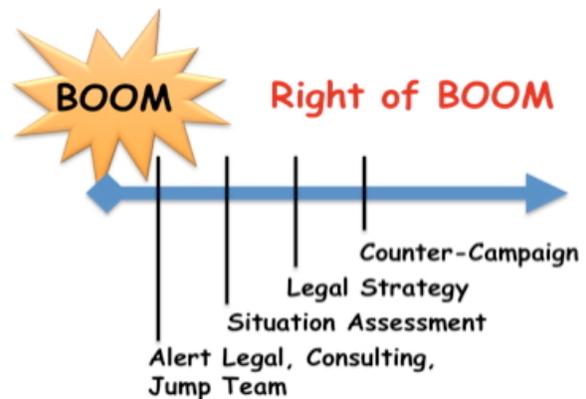
### **“RIGHT OF BOOM” IN THE WORKPLACE**

The concept of “Right of Boom” in the workplace refers to the idea of responding to a negative workplace event after it happens. While we argue that most effort should be paid to “Left of Boom” activities, there are critical activities that should take place “Right of Boom.” These tactics will minimize damage of negative events.

#### **“Right of Boom” Strategy: “Firewall” Defense**

The first “Right of Boom” activities we teach our clients are “firewall” techniques. These techniques are designed to respond at the earliest possible notice of union organizing activity. The strategy is to counter the emotional and usually inaccurate information used by organizers. Instead you want to get employees focused on the facts and – if possible – reverse the emotional energy against the union. As an example, if a company announces a layoff and this results in union organizing activity, a “firewall” technique would be to respond to the union organizing activity by:

- Holding employee meetings
- Showing a video about union cards
- Handing out warranty coupon books
- Pointing people to websites that educate employees about unions
- Providing training for supervisors about how to answer questions
- Distributing handouts, fliers or posters





These techniques (sometimes called “pushback” techniques) are often marketed as proactive measures by consultants and attorneys. But these are “Right of Boom” techniques and are not proactive. This is not to say that “pushback” tactics aren’t useful or necessary. But if you understand the Left of Boom/Right of Boom framework, it is clear that a response to organizing activity after it begins is not proactive. It does not prevent the organizing activity from occurring in the first place. An employer is more prepared by having supervisors and managers that are taught “firewall” techniques, but they are not in any real sense more protected from organizing attempts by doing so.

**“Right of Boom” Strategy:  
Legal Defense**

Your legal strategy can also provide some important protection to the company “Right of Boom.” Some of the strategies that might be employed after a card-signing event include:

- Unit determination issues (we do teach clients to use this as a “Left of Boom” tactic by rearranging the way you do work to reduce the likelihood of a campaign gaining traction in the first place and to limit the union’s ability to “peel and stick” its preferred bargaining unit).
- Election details, including length of the campaign.
- Review of employee communications to prevent the filing of unfair labor practice charges.
- The defense of unfair labor practice charges.
- Preparing a legal defense for unfair labor practice charges, election objections or other legal matters related to the organizing event.

These legal strategies, while not proactive, are definitely important. At the point where a company is involved in an organizing event, many cases are won or lost based on the effectiveness of these legal strategies.

**“Right of Boom” Strategy:  
Counter-Organizing Campaign**

Your counter-organizing campaign strategy is also “Right of Boom.” To effectively respond to organizing activity, a company needs to have a campaign strategy mapped out in advance. This is particularly true in an environment where union elections are likely to be compressed. While it’s beyond the scope of this white paper, we have written extensively about how campaigns will be won and lost in a compressed election environment. See our *How to Win (and Prevent) a Five Day Election* white paper for additional detail. Your campaign strategy could include:

- Preparation of communications, especially pre-planned and pre-staged communication items (we call this a “Campaign in a Box”).
- An employee-centered website for communications.
- Supervisory or Jump Team™ website with campaign materials.
- Video presentations.
- Issue identification and response strategies.
- Direct communication with employees through a consultant.
- Response strategies to defend against union communications.

These techniques are vitally important if a company plans to win its election or to turn back a card-signing event.



**“Right of Boom” Strategy:  
PR or External Communication Campaign**

An effective PR or communications campaign can be crucial to help sway both public and internal opinion, especially in the face of union disinformation strategies. Elements of a solid campaign can include:

- PR response and damage control.
- Identifying and establishing a communication team.
- Establishing a communication protocol.
- Creating a media kit and position statements on anticipated issues.
- Website or web reputation management.

These tactics are designed to limit the damage of union corporate campaign type activities. In any organizing event, a company should anticipate these types of media events. This is increasingly true in today’s rapid-fire news cycle.

**“RIGHT OF BOOM” RESULTS**

Companies involved in organizing campaigns today lose 7 out of 10 times unless they utilize most of the strategies outlined above. Our clients who use these strategies win about 9 out of 10 times. Just as in Iraq, it is vital to have a strong “Right of Boom” strategy for those occasions where the “Left of Boom” strategies do not stop the boom from happening. However, “Left of Boom” teaches that it is better to avoid these campaigns altogether.

It is a huge mistake to believe that pre-planning the above activities is employment of a “Left of Boom” strategy. Soldiers are trained on the exact steps to take at the explosion of an IED (including how to exit their vehicles, give emergency first aid to any injured, pursue the possible bomb trigger-man still hiding behind rocks or buildings, etc.). Similarly, your supervisors and leadership team need to be effective at “Right of Boom” actions to mitigate the damage and attempt to take the offensive. But – this training is not a “Left of Boom” activity or strategy!

**“LEFT OF BOOM” IN THE WORKPLACE**

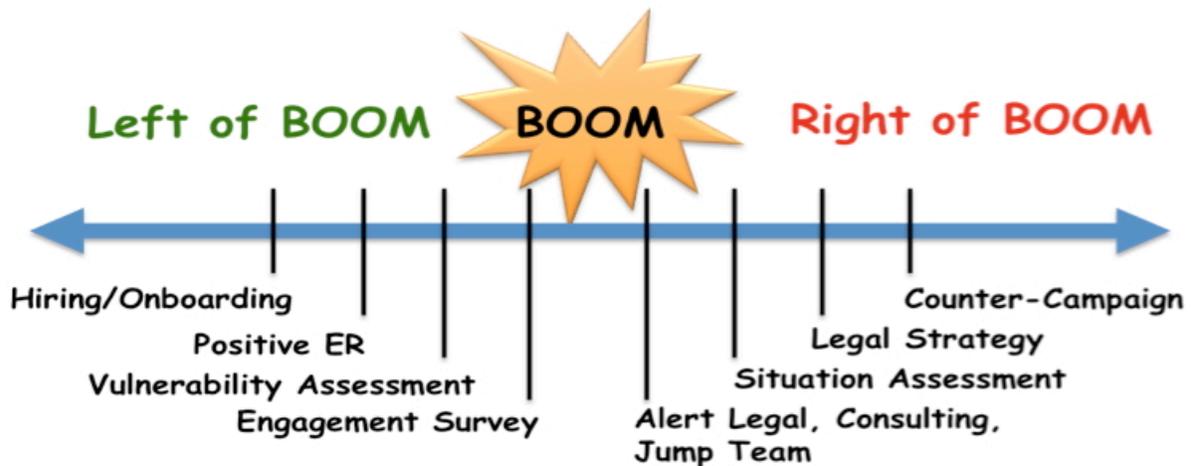
How do you disrupt the “Network” that leads to the “Boom” events in your workplace? The most important part of this paper is not just the philosophy of “Left of Boom,” but its application in your company’s employee relations strategy. Just like the Iraq IED scenario, it is very common for companies to place most of their attention and investments “Right of Boom.” Also, like the IED example, your return on investment is likely to be much greater if you focus “Left of the Boom.”

The cornerstone of a “Left of Boom” strategy is creating a positive workplace. All of the negative employment events that we’ve discussed, and especially union organizing events, almost always begin in an employment environment where there is a lack of affiliation with the company. In order for one of these boom events to get any traction, there must be a fertile environment.

**The cornerstone of a “Left of Boom” strategy is creating a positive workplace. Union organizing events almost always begin where there is a lack of affiliation with the company. In order for one of these “boom” events to get any traction, there must be a fertile environment.**

Much like the environment in Iraq is conducive to the insurgency, a negative work environment is conducive to union organizing events. Thus the crucial element of a “Left of Boom” strategy is to eradicate the issues that give rise to the negative workplace environment in the first place.

Comparing the situation to that in Iraq or Afghanistan, it helps to identify the activities or events that create the proper environmental conditions for the insurgency. As an example, a big part of the Left of Boom strategy in Iraq is the winning of hearts and minds in the communities of Iraq. There are numerous public works projects and other partnerships with local schools and religious leaders that create a positive impression of the U.S. military, and also create a community that is more willing and able to stand up for itself and to reject insurgent elements within.



A similar situation occurs inside companies. There are always going to be negative pockets of employees in any organization. The trick is to make sure that those groups remain isolated and to some extent are even rejected by the rest of the organization. It should be uncomfortable and isolating to be a negative voice in your work environment. This is not to be “mean” to that individual or group, but simply highlights that their experience of the employer is uncommon. Most employees in the organization should see the employer as kind and supportive of co-workers.

**KEY “LEFT OF BOOM” STRATEGIES**

There are a number of practical strategies you can employ to create the proper work environment. We have published several recent white papers that deal with some these in more detail (see our list of white papers [here](#)).

**“Left of Boom” Strategy Number One:  
Create a Net Promoter Culture**

Bain Consulting has done some fascinating research on customers as “promoters” for a company, and how the ratio of promoters to non-promoters creates a “Net Promoter Score” for a company and its products. This score is an indicator of the company’s future performance. (For a quick overview of the research, go [here](#).)

Bain’s work is devoted primarily to customer engagement. However, we have reached very similar conclusions in our employee engagement research. The key learning in the Bain research is that there is really only one measure that matters when it comes to customer engagement: whether or not customers would tell their friends or acquaintances to do business with the company. Likewise, one of the key measures of employee engagement is whether or not your employees would recommend (or perhaps defend) the company to others.



There are a couple of important implications of this research:

1. **You can leverage your employee satisfaction research by focusing on this promoter statistic.**  
Our Employee Satisfaction Surveys ask 3 specific statements related to net promoter score. It is also a key component of our Structured Interview Vulnerability Assessment process. You want to create a culture where your employees are active promoters of your organization, and where you are stressing projects and engagements that increase the number of employees who are promoters.
2. **If you have a lot of promoters in your organization, you disrupt the network of non-promoters (what we call net-detractors) of the organization.** In Iraq, you are more likely to find people who will engage in or support the insurgency in communities where they are surrounded by likeminded individuals (even if many of those individuals on their own would not take action in support of the insurgency). The same is true of the workplace. You do not want to create an environment where these negative people are surrounded by others who, even though they may not actively promote a union, would still not notify the employer if union activity was occurring around them. By focusing on creating a promoter environment you increase the probability that these promoters will notify the company if there is union organizing activity going on around them.

**“Left of Boom” Strategy Number Two:  
Engage Effective Employee Survey Research**

We perform our Employee Satisfaction Survey for companies across the United States. It is an ideal tool to identify early whether you have an employee relations problem at a particular location, and to map out a strategy for turning around a negative environment. The survey data also provides a great platform for discussing your company’s employee engagement process. The key components of an effective employee engagement survey include:

- Make sure that you’re asking net promoter questions (discussed above);
- Make sure that you are segmenting your survey data and remember there’s no such thing as an average employee. See our Vulnerability Assessment white paper for an in-depth discussion of this point; and
- Respond to the issues based on the most important groups. Again, focus on the key segments of employees who are “on the fence” about the company (what we call the “mushy middle”) before you focus on other groups. Focus on moving those in the “mushy middle” into promoters of the company.

**Key Left of Boom Strategies:**

1. Create a “Net Promoter” Culture
2. Effective Employee Research
3. Structured Interview Process
4. Positive Employee Relations Training for Supervisors
5. Hiring and On-boarding Process
6. Enriched Employee Communication Process

**“Left of Boom” Strategy Number Three:  
Structured Interview Process**

We use a Structured Interview Vulnerability Assessment process in many of our client locations, particularly where an employee survey has identified that a location is internally vulnerable due to a poor employee engagement score. The Structured Interview process focuses on supervisors and helps to identify the following:

- It identifies key “nodes” in the informal communication network.
- It helps to identify the key influencers among employees.
- It helps us map a communication strategy on how to move opinion among a particular group of employees.



- It helps with issue identification.
- It helps evaluate the strength (or weaknesses) supervisors.

This Structured Interview process is highly detailed and focuses on multiple dimensions of vulnerability, not simply whether employees like the company or not. It is a highly sophisticated yet practical tool that can provide an added level of detail to the information provided by an employee survey process.

**“Left of Boom” Strategy Number Four:  
Positive Employee Relations Training for Supervisors**

Employees generally don’t have a problem with their company, they have a problem with their supervisor. This is what tips most employees to become net-detractors and creates an environment conducive to union intrusion or other problems. Supervisors are often employees promoted from line work, so they have a solid knowledge about how work is performed within their sphere of experience, and this is good. However, these supervisors do not necessarily have training or experience in how to effectively supervise and manage others.

In addition to the “firewall” or “pushback” training discussed above as part of your “Right of Boom” strategy, your organization should spend a significant amount of its training resources on teaching supervisors and managers how to lead in a positive way. We have designed two types of training to meet this objective:

- Online Active Interval training
- Trip Wire™ training

The active interval training is designed to teach supervisors how *not* to be a jerk. The modules teach frontline leaders how to engage employees in a positive way. This training is based on spaced, self-paced repetition, with direct-report accountability, so that the core components are reinforced over time.

**Active interval training is designed to teach supervisors how *not* to be a jerk. The Trip Wire™ training, on the other hand, is designed to teach supervisors and managers how to recognize behavior change in the workplace before it spirals out of control into a “Boom” event.**

The Trip Wire™ training, on the other hand, is designed to teach supervisors and managers how to recognize behavior change in the workplace before it spirals out of control into a “Boom” event. This training is based on simulation so that supervisors and leaders can feel in a real, experiential way how these events unfold, and can think about how behavior might change because of those events.

The active interval training is the farthest “Left of Boom” training, but both are valuable in both preventing and detecting unrest that could lead to a boom event.

**“Left of Boom” Strategy Number Five:  
Hiring and On-Boarding Strategies**

It is vitally important that you get the right people on the bus to begin with. Employee engagement is certainly important. Teaching supervisors how to be effective leaders is a critical component. However, many times the lack of engagement is not so much the way employees are treated, but rather that you have a square peg in a round hole. If you have the right people “on the bus” to begin with, your engagement training is much more useful and effective.

Additionally, the orientation and on-boarding process provides the first (and prime) opportunity for the company to present its philosophy with respect to work environments, and particularly, unions. The messaging should reinforce the



desire for, and benefits of, a direct relationship between all levels of management and the employee. Companies that have high external vulnerability should also include a message about the company's position on unions.

The action items for this strategy are:

- A well-mapped-out hiring process that focuses primarily on getting people who are a good cultural fit into your organization, in addition to the skill level they possess for a particular job. This is addressed superbly by Jim Collins' *Good To Great* concept of getting the right people on the bus, or Bradford Smart's *Topgrading* approach to talent acquisition and training.
- The on-boarding process should be designed to effectively communicate the company's cultural expectations and make sure that the company's "DNA" is passed to each employee very early in the process.
- New hire orientation video that can help not only the employee, but also the employee's family and friends to know and understand the company's story and how the employee fits into that story.
- A direct relationship message that is repeated throughout the orientation process and emphasizes the importance of that direct relationship.

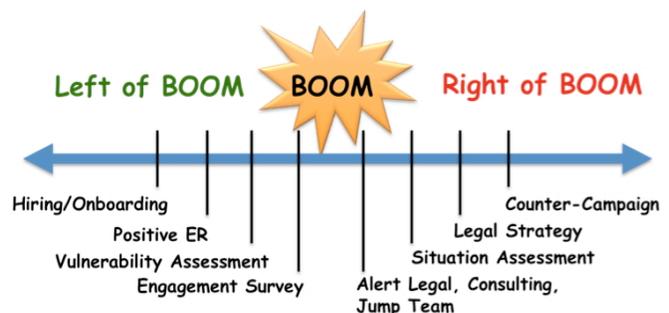
**"Left of Boom" Strategy Number Six:  
An Enriched Employee Communications Process**

It is critically important that the direct relationship message be repeated regularly and in multiple channels. We recommend that our clients use an employee centered website and develop a direct relationship "internal PR" campaign. The campaign should be a regular component of how managers and supervisors talk to employees about the relationship between the company and employees. This communication should be completely independent of anything said about unions. The goal is to have this core message of working directly together so much a part of the way employees interact with the business that the idea of having a third party interfering with that relationship is rejected out of hand.

**Warning:** this is not something that can just be said once. It must become part of the very fabric of the company culture and reinforced repeatedly. To this end, companies should consider how they could employ all new-media or Web 2.0 tools to accomplish this objective. We recommend at a minimum moving to a dynamic web site (where content changes constantly, thus drawing employees back to it to interact with it). Also consider utilizing additional Web 2.0 applications such as RSS feeds, SMS messaging, and other social media tools.

**Conclusion**

These strategies are just the beginning of a comprehensive "Left of Boom" strategy. Your program will certainly be unique to your own organization, but this is a good road map for how to begin that process. Make sure that you are focusing at least half of your attention, if not more, on the "Left of Boom" strategies. That will have two important impacts on your company: First, it will reduce the likelihood of the "Boom" in the first place. Second, whatever "Right of Boom" strategies you employ will be much more effective if you have laid the groundwork by having a strong "Left of Boom" framework already in place.





## WHAT TO DO NEXT?

**Where do your current tactics fit on the Left of Boom/Right of Boom framework? What tactics are you missing for an effective “Left of Boom” strategy? Discover your gaps during our 30-minute “Left of Boom” Strategy Audit (it’s FREE).**

Our organization has had more than 10,000 successful engagements with companies of all sizes in helping them to respond both “Right of Boom” to negative employment events like union organizing campaigns, and “Left of Boom” to create and extend a positive employee relations environment. If you’d like to talk to Phil Wilson, author of the acclaimed *The Next 52 Weeks: One year to transform your work environment*, we offer new clients a **FREE 30-Minute “Left of Boom” Audit**, conducted over the phone with you and your key staff. Here is what we accomplish during this fast-paced, no-nonsense session:

- **An evaluation of your current practices and where they fit on the Left of Boom/Right of Boom timeline:** Are most of your efforts focused “Right of Boom?” Mistakenly labeling “Right of Boom” tactics as “Left of Boom” can leave huge gaps in your Positive Employee Relations strategy.
- **An explanation and assessment regime for a net promoter culture:** How do you know if you have a net promoter culture? Focusing your attention on the wrong group of employees can blow up in your face. Learn to identify the right group, and how to coach them into becoming promoters.
- **How do you properly add missing “Left of Boom” tactics to your overall strategy:** Is there a wrong way to implement employee engagement surveys? Understanding the proper sequencing and timing of various “Left of Boom” strategies will produce the greatest return on your “Left of Boom” strategy investment.
- **Communication strategies that connect with your workforce and deliver the right message:** Does my employee web site stink? There are multiple ways to draw employees consistently back to your communication site. Learn which ones fit your workforce, and how to couch your messaging in a way that reinforces a direct relationship between you and your employees.

The **30-Minute “Left of Boom” Audit** is not a sales presentation; it consists of the best intelligence we can supply in a thirty-minute time span, honed from 30 years of experience with other companies’ “lessons learned.” There is no charge for this call, but the call must be strictly limited to 30 minutes. We would very much like to talk to your organization about the strategies that you already employ and to discuss ways that you could improve your “Left of Boom” strategy.

To secure a time for this consultation, please call Tammy Swinford at 800-888-9115 and she will advise you regarding available time slots. She will also provide you with a pre-consultation questionnaire that will prepare both you and us to get maximum value in the shortest amount of time.



**About the Author:**

**Phillip B. Wilson** is President and General Counsel of Labor Relations Institute, Inc. He also is an adjunct professor at Northeastern State University. He received his J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School and his B.A. (*magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa), from Augustana College.

Mr. Wilson began his career practicing law in Chicago, where he represented companies nationwide in all areas of labor and employment law. He later served as the Director of Human Resources for a multimillion-dollar gaming corporation employing over 1,200 people.

Mr. Wilson is a much sought after lecturer and the author of numerous books and articles on labor relations topics including *The Next 52 Weeks*, *Managing the Union Shop*, and *Model Contract Clauses*. He has been invited to testify in Congress on numerous occasions on the subject of union financial reporting requirements.

**About LRI:**

**Labor Relations Institute, Inc. (LRI)** is a consulting firm dedicated to protecting the direct relationship between employees and their employers. LRI provides the widest possible range of employee communications products, sophisticated databases and deep intelligence services. LRI clients can secure everything required to monitor their risk of unionization, build positive employee relations, train supervisors, and if necessary, run a winning campaign. LRI's acclaimed products and services have been used in more than 10,000 union elections with a win rate of over 90%.

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