

Report **6**

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**Assessment of Quality-of-  
Work-Life Programs For The  
Transit Industry  
Model Programs**

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Report **6**

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*sh* ✓ **Assessment of Quality-of-  
Work-Life Programs For The  
Transit Industry  
Model Programs**

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## NATIONAL COOPERATIVE TRANSIT RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Administrators, engineers, and many others in the transit industry are faced with a multitude of complex problems that range between local, regional, and national in their prevalence. How they might be solved is open to a variety of approaches; however, it is an established fact that a highly effective approach to problems of widespread commonality is one in which operating agencies join cooperatively to support, both in financial and other participatory respects, systematic research that is well designed, practically oriented, and carried out by highly competent researchers. As problems grow rapidly in number and escalate in complexity, the value of an orderly, high-quality cooperative endeavor likewise escalates.

Recognizing this in light of the many needs of the transit industry at large, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, got under way in 1980 the National Cooperative Transit Research & Development Program (NCTRP). This is an objective national program that provides a mechanism by which UMTA's principal client groups across the nation can join cooperatively in an attempt to solve near-term public transportation problems through applied research, development, test, and evaluation. The client groups thereby have a channel through which they can directly influence a portion of UMTA's annual activities in transit technology development and deployment. Although present funding of the NCTRP is entirely from UMTA's Section 6 funds, the planning leading to inception of the Program envisioned that UMTA's client groups would join ultimately in providing additional support, thereby enabling the Program to address a large number of problems each year.

The NCTRP operates by means of agreements between UMTA as the sponsor and (1) the National Academy of Sciences, a private, nonprofit institution, as the Primary Technical Contractor (PTC) responsible for administrative and technical services, (2) the American Public Transit Association, responsible for operation of a Technical Steering Group (TSG) comprised of representatives of transit operators, local government officials, State DOT officials, and officials from UMTA's Office of Technology Development and Deployment, and (3) the Urban Consortium for Technology Initiatives/Public Technology, Inc., responsible for providing the local government officials for the Technical Steering Group.

Research Programs for the NCTRP are developed annually by the Technical Steering Group, which identifies key problems, ranks them in order of priority, and establishes programs of projects for UMTA approval. Once approved, they are referred to the National Academy of Sciences for acceptance and administration through the Transportation Research Board.

Research projects addressing the problems referred from UMTA are defined by panels of experts established by the Board to provide technical guidance and counsel in the problem areas. The projects are advertised widely for proposals, and qualified agencies are selected on the basis of research plans offering the greatest probabilities of success. The research is carried out by these agencies under contract to the Academy, and administration and surveillance of the contract work are the responsibilities of the Academy and Board.

The needs for transit research are many, and the National Cooperative Transit Research & Development Program is a mechanism for deriving timely solutions for transportation

problems of mutual concern to many responsible groups. In doing so, the Program operates complementary to, rather than as a substitute for or duplicate of, other transit research programs.

### NCTRP REPORT 6

Project 33-2 FY '81

ISSN 0732-4839

ISBN 0-309-03716-6

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 84-50530

**Price: \$6.80**

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## FOREWORD

*By Staff  
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The model programs documented in this report will guide general managers, officials of transit unions, and others responsible for human resources development in initiating and maintaining quality-of-work-life programs within transit agencies. Of interest to the same individuals should be a companion document, the final report (*NCTRP Report 5*), which thoroughly documents the study effort leading to the model programs and provides the information needed for a more complete understanding of quality of work life and its relationship to the transit industry.

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The political and fiscal environment of transit agencies is in a period of significant change. Scarcity of funds will mean an emphasis on productivity and efforts to retain and motivate quality employees. New federal policies stressing local initiative will encourage management to be more sensitive to innovative ideas, and a changing work force will make different demands. Although the transit industry is highly labor-intensive, a great deal of emphasis has been placed in the past on capital development, financial controls, and transportation planning. Potentially, one of the most important areas for improving transit agency effectiveness is the development and management of human resources. Quality-of-work-life programs can provide such an opportunity by stressing the importance of the individual as well as the productive gains to the agency.

The feasibility of these programs for application by transit agencies was assessed by Public Administration Service of McLean, Virginia. Although quality-of-work-life programs may focus on particular employees or groups of employees, the initiation and success of a program many times depend on the attitude and environment created by upper management and, if unionized, the interaction between management and the affected unions. Therefore, recommendations on the potential application of quality-of-work-life programs required consideration of both transit agencies as a whole and individual employees.

The results of this study have been published in two reports. This report on model programs provides specific guidance for initiating and maintaining programs within a transit agency. The companion document, *NCTRP Report 5*, "An Assessment of Quality-of-Work-Life Programs for the Transit Industry—Research Report," is the main research document. It includes an overview of the summary of findings; a main text that thoroughly documents the study effort and recommendations; and several appendixes that provide a master list of references, a selected annotated bibliography, case studies, and summary results of a survey of transit agencies. A single table conveniently documents current activity in various industries.

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## **NCTRP TECHNICAL STEERING GROUP**

Annual research programs for the NCTRP are recommended to UMTA by the NCTRP Technical Steering Group (TSG). Under contract to UMTA, the American Public Transit Association, supported by the Urban Consortium for Technology Initiatives/Public Technology, Inc., is responsible for operation of the TSG, the membership of which is as follows.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The research was performed under NCTRP Project 33-2 by Public Administration Service (PAS). Dr. Susan Clark served as Principal Investigator for the project and spearheaded all major phases of the research beginning with research design and concluding with the preparation of final work products. Kathleen Warren, Research Associate, worked closely with Dr. Clark and participated in major phases of the research work. George Greisinger, Assistant Director of PAS, served as overall Project Manager. Assistance was also provided by Margaret Beckham, Special Consultant to PAS, William Hughes

and Barbara Koll of Personnel Development Systems, and Virginia Fait, Staff Associate, PAS.

The authors also wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Project Advisors, Gerald Haugh, General Manager, San Mateo County Transit District (California) and Joseph Jaquay, Director of Research Amalgamated Transit Union. Both advisors met with the project staff; reviewed all material in developmental and final stages; and provided constructive comments and criticism.



# ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY-OF- WORK-LIFE PROGRAMS FOR THE TRANSIT INDUSTRY MODEL PROGRAMS

## SUMMARY

Job enrichment, employee participation, quality circles, labor-management committees, quality of work life—all are much talked about approaches to management, generated by an interest in productivity and a desire to improve employee and labor relations and to develop human resources. But what is “quality of work life,” and do these techniques work in transit agencies?

Under the National Cooperative Transit Research and Development Program (NCTRP) Project 33-2, Public Administration Service (PAS) systematically investigated innovative approaches to organizational change applicable to transit agencies that can lead to improved productivity, quality of work life, employee morale, and job satisfaction. *NCHRP Report 5*, “Assessment of Quality-of-Work-Life Programs for the Transit Industry—Research Report,” describes the background research, including an extensive literature review, survey, and site visits, from which recommendations for model programs to implement quality of work life were developed. That report provides a valuable supplement to any of the model programs described here.

The model programs described in this report are designed to give guidance to those persons interested in learning more about quality of work life (QWL) or if one is thinking about initiating a quality-of-work-life approach to human development and productivity improvement. Emphasis is on initial activities, policy questions, and potential barriers. Transit managers and union officials should find guidance for program planning and development in this material. But no one should proceed directly to implementation without some additional information on the details of program administration. National organizations, the American Public Transit Association, or research departments of international union offices provide an excellent source of information. For the reader's convenience, a resource guide of printed material and organizations offering QWL information is included at the end of each program described in this report. A comprehensive reference list and bibliography are also included as Appendix A.

## INTRODUCTION

### ORIGINS AND MEANING OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

News magazines in the summer of 1981 popularized the term, "quality of work life." These included a series in *Fortune* by Burck and a "Special Report" in *Business Week*, titled "The New Industrial Relations." The phrase, however, has a much longer history, having been coined at a conference at Columbia University's Arden House in 1972.

The Arden House conference and publications in the early 1970s, including *Work in America*, a report to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and *Where Have All the Robots Gone?*, developed the QWL concept, which was essentially that principles of human development should have an important role in work organizations.

That this theme developed in the early 1970s, as the "baby boom" was hitting the job market, is not surprising. The nature of the work force was changing dramatically; it was younger, better educated, less concerned over economic security, and expressing growing dissatisfaction about established institutions and authority in our society. The "organization man" of the 1950s was replaced by student protestors and young factory workers on wildcat strikes. "Quality of work life" was seen as a way to adjust to these changes, an expression of a belief that people are important in the workplace.

In the mid-1970s, however, the U.S. economy took a sharp downturn. The oil embargo hit the automobile and related industries with particular severity. Interest in productivity improvements became dominant. Having a job, rather than improving the quality of the job, became a goal for many persons. During this time period, interest in quality of work life was not abandoned, but modified. QWL came to be seen as a means to improve productivity. In this context, QWL as a process focused on participative decision-making as a way to improve productivity.

Thus, by the end of the 1970s, the phrase "quality of work life" was being used in two ways: (1) to describe a set of beliefs or values concerning the importance of human development in the work place, and (2) to convey commitment to a set of means, involving some form of employee participation, to reach goals of increased organizational effectiveness or improved productivity.

Quality of work life today often involves a combination of both themes, as can be noted in the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) report, *People and Productivity: A Challenge to Corporate America* (1982, p. 22):

At its core, QWL is the effort to encourage employees to participate in the key decisions that affect and determine day-to-day work patterns. It recognizes that the person who does the job is the person who knows the job best. And it seeks to draw upon the expertise and creativity of a better educated workforce

to help redesign and reorganize work in ways that meet employees' as well as employers' needs. The hoped for result is to maximize workers' contributions to the productivity of their companies.

Throughout these model programs, "quality of work life" will mean an approach to organizational change that stresses human values and human resource development, aims to offer employees the opportunity to participate in decision-making, and promotes productivity improvement.

### QWL as a Labor-Management Effort

In the early 1970s, an historic agreement was reached between the United Auto Workers and General Motors. The contractual agreement to seek improved labor-management relations at the plant level, to improve the relationship between workers and their supervisors, and to increase shop floor participation in decision-making was important because it contributed significantly to the development of a structure (labor-management committees) for the implementation of quality-of-work-life improvements. Further, it established union-management cooperation as a cornerstone to quality-of-work-life efforts.

Managers and union leaders may not find quality of work life easy to accept. Cole (1983) has written frequently on the problems faced when companies adopt new values and participative systems. He states that management is often unprepared for the consequences—the need to share information, share power, and decentralize decision-making. A dilemma for managers is that they are frequently motivated to implement QWL programs because of expected payoffs in productivity improvements; yet, they may be more reluctant to attempt QWL techniques because of the lack of predictability of the participative process and the results.

Brower (1982) notes that unions, too, face difficulties in accepting QWL projects. Union leaders may be unprepared to give up the adversarial role, arguing that participation already is accomplished in collective bargaining. In that process, employees, through their elected union representatives, participate in determining wages, hours, and working conditions.

But union leaders want to encourage those programs that will directly benefit their members, and they would be expected to support those techniques directly related to human development issues. If initiated by management, however, the union as an organization will not benefit. Further, union leaders must ask themselves how they can support programs that clearly emphasize productivity when "productivity" in labor intensive industries has meant layoffs.

Nevertheless, these techniques, oriented toward participative processes with expectations of productivity improvement, appear to hold great promise for the transit industry, and they

must be seriously considered. The union will find its dilemma partially resolved because, for participative processes to be effective, human development programs cannot be ignored. Further, most managers will agree that characteristics of the work force require new approaches, and few would argue that the rigid "top-down" authority structure of the past will work well in the future. In addition, few union leaders or managers would argue that productivity can be ignored. Managers and union leaders may argue over the extent of the fiscal crisis facing transit organizations—indeed, effective lobbying by labor and management associations may have lessened the crisis. But the taxpayer revolt is real. The need to provide service that is both efficient and effective in meeting social goals is real, and the need to recognize and reward employees is also a reality that must be faced.

The history of QWL makes it clear that in unionized organizations there can be no QWL programs (as defined above) without joint union-management cooperation. Managers cannot approach bargaining unit employees except through the union. To approach the employees directly would undermine the key function of the union, which is to provide representation. For its part, the union cannot use the QWL process to expand the scope of bargaining in a way that usurps the basic management function. Union and management must respect the rights and responsibilities of each other and recognize their mutual interest in a viable organization.

#### Techniques for Implementing Quality of Work Life

There are a wide variety of techniques and programs associated with quality-of-work-life efforts. In small organizations

QWL may simply be a philosophy or a general approach to management without emphasizing a structured program. Melohn's (1983) recent *Harvard Business Review* article is a case description of this kind of approach to QWL. Melohn and his partner bought out a weak company and began managing on the premise that a company's well-being depended completely on employees caring about the quality of their work. Their management style involved open communication, recognition of employees' work through monetary and nonmonetary rewards, and assistance for employees with both personal problems and professional development.

In large organizations, a number of programs may be combined to implement quality of work life. The Westinghouse corporation combines a participative management philosophy with structured programs including more than 600 quality circles and management work teams (Main, 1981). The more inclusive the program structure, the more likely that broad organizational improvements will result.

A number of techniques associated with quality of work life are presented on Figure 1. The figure shows the target areas in relation to techniques, grouped into two general categories. The categories follow two themes associated with quality of work life: (1) programs that value human development with the primary goals of increased morale, satisfaction, and improved communication, and (2) programs that foster employee participation in decision-making with goals of increased productivity. These are not, however, mutually exclusive categories; rather they should be considered as categories with large areas of overlap, distinguished by the degree of orientation toward productivity or human development as end goals.

The research conducted under NCTRP Project 33-2 has led to the development of recommendations concerning application

<u>Organizational Target</u>	<u>Human Development Oriented</u>	<u>Productivity Oriented</u>
Changing people who do the work	Employee assistance programs	Improved selection Skills training
Changing others	Supervisory training Participative management	Technical training for supervisors
Changing context	Alternative work schedules Organizational development Task forces Labor-management committees	Quality circles Physical redesign of work area
Changing consequences	Suggestion awards Recognition	Piecework Merit pay Group incentives for increased efficiency Gain sharing Employee ownership
Changing nature of the job	Job rotation Job enlargement Job enrichment Work teams Autonomous work groups	

Figure 1. Quality-of-work-life techniques.

of certain QWL techniques to certain positions in different-sized transit organizations. All of these recommendations have some link to motivational theory and/or to theories of bureaucratic organization. All have some evidence in the form of existing programs considered successful. A summary of these recommendations is shown on Figure 2.

**THE PROCESS OF CHANGE**

Knowing about a program is one thing; knowing how to get that program going in one's organization is another. This section deals with the process of change; the steps that a planning committee should go through, no matter which program is chosen to meet one's organizational needs. Participation by those to be affected by change is a keystone to success. The opportunity to influence decisions that have an impact on one's own work is an underlying principle of QWL.

Practitioners generally agree that there are seven steps in the change process (see Figure 3). A brief description of each step follows.

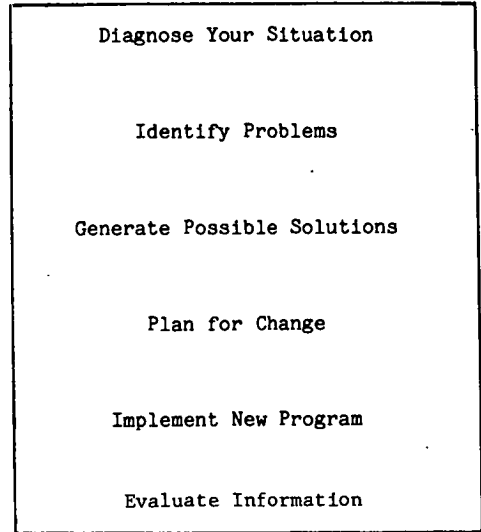


Figure 3. Steps in the change process.

**Diagnose Situation**

All organizations can improve, but before a change is implemented, one should find out what is working well and what can be improved. If something that is already working well is changed; one may end up with worse problems than is now faced.

Usually problems generate the feeling, "It's time we do some-

thing..." An immediate action is desired. But it is wise to go through the diagnostic process. What was thought to be the problem may be a symptom of something else.

Diagnosis is simply a process of gathering information. Consider the following:

1. *What information is needed.* Develop a list of the kind of informatin that will help in the diagnosis. Some common data are employee attitudes, work flow, perceived problems, service

	Bus Operator	St. Sup/Disp.	Mechanics	Foreman	Clerical (non-union)
Large	Incentives	Job Enlargement	Incentives	Labor Management	Flexitime
	Labor Management	Job Enrichment	Labor Management	Committee	Incentives
	Committee	Labor Management	Committee	Quality Circle	Quality Circle
	Task Forces	Committee	Quality Circle	Task Forces	Task Forces
		Task Forces	Task Forces	Work Teams	Work Teams
		Work Teams	Work Teams		
Medium	Incentives	Job Enlargement	Incentives	Labor Management	Flexitime
	Labor Management	Job Enrichment	Labor Management	Committee	Incentive
	Committee	Labor Management	Committee	Quality Circle	Quality Circle
	Task Forces	Task Forces	Task Forces	Task Forces	Task Forces
				Work Teams	
Small	Incentives	Job Enlargement	Incentives	Task Forces	Flexitime
	Task Forces	Job Enrichment	Task Forces	Work Teams	Incentives
	Top Level Labor	Task Forces	Top Level Labor		Task Forces
	Management		Management		
		Committee			
		Work Teams			

Figure 2. Summary of recommendations concerning QWL techniques, by organizational size and position.

complaints, written policy and procedures, UMTA Section 15 data, and numbers of grievances by department over the life of the union contract.

2. *How to collect the information.* Common methods of data collection are review of written records, interviews, and questionnaires.

3. *Who will be involved.* Does the staff have the expertise or is the help of an outside consultant needed? Will information be sought from bargaining unit employees? If so, inform the union leadership of the process. How shall supervisors and middle level managers be informed and involved?

Not all diagnoses must be organizationwide. This step should not be made so complex and time consuming that everyone involved will run out of time and interest. On the other hand, it is expedient to gather information about one's organization before proceeding to the next step.

### Identify Problems

Use the data gathered to identify problems in one's organization. Review and analyze the information, then interpret the findings. An effective method to check for accuracy is to present the interpretations to those from whom the information was collected and ask for their comments. Conclusions may have been drawn that are not accurate, or new ways of looking at a problem may have been suggested that did not occur to those directly involved. In either case, giving employees, union officials, supervisors, and middle level managers an opportunity to review the tentative diagnosis will increase the accuracy of the findings, and it will have the added benefit of gaining credibility for the process of change.

### Generate Possible Solutions

Once the problems are identified, one must look at a variety of possible solutions and evaluate the potential of each. Which are most suitable for a particular organization? What is the expected time span from implementation to results? How much will each cost?

The model programs are possible solutions. A review of these and other programs is appropriate at this step.

The results of this process will be a number of possible solutions. One may want to have the people who will be involved in implementation review the options and make recommendations on their choice of solution and the reasons for their choice.

### Plan for Change

The process of change is slow. Many get frustrated by the constant need to involve others in decision-making. Yet this process will gain commitment for change, avoid the "trial and error" approach, and ensure longer lasting results.

In this step, too, there is a requirement for involvement. Janka (1977, p. 71) summarizes five points that she recommends in the planning process.

1. *Locate program.* Are some changes applicable only to certain departments? Are some organizationwide? Where is there a high success potential? Where will projects be visible and success transferable?

2. *Decide whom to involve in planning.* Who will be affected by changes? Are there existing employee or management committees that can be utilized?

3. *Clarify roles.* What should be the roles of those who participate in the planning? Who will make final decisions? Does management have a veto power? Should outside facilitators be involved?

4. *Develop action steps to achieve goals.* What actions can be taken to minimize restraining forces? What can be done to maximize driving forces?

5. *Set targets.* What specific activity will be undertaken? Who will do it? When will it be started (and finished)? How will one measure progress and results?

During this step, decisions must be made about evaluation. What must happen if the program is to be considered "a success"? The three different approaches to defining success may be used. The first, and most common, is that the program is successful if it meets targets for change set within the parameters of the program. For example, a labor-management committee may decide to establish an attendance incentive program, and it determines that the program will be successful when 20 percent of operators meet the program's criteria. This approach is usually referred to as an evaluation of outcomes.

Another, but less common approach to evaluation, is that the program is only considered successful if there is positive impact on organizational performance. Commonly used measures of organizational performance are those collected for UMTA Section 15 reports. Using the foregoing example, the labor-management committee's incentive program would be considered successful only if improvements in overall organizational performance resulted. This type of evaluation requires collection of benchmark data before the program begins and at regular intervals during the program.

A third type of evaluation, called process evaluation, is less concerned with a program's results and more concerned with the process of reaching the goals. A scorecard is kept to record meetings cancelled, attendance at meetings, number of projects completed, number of employees involved, and so on. Evaluation data of this type are particularly useful in trouble shooting problems if a program does not seem to be accomplishing its goals.

A sophisticated evaluation plan would include all three types of evaluation. More common, and still useful is a combination of outcome and process evaluation.

### Implement New Program

In this step, it is a good idea to make a serious effort to inform all employees of the new effort. Information disseminated on bulletin boards, in newsletters, or by an orientation meeting will reduce rumors that can be destructive to the new program. Openness is a characteristic of quality of work life, and one's credibility will be severely challenged if employees must rely on "the grapevine" to learn about the new program.

By this stage, goals and targets are clear, and participants understand their roles and responsibilities.

Janka (1977, p. 83) says of implementation:

Employees should be able to "get on with it" on their own. Control can be inhibiting. . . .

## Evaluate Information

Evaluation has been considered earlier in the planning process. Now is the time to collect information to judge the outcomes, compare the current performance data with benchmark data gathered before the program was started, and/or to begin collecting information on how well the process is working.

Sometimes there is too much pressure for results. But evaluation should be seen as part of the process of change. Evaluation can provide information that is used to fine tune a program, by identifying areas that require corrective action, and this should be the purpose of evaluation in QWL efforts. Programs that involve employees should not be quickly terminated for lack of results.

The process then goes back full cycle; the evaluation data may be used to diagnose the situation. Is the program working or creating new problems? If problems are developing, what are the causes, what are the possible solutions, which solutions can be implemented, and who should be involved? After answering this series of questions, implement the change, evaluate it, and use the information for further diagnosis.

A transit organization that involves employees, union leaders, staff and line managers in this process of organizational change is well on the way to improving its quality of work life.

## RESOURCES

### Printed Material on Quality of Work Life

BURCK, C. G., "Working Smarter." *Fortune*. Vol. 103, No. 12 (June 15, 1981) pp. 68-73. This article discusses basic assumptions and intentions of QWL programs: people want to work together in common purpose; workers are willing and able to participate in management decisions at all levels; and any organization that shuns the participation of workers in management is wasting valuable intelligence. Quality-of-work-life programs are applicable in offices and service businesses as well as factories. The article contains statements from heads of firms with successful QWL programs and theories of QWL experts, espousing basic QWL assumptions. There are dangers, however. Quality of work life challenges a system of authority and accountability that has been used through most of history. Mid-level managers generally do not like QWL programs; it seems they have to change their management styles the most to be willing to take suggestions from workers and not be totally authoritarian.

CONTINO, R. "The Theory Z Turnaround of a Public Agency." *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1 Washington, D.C. (January-February 1982) pp. 62-72. This article analyzes the progress of the New York City Bureau of Motor Equipment of the Department of Sanitation in improving productivity and employee job satisfaction utilizing Ouchi's Theory Z management techniques. The techniques transform an organization from a "Type X" organization where decision-making authority is vested in one person to a "Theory Z" organization where decisions are based on qualitative and quantitative input from all levels of labor and management. The article provides evaluation data which prove how successful this approach is when implemented carefully.

GREENBERG, P. D., and GLASER, E. M., *Some Issues in Joint Union-Management Quality of Worklife Improvement Efforts*,

Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (1980) 85 pp. This document summarizes proceedings of a conference of union officials and includes management comments on QWL issues. Purpose was to: clarify QWL concept; formulate suitable objectives for QWL programs; identify workable structures for joint QWL efforts; stipulate appropriate union role in QWL; develop policy implications of QWL. Management and labor representatives supported the concept of QWL improvement and agreed it required bilateral effort. Some reasons for failure of QWL programs are outlined.

KANTER, R. M., "Dilemmas of Participation: Issues in Implementing Participatory Quality of Work Life Programs," *National Forum*, Vol. LXII, No. 2 (Spring 1982) pp. 16-19. The author defines "delegation to a group" as the central theme of participation. The conclusion drawn in the article is that although quality-of-work-life projects must be carefully planned and implemented and the proper people involved, the results in increased communication and job satisfaction are well worth the effort.

PAULEY, R. "Human Side of Work," *Transportation Research News*, No. 95 (July-August 1981) pp. 11-13. The article discusses changes occurring in the "world of work" including the characteristics of today's worker, and the decline in employee job satisfaction. It then describes work improvement experiments initiated in the 1970s that addressed these job satisfaction issues. These are the joint General Motors/United Auto Workers quality of working life program, the Lincoln National Life "quality commitment" program, and the Cummins Engine Company program. The central theme of each of these programs is employee participation in decision-making.

*People and Productivity: A Challenge to Corporate America*, New York Stock Exchange, Office of Economic Research, New York (1982) 53 pp. The NYSE conducted a national survey of corporations using "quality of work-life" programs which they define as any effort "to encourage employees to participate in the decisions that affect and determine day-to-day work patterns," although in its broadest sense it includes "general efforts to stimulate workers by making their jobs more interesting, giving them more control over their own activities, and providing them with a more direct stake in their companies' fortunes." They found that 14 percent of the 49,000 corporations surveyed have QWL programs. Larger corporations were much more likely to have programs, 53 percent of those listed on the Exchange have programs. Programs were initiated for a variety of reasons, the top three being: to cut costs, to deal with poor employee attitudes or morale, and because the top manager had heard of other successful programs. Of corporations with more than 500 employees the four most successful programs were personalized hours, setting company objectives, formal training, and task forces. Among all programs, 12 percent of corporations considered their programs "highly successful"; 42 percent "successful"; 24 percent "partially successful"; 0 "unsuccessful"; and 20 percent "too early to evaluate." In addition to the survey, the publication looks at the components of Japanese success and suggests it stems from the quality of primary and secondary education rather than management practices such as quality circles.

WATTS, G., "QWL: CWA's Position," *QWL Review*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (March 1983) pp. 12-14. The author, who is President of the Communications Workers of America, comments on the QWL movement from the perspective of American labor. He

warns that QWL challenges the way unions have done business in the past because it is a cooperative, problem-solving relationship rather than adversarial. He emphasizes that QWL has great potential if several issues are understood and kept in focus: (1) Avoid gimmicks (management tricks to circumvent unions and increase productivity. He classifies quality circles as such). (2) QWL involves a long-term change in management style. (3) Unions must be involved in planning and implementing worker participation programs. He establishes a set of general principles to be followed when establishing a QWL program.

#### Printed Material on the Process of Change

JANKA, K., *People Performance . . . Results*, National Training and Development Service, 444 N. Capitol St., Suite 349, Washington, D.C. 20001 (1977) 159 pp. This brief and well-written book is oriented toward local government practitioners who want help with the process of change. It is based on research findings, which gives more credibility to the step-by-step process for improving organizations outlined in this practical text.

SUSMAN, G. I., *A Guide to Labor-Management Committees in State and Local Government*. Public Technology, Inc. Washington, D.C. 20036 (1980) 68 pp. The *Guide* is particularly useful if you are planning for labor-management committees, but it also has general utility because the question and answer format may be used as a guide to important issues in any change effort. It is concise and has practical advice that can be used by transit officials in planning, implementing, and evaluating organizational change efforts.

BECKER, C., *So Now You're a Trainer*, International City Management Association, 1120 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 (1979) 37 pp. Implementing almost any new quality of work-life technique will involve training. This handbook is about the process of training. Particularly useful for those in mid- to small-sized agencies that have been "drafted" to conduct training, this book will tell one how to train, and then all one must do is plan what to train.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### INCENTIVES

Incentive programs are widely used in transit agencies. In response to a survey conducted for this report, 75 percent of the agencies reported use of an incentive system. This section provides a useful guide in reviewing and perhaps improving an existing program or in planning for new types of incentives.

Incentive programs are broadly defined as any system that links some type of reward to certain defined behavior or change in organizational performance. A typical incentive among transit agencies is a safety patch (the reward) awarded to employees with no chargeable accidents (the behavior) over a specified time period. There is one group of programs designed to recognize

and reward employees that are similar to incentives, but should be distinguished from incentives because the purpose and implementation procedures are different. These recognition programs, such as "Employee of the Month" are useful programs, but the link between behavior and reward is less clear than in incentives. Criteria for eligibility are usually more general, and even if an employee fulfills the criteria, there is no guarantee the reward will follow. Recognition programs look at past behavior and say, "thanks, you've done a good job." Incentives look to the future and say, "if you do this (or if these things improve), you'll receive this as a reward."



In practice, there is a fine line between incentive and recognition programs because where recognition programs exist, employees may modify their behavior to be eligible for recognition. However, incentives are more useful in bringing about changes in behavior. Many agencies use both approaches and results can be beneficial.

Many types of rewards may be used as incentives. Nonmonetary rewards include recognition in the form of uniform patches. Another example of a nonmonetary incentive is a reserved parking space for a month. Some awards have monetary value (e.g., extra day off, free parking where the employee normally pays), but do not require an outlay by the organization. Monetary rewards range from savings bonds to bonus cents per hour; the latter could possibly accumulate to hundreds of dollars annually.

No matter what the reward, incentive programs will not succeed in bringing about desired changes unless four conditions apply. (1) The desired behavior must be clearly specified, for example, each month in which the full-time employee works at least 155 hours without incurring an avoidable accident and/or injury, he or she will be paid a \$0.05 bonus per hour worked. (2) The reward must be of value to the employee. (3) The employee must believe that the reward will follow the behavior. (4) The employee believes the system is being administered fairly. To accomplish the latter, record keeping must be impeccable.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Incentive programs are more complex than they appear at first glance. Serious study is required, and it may be desirable to seek professional advice. But first consider the organizational climate. If it is not conducive to incentive plans, much time and effort may be wasted.

### Management Support

Incentive programs must be firmly backed by top management for implementation to be successful. One type of support is a guarantee of job security. Incentive programs have resulted in reduced extra board requirements, and no employee wants to participate in a program that may lead to layoffs of fellow employees. Managers can alleviate this concern by guaranteeing reductions through attrition.

Another demonstration of support by top management is some guarantee of continuity for the program. An incentive program that is short lived appears manipulative. Thus, evaluation should be undertaken to improve the program, not to determine, in the short run, whether the program will be continued.

### Union Support

Incentives cannot be effective in a climate of mistrust, insecurity, or highly adversarial labor-management relationships. Conversely, incentives appear to work best in open, participative atmosphere.

Union leaders should be consulted early in the process. They, in turn, should inform and solicit ideas from the members. It is not unusual for the planning committee to be made up of managers, staff, union officials, and employees.

## INITIAL ACTIVITIES

### Setting Program Goals

One of the first decisions to make is what the program is expected to accomplish. To make this decision, diagnose the organization's problem areas by collecting and reviewing information on the organization's performance. How does the rate of absenteeism compare to other agencies of a similar size? What of the accident record, miles between road calls, on-time service, etc.? Are problems in certain target areas (e.g., "miss outs") increasing or decreasing?

After this information is collected, involve top management and the union leadership. Reaching consensus on the goals of the program at this early stage is very beneficial and will aid in implementation.

Once the goals are established, a task force could be established to study and make recommendations on the policy for setting up or reviewing, expanding, administering, and evaluating the incentive program.

### Issues Considered in Planning Incentive Programs

#### *Individual or Group Incentives*

One of the first issues for the task force to consider is whether individual or group incentives are best. Perhaps both would be adaptable to a particular organization.

Most existing incentive plans in transit are based on standards to be accomplished by individuals. Changes in a person's behavior, however, do not always result in increased system performance. Group incentive programs tend to focus on system performance, and in that regard are particularly useful for transit. Wherever team work can increase organizational performance, group incentives are appropriate. For example, increased miles between road calls for buses operating out of a garage could be the basis for rewards going to all maintenance personnel in that garage.

*(The Safe Driving Award of the Des Moines, Iowa, Metropolitan Transit Authority is illustrative of the type of program that is widely used as an incentive for bus operators. The program is open to all operators. Safety patches are awarded to those who drive for a 12-month period without a chargeable accident. The program provides recognition to safe drivers, increases the emphasis on safety, and demonstrates employee accomplishments to the public.*

*New York City's Bureau of Motor Equipment has an unusual and effective group incentive. There a labor-management committee established each repair facility as a "profit center." First, the value of the work is determined by collecting the average cost of the same work in the private sector. For example, the cost of rebuilding truck transmissions might be the average cost of that work billed to customers by a sample of private garages in New York City. Then each garage in BME tracks its actual costs (wages, supplies, operating costs) to perform the work. The difference between the "value" (private sector output) and the actual cost (the input) is the profit. Each garage regularly gets records of its own profit, and the Director of BME has used the budget process to plow "profits" back into the garages in the form of new equipment.)*

Whether the incentive plan rewards individuals or groups,

the criteria that must be met must be entirely clear to the employees.

### *The Nature of the Reward*

The planning group must also devise rewards. As noted earlier, these may be monetary, nonmonetary, or a combination. In making these decisions, one must consider what is available, what employees would consider valuable, and the projected payout if the reward is monetary.

### *Who Participates*

Incentive systems are particularly useful for transit's largest employee group—operators. These employees interact daily with clients, but have little opportunity for direct contact with management. Caught in the middle, many operators think management automatically blames the operator when passengers file complaints. Public recognition of operators with exemplary performance is one step management can take to increase support for its employees.

Other employees, however, should not be ignored as incentives are developed. The task force must think about the issue of perceived fairness. Most transit agencies that have incentive programs do limit participation to operators. While certain types of incentives may be suitable only to one group of employees (e.g., safe driving for operators), other kinds of awards (e.g., attendance) are applicable to all. Opening the program to only one group will raise questions of fairness.

The final output of the task force or study group could be a report which includes the following elements:

1. An analysis of organizational problems.
2. A definition of the goals of the program.
3. A statement of eligibility.
4. A clear description of the incentive award, the standards which must be met, and the timing of the award.
5. A definition of how the program will be evaluated with a statement supporting flexibility if the program is not working as planned.
6. A recommendation for when and how progress will be communicated to employees.
7. An action plan with steps and dates for implementation.

### **BARRIERS**

A major cause of failure of incentive programs is poor administration. Experience has shown that criteria must be unambiguous and, when the criteria are met, the reward must follow quickly for the incentive to be effective. Sunline Transit Agency, Palm Springs, California, for example, pays incentive bonuses on the first day of the following month.

Questions of fairness often arise if incentives are poorly administered. The incentive value drops if an employee met the criteria, but fails to receive the reward. Rumors will soon spread the word that the system does not work. An excellent record-keeping system is a requirement. If you do not have the administrative capacity for tracking, do not start an incentive system.

Some of the major barriers to effective use of incentives have already been discussed, but a brief review may be helpful. Consider the following general conditions:

1. Does the agency have reliable, accurate, and trusted payroll and other record-keeping systems?
2. If existing policies (e.g., accident review procedures) are related to incentives, are these policies in writing and available to employees?
3. Can top management support be counted on to last?
4. Are labor management relations characterized by some degree of trust and open communications?

A "no" response to any of these questions indicates that it would be wise to set the incentive program aside and deal first with these problems.

Incentive programs must be carefully designed and implemented with attention to issues of fairness, the type of work, job security, and the organizational climate. As a quality-of-work-life technique, incentives are most effective when combined in a total program that encourages employee and union involvement. As noted earlier, incentives are widely used in transit and have great value. Where currently used, agencies may want to review or expand their programs. If an agency is not involved in such a program, perhaps now is the time to start.

### **RESOURCES**

#### **Printed Material on Incentives**

"A Vote for Individual Incentive Plans," *Training*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (February 1982) p. 46A. The article is an account of information that appeared in *Small Business Report* (SBR). The SBR encouraged the use of individual work incentive plans over group incentive plans which overreward mediocre workers and under compensate the best workers. Guidelines for use of individual incentive plans in the non-sales arena are presented: the plans should be aimed at increasing machine utilization because most productivity today is machine-paced; labor and management must trust and agree with each other; "bail-out" clause should be included, which limits the incentive by time or to a specific project. Individual incentive programs are inappropriate where machine work is computer controlled, where quality and quantity are equally important, or where labor-management relations are poor. The individual incentives are most workable in labor intensive work, when employee attendance decreases, where individuals have quality responsibility, where machine downtime is very expensive, and when exempt overtime costs go up.

GREINER, J. M., DAHL, R. E., HATRY, H. P., and MILLAR, A. P., *Monetary Incentives and Work Standards in Five Cities: Impacts and Implications for Management and Labor*, The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C. (1977) 94 pp. Five case histories in local government departments of vehicle maintenance, water meters, police, and streets are presented in considerable detail. Overall findings suggest that productivity programs where employees share the benefits in the form of extra pay can provide significant improvements even in efficient departments. Work standards alone generally do not produce results. Administration of incentives, however, involves costly record keeping. Neither incentives nor work standards damage labor-management relationships in the long-run, but the authors recommend "early

and meaningful participation by employees and their unions." Work standards in the absence of monetary incentives produced some employee dissatisfaction. Supervisors were "a major source of resistance." Group incentives had several beneficial side effects, notably increased cohesion and cooperation in work groups. The authors think components of incentive programs are transferable to other functional areas.

National Commission on Productivity and Work Quality, *Employee Incentives to Improve State and Local Government Productivity* (March 1975) 147 pp. This report provides a broad overview of incentive programs in state and local government. The report, largely a compilation of project descriptions, is based on mail and telephone surveys. Job enlargement was one of the incentives covered in the report. Job rotation, team approaches, and job redesign programs were reported in 14 percent of the responding local governments and 20 percent of the responding state governments. The report recommends more evaluation of incentive programs.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### JOB ENRICHMENT

A simple definition of job enrichment is the addition of tasks, responsibility, and autonomy to work currently being done by a worker to make the job more meaningful to the person, thus increasing the internal motivation to perform in a more productive way. Three psychological states must exist within the person to enhance internal motivation: (1) the person must experience the work as meaningful; (2) the person must feel responsible for outcomes of the work; and (3) the person must have knowledge of the actual results of the work activities.

Research suggests that there are five job characteristics (Hackman and Oldham, 1980) that foster these psychological states:

1. *Skill variety*. The degree to which a job requires a variety of activities in carrying out the work, involving the use of a number of different skills and talents of the person.
2. *Task identity*. The degree to which a job requires completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work, that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome.
3. *Task significance*. The degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives of other people, whether these people are in the immediate organization or in the world at large.

4. *Autonomy*. The degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out.

5. *Job feedback*. The degree to which carrying out work activities required by the job provides the individual with direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance.

For an enriched job, the foregoing job characteristics must be present and structured into the day-to-day work.

#### INITIAL ACTIVITIES

##### Setting Program Goals

Job enrichment is a complex process and requires expertise to implement. Staff members from personnel or human resource departments would be logical choices for inclusion in a small study team to investigate the applicability of job enrichment in an agency.

As a first step, the study team should review the resource materials suggested at the end of this chapter. They should then consider which jobs most need enriching. Most attitude studies suggest that bus operators and mechanics have enriched jobs. These employees usually express high levels of satisfaction concerning variety, task identity, task significances, and feedback. Bus operators also enjoy a high level of autonomy. One should never assume that a particular job needs enrichment. Test whether a job needs enriching by means of group discussions, interviews, or surveys. Many opportunities for enriching jobs may be disclosed when this topic is discussed with employees.

The research conducted under Project 33-2 suggests that street supervisors are a target group in transit for job enrichment; the following discussion, therefore, is focused on street supervisors to demonstrate the concept of job enrichment.

To set the program goals, the study team should begin with an analysis of the nature of the job of the street supervisor in light of the five job characteristics of job enrichment described earlier. Transit agencies will differ, but the findings from this research may be helpful in guiding the analysis.

In virtually every transit agency—large, medium, or small—the function of the street supervisor is to act as a monitoring agent for a set of necessarily rigid rules and procedures for safety and efficiency in bus operations. Although he or she performs other functions, such as accident investigations, re-blocking of the line, and acting as an on-the-spot resource for the operator, most of the time on the job is spent implementing a “management-by-exception” system. In this regard, the supervisor acts pretty much like a quality control inspector on the assembly line, looking for deviation from the desired standard and recording deviations, such as operating ahead or behind schedule, operating without proper designation signs or without proper attire, etc., in the form of written violations against the operator.

For the most part, the job consists of waiting or looking for trouble or deviations from the expected norm. Although the skills and experience of many street supervisors are varied because of their long tenure in transit operations, their job, for the most part, uses little of that skill base.

The street supervisor's job as presently structured has two main components: keeping runs on schedule and supervising operators. But neither task has a clear beginning and end, since few have responsibility for a complete route and supervision rarely involves performance evaluations. The responsibilities are fragmented. Most day-to-day duties (responding to emergencies, accidents, requests for assistance from operators and responding to perceived violations) are reactive, and there is little or no opportunity to initiate tasks and see them through to ultimate completion.

Although the street supervisor is to keep runs on schedule, the focal point for communication to and from the operator on the street and Central Operations Control is the radio dispatcher. The dispatcher has a wider perspective on the factors influencing the smooth routing of the bus than does the street supervisor because the dispatcher is privy to a larger source of information—police reports, weather reports, and call-ins from operators all over the system. Moreover, all changes of orders going to the street from Central Control come through the dispatcher. Therefore, if an operator needs guidance or assistance in an emergency or in handling problems with the schedule, he or she usually turns to the dispatcher via the radio in the bus. The

street supervisor may be left out of the process entirely or may have to rely on instructions from the dispatcher in order to take appropriate action.

The second component of the job, supervising bus operators, is also fragmented in most agencies. Street supervisors do not have a specific group of people as subordinates. Because of periodic picks by the operators and because of extensive use of the extra board to run trippers, the runs covered by street supervisors may be driven by a changing array of operators.

Even if there were a certain group of people to supervise, street supervisors do not have the necessary tools or the time to supervise the operators effectively. Supervision should consist of correcting, supporting, teaching, problem solving, and reprimanding. In transit, however, because the street supervisors must check for deviations from the schedule and from the standards of bus operator behavior, supervision is largely negative. Few agencies have ways for supervisors to reward “good” performance.

Even considering discipline, in some agencies, supervision is fragmented. When the supervisor cites an operator for a violation, the citation may be overturned without the supervisor's input or even knowledge.

On the whole, street supervisors enjoy a fairly high degree of task significance in their jobs because they deal with and are considered responsible for the safety and efficiency of the transit service. The significance of the tasks performed by the street supervisor is highest under unusual circumstances, such as emergencies and accidents, but even in day-to-day performance their jobs are important to the agency and to the public. This characteristic is not lacking in the supervisors' job, and thus is not a significant issue in job enrichment.

The street supervisor does not, under normal conditions, either assign work to operators or evaluate the operator's work output. He must work with what has been totally scheduled and structured by others. The limited discretion he does exercise lies primarily in the area of whether to write an official violation on an operator or give a verbal warning. On the other hand, because he is highly mobile and performs many of his daily tasks virtually unsupervised, he enjoys some degree of autonomy in his job as presently structured.

Because the street supervisor is largely unsupervised himself, circulating throughout large parts of the system by car and maintaining contact only by radio, a large portion of his working day and its work results may be unmonitored and unevaluated by anyone. Like the operator, his performance is monitored negatively. This leads to the frequent complaint of operators and street supervisors alike—“They only notice me when I make a mistake.”

### **Issues Considered In Job Restructuring for Street Supervisors**

Job enrichment is not to be undertaken without careful diagnosis of the structure of the job of supervisor and the perceptions of people holding the job. If the analysis provided above seems to apply, the next step is to test the concepts.

#### *Test for Need*

The study group may want to interview the street supervisors.

Another recommended approach is use of Hackman and Oldham's Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS). The JDS is not copyrighted, and a few sample questions are shown on Figure 4. The questionnaire and scoring guide are included as an appendix to Hackman and Oldham's 1980 publication, *Work Redesign*.

**Generate Options**

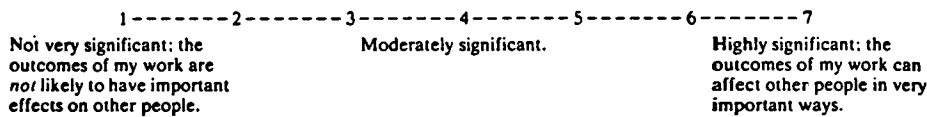
A number of transit agencies have attempted to enrich supervisors' jobs. The study team may wish to contact other agencies to learn from their experience. One of the most ambitious efforts was in San Francisco Municipal Railway. Operations for enriching supervisors' jobs may be seen in the way changes were instituted there. Figure 5 compares the new, enriched job with that of traditional responsibilities of a street supervisor.

**Variety of Tasks.** Variety in a street supervisor's job may be increased in the areas of instruction and counseling of operators. (*The Spokane Transit Authority established a Unit Management System which effectively delegates personnel matters to the road supervisor level and enhances communication and organizational cohesiveness. Each supervisor is assigned 20 operators. Supervisors work a fixed 35 hour week, plus 5 hours of flex time to enable them to be in contact with each of the drivers in the unit. This allows better communication about the problems of individual drivers as well as a better opportunity to praise good performance.*)

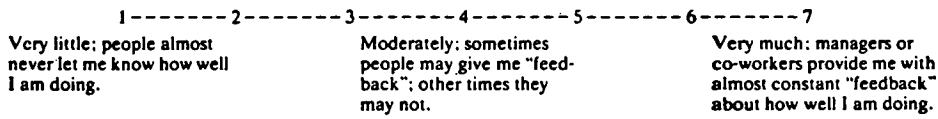
These are positive supervisory functions often precluded from the traditional street supervisor's tasks. These positive supervisory tasks are also essential to counter the stereotypical image of the street supervisor as one who only finds fault with operator performance and writes violations.

**Task Identity.** Task identity may be increased by making street

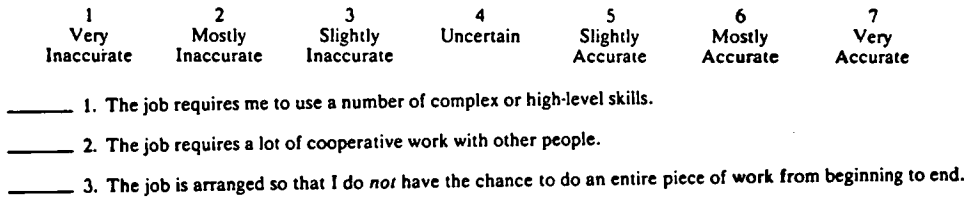
In general, how *significant or important* is your job? That is, are the results of your work *likely* to significantly affect the lives or well-being of other people?



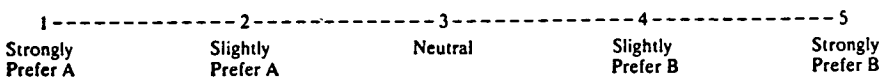
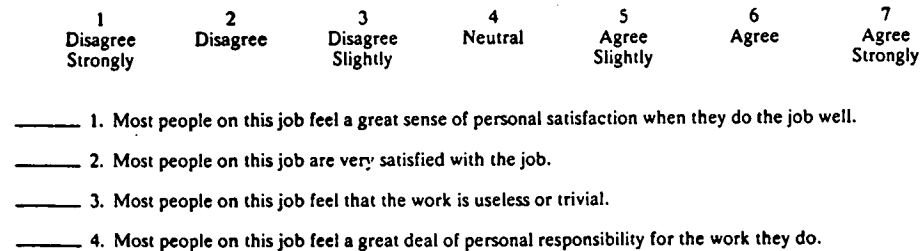
To what extent do *managers or co-workers* let you know how well you are doing on your job?



*How accurate is the statement in describing your job?*



*How much do you agree with the statement?*



A job in which there is a real chance for you to develop new skills and advance in the organization.

A job which provides lots of vacation time and an excellent fringe benefit package.

**JOB A**

**JOB B**

*Figure 4. Job diagnostic survey. (From Hackman and Oldham, 1982, Appendix A).*

Dimensions of Job Enrichment	Inspector	Transit Line Coordinator
Span of Control	1:40-250	1:25
Variety of Tasks	Moderate--record data, write reports, direct vehicles, supervise operators. Must take exam for new job.	High--monitor schedule adherence, direct vehicle to maintain headway, supervise, instruct, and counsel operators. Eligible for seven different jobs without civil service exam.
Task Identity	Low--accountable for segments of line, accountable for some parts of operator performance, but did not evaluate operator.	High--accountable for complete line (or lines) with authority to make adjustments to maintain schedule or headway. Increased operator contact, evaluate operators.
Task Significance	High--responsible for reliable service.	High--responsible for reliable service, leader of group of operators.
Autonomy	High	High
Feedback	Low--little opportunity for interaction with operators, limited to "corrections." Limited information on total line performance, inadequate radio system.	High--lower ratio of supervisor to operator permits interaction, control over total line and improved radio communications. Permits better feedback on service reliability.

Figure 5. An example of job enrichment—Transit Line Coordinator.

supervisors responsible for total runs and by providing time and tools for supervisor operators. The restructured street supervisor's job, as in the case of the Transit Line Coordinator in San Francisco, with a narrower span of control and greater variety of tasks and supervisory controls, enables the supervisor to be accountable for the complete line with authority to make adjustments to maintain the schedule and the proper headway. The narrower span of control and the resulting increased contact with a manageable number of operators also enable the supervisor to gain job enrichment by engaging in a basic supervisory function—evaluation of subordinates.

**Feedback.** This dimension is hampered for the street supervisors because of their limited interaction with operators, their negative image in the minds of the operators because of excessive emphasis on corrections or violations and because of limited access to information necessary for proper supervision of the line. There is little or no feedback from performance of the job to let the supervisor know if things are going well or poorly.

Improved radio communications to and from the dispatcher and the street supervisor is one way to improve feedback because it enables the latter to have at his disposal the necessary information to supervise the line effectively and maintain a credible image of leadership with the operators.

**Task Significance and Autonomy.** These two areas require no major changes in job redesign to improve the street supervisor's

job. Task significance is usually quite high for street supervisors because they are mobilized to play key roles in maintaining safe and reliable service. The additional leadership status that supervisors would enjoy through narrower span of control and increased supervisory responsibilities over the operators would further enhance the dimension of task significance.

The dimension of autonomy, because of the street supervisor's mobility and high degree of independence in the performance of day-to-day tasks, is usually quite high and would remain so under job redesign.

**Span of Control.** It appears that a necessary precondition for job redesign is to give the street supervisor a manageable and practical span of control. In San Francisco, the supervisor's span of control went down from 1 to 40 to 250, to 1 to 25. The extent to which the span of control can be lessened will vary from agency to agency, depending on staff resources. However, it is important that the supervisor have a manageable number of operators to supervise; otherwise, it will be extremely difficult to put other elements of job redesign in place.

#### PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

As one plans for implementation, it is important that all those be informed who will be affected by the changes in the street supervisor's job. For example:

1. *Coordinate with the union.* The union should be advised of the changes in the supervisor's functions and the influence these changes will have on the operators.

2. *Orient dispatchers.* The dispatchers will be most affected by the changes in the supervisor's job. Dispatchers should not only be informed of the changes in procedures, especially in radio communication between themselves and the street, but they should also be asked for ways to implement these changes effectively.

3. *Inform bus operators.* By whatever practical means available—small group sessions, large group sessions, bulletin board announcements, or other written communications—bus operators should be fully apprised of the changes in the street supervisor's responsibilities and the impact on the bus operators and any resulting changes in policies and procedures.

4. *Gain top management support.* Top management must visibly endorse and support the redesign of the supervisor's job and acknowledge the importance of the street supervisor's function both to the supervisors as well as to the operators who will be under his control. This, in itself, would be a significant source of job enrichment for the street supervisors.

Beyond informing others, special attention must be paid to the street supervisors. Goals must be clear. As mentioned earlier, supervisors must be reoriented and, in most instances, trained in new skills. This is the most important of all the steps because it will determine if the changes will result in confusion and disillusionment for the supervisors or success and the kind of job enrichment that job redesign is supposed to produce.

Large agencies should consider a phased implementation, perhaps starting with pilot areas.

## BARRIERS

The impact of restructuring the street supervisor's job is bound to be felt significantly throughout the transit operations division. While it is not mandatory to reorganize the operations completely, as did San Francisco, certain changes are likely to be necessary, and most of the changes are expensive. Thus, the cost of implementation may be a major barrier.

One cost relates to the size of the supervisor force. If the span of control of each supervisor is narrowed, more staffing may be required. In some cases, however, reassigning work shifts and more efficiency in the utilization of the supervisor force may be sufficient. Where extra staffing is necessary, the use of experienced operators as utility supervisors is one approach used successfully by many transit agencies. Cost/benefits should be judged over a period of time. Changes in the job of supervisor should cause savings in other areas (e.g., reduced absenteeism among operators).

Another cost is associated with new equipment. Effective radio communication, for example, is essential to the success of the street supervisor, especially when the job is redesigned for job enrichment. Car radios in good repair, capable of receiving all transmissions from Central Control and from the operator, and capable of sending information are necessary.

Another possible barrier is the resistance to changing policy and procedures. Certain policies and practices relating to operator evaluation and discipline must change. These policies must be decentralized to give more responsibility to the street supervisor. This change will have an impact on the functions

and responsibilities of the superintendent or middle management in transit operations.

Procedures concerning the pattern of radio communication between the dispatcher and the operator may have to be changed. Dispatchers should equip street supervisors with as much information as possible to enable the supervisors to supervise the operators in his sector effectively. This may mean directing information to the street supervisor that would normally go from the dispatcher to the operator.

The kinds of expectations that management has of street supervisors and the way street supervisors will be evaluated will change. The street supervisor will have significantly more to be accountable for, and this must be reflected in the performance appraisal. While the job will be more enriched, it will have a price (more responsibility and more accountability).

Job rotation and additional skill training in areas relating to basic supervision will be necessary in most cases. Even after reorientation and training, time should be allowed for the supervisors, particularly those with high seniority, to adjust to the change in the new tasks and responsibilities. Rushing to evaluate results can create barriers to program success.

Job enrichment is one of the more complex and costly quality-of-work-life techniques. Yet the job of street supervisor appears, from past research, to be particularly in need of redesign. If street supervisors evidence high levels of dissatisfaction with their work and if the job diagnostic survey or some other survey shows that dissatisfaction to be related to the nature of the work, then job enrichment should be worth the effort.

## RESOURCES

### Printed Material on Job Enrichment

GOMEZ, L., and MUSSIO, S., "An Application of Job Enrichment in a Civil Service Setting: A Demonstration Study," *Public Personnel Management*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January-February 1975) pp. 45-54. Authors use Herzberg's theory and look for "motivators," "hygiene," and the opportunity for more responsibility, achievement, recognition, growth. Data on satisfaction, performance, and absenteeism were collected before any changes and 6 months after. Results were positive in all three categories but there were no tests for significance. Limits on the study were the 6-month follow-up and the small number of subjects (eight).

GREINER, J. M., HATRY, H. P., KOSS, M. P., MILLAR, A. P., and WOODWARD, P., *Productivity and Motivation*, The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C. (1981) 461 pp. A part of this publication presents survey findings for four major types (team efforts, increased participation, job rotation, and job redesign) of job enrichment programs found in state and local governments. The authors conclude there has been little systematic evaluation of these programs. With few exceptions there is little documentary evidence that job enrichment has led to improved productivity or employee job satisfaction. The authors found that 244 jurisdictions had 309 programs; 187 of them involved police or fire, only 122 in other departments; in some of these participation was entirely top management.

HACKMAN, J. R., and OLDFHAM, G. R., *Work Redesign*, Addison-Wesley (1980) 330 pp. Hackman and Oldham have been refining principles of work redesign for more than 10 years. This book coherently brings together the whys and hows of

work redesign. It is full of details and the authors urge caution in implementation. "We favor better work redesign activities—thoughtfully planned and executed changes that are fully appropriate for their organizational settings—even if that means we will see fewer of them." (p. 243) This work is the classic on the topic of work redesign.

LOCKE, E. A., SIROTA, D., and WOLFSON, A.D., "An Experimental Case Study of the Successes and Failures of Job Enrichment in a Government Agency," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (1976) pp. 701–711. An experimental job enrichment program was introduced in three clerical work units of a federal agency. Matched control groups were selected for each experimental unit. The program was introduced after careful diagnosis of the work situation and thorough training of the personnel involved. Within the limits imposed by the field situation, before-after measures of both behavior and attitudes suggested that changes in behavior (e.g., productivity, absences) occurred in favor of the experimental groups. Job enrichment apparently had no effect on attitudes. The productivity changes were attributed mainly to more efficient use of manpower, elimination of unnecessary operations, and feedback and competition, while the absence changes were attributed to initial changes in morale based on the expectation of extrinsic rewards. It was concluded that attitudes did not improve because the expectation and desire for such rewards had not been met. The problems and limitations of job enrichment are discussed.

ORPEN, C., "The Effects of Job Enrichment on Employee Satisfaction, Motivation, Involvement, and Performance: A Field Experiment," *Human Relations*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (March 1979) pp. 189–217. This document is a study of two groups of clericals (South African government) one enriched, the other not. It is very similar to Locke *et al.* in design, but not in results. Orpen found enrichment caused increases in job satisfaction, involvement, internal motivation; led to decrease in absenteeism and turnover but had little impact on performance. "It is argued that in order to explain the effect of enrichment on performance, it is necessary to consider other factors than the psychological states produced by jobs. . . ."

SIROTA, D., and WOLFSON, A. D., "Job Enrichment: What Are the Obstacles?", *Personnel*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (May/June 1972) pp. 8–17. Major obstacles to job enrichment are described: managers lack of education about job enrichment, anti-job enrich-

ment ideology, organizational pressures, managerial resistance, technological restraints, belief that employees are incapable or uninterested in job enrichment, lack of problem analysis, belief in uniqueness of organization, job enrichment is just "good management," and requirement for considerable management time needed. The discussion of obstacles serves to emphasize the need to introduce job enrichment activities properly.

SIROTA, D., and WOLFSON, A. D., "Job Enrichment: Surmounting the Obstacles," *Personnel*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (July-August 1972) pp. 8–19. This article describes an approach to overcoming the obstacles to job enrichment programs that was developed in a large manufacturing organization. There are four phases: diagnosis of where job enrichment could be used most appropriately; top management exposure to problem analysis; training of designated "key men" throughout the organization in theories of motivation, job design, idea generation implementation strategies, evaluation and group leadership; keymen serve as consultation resources for managers during the job enrichment process. Case histories of actual programs are described. The article addresses the problem of implementation: How does one get job enrichment started in environments where the barriers seem nearly insurmountable?

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### QUALITY CIRCLES

Quality circles (QCs) are a technique to improve the productivity of an organization by tapping the intelligence and knowledge of employees. Employees performing similar work volunteer for participation, receive training, and work in groups

of six to ten with their foreman or first-line supervisor for one hour each week on problems that arise in their work area. These volunteers are actively involved in defining the problems they encounter (related to service and morale issues), seeking solu-



tions, and making formal recommendations to top management. Circle members may be asked to implement and evaluate those recommendations accepted by management.

The quality circle concept was originated by American consultants seeking answers to problems of Japanese industry following World War II. At that time, "Made in Japan" was almost synonymous with inferior quality goods. Since then, the recommendation to train employees in quality control techniques, with heavy emphasis on statistical procedures of quality control analysis, has been widely adopted in Japan. The Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers maintains a registry for "Quality Control Circles" and reports over 100,000 active circles in Japan, mostly in the manufacturing sector and involved with production issues.

The success of the Japanese experiment was noted by West Coast manufacturers in the early 1970s and instituted in high technology companies. It caught on and spread rapidly in the United States. Initially concentrated in manufacturing companies (e.g., Lockheed, Westinghouse), the concept has now been shown to have application in service organizations. Hospitals, local governments, and transit agencies have documented success (Johnson, 1981; Godsey, 1982; Caria, 1982).

Some observers, in fact, are concerned over the rapid spread of quality circles in the United States and the notion which seems to have developed that quality circles are the answer to all problems in any kind of organization. Quality circles, some say, have become a fad.

Unfortunately, many different organizational interventions have been called "quality circles"—everything from informal meetings of managers and employees from different departments to solve a particular problem (more commonly called task forces) to the highly structured system that is, in fact, involved in a quality circle effort. Before embarking on development of quality circles, managers should be sure they know what they are buying into—quality circles require long-term commitment and are expensive to start compared to some other programs. But QCs have much potential benefit to the organization, in terms of productivity improvements and better service for the public, and to employees, who are challenged by their involvement in decision-making.

## INITIAL ACTIVITIES

### Setting Program Goals

The impetus for quality circles generally comes from management, although it may stem from managers of many different departments. In large transit agencies there may be a separate human resources or training division, and someone from that division may suggest QCs. In smaller agencies, the Director of Personnel, Assistant General Manager, or the General Manager may initiate the program. Wherever the idea originates, there should be some investigation of the concept, of the needs of the organization, and some allocation of resources before beginning implementation.

One person or a small committee might begin by reading more about quality circles and trying to think how the program would work in their own organization. Specific questions should be developed and contacts made with other organizations that have used quality circles. Negative as well as the positive aspects should be investigated. Information should be sought from

professional organizations. A list of materials, contact persons, and organizations is found at the end of this chapter. At the end of this process one should have enough information to provide a briefing of the program goals to those who will have to approve the program if it is to be implemented.

Top management, including the General Manager and managers of line functions, and union officials should be informed of the quality circles concept early in the planning stage. Unless an agency already has been involved in employee participation programs (e.g., labor-management committees, task forces involving hourly employees), quality circles will require some change in attitudes, management style, and frequency of the interaction between labor and management. Managers will be expected to attend meetings planned by circle members. At these meetings, circle members make recommendations, and managers are required to respond. It is a "bottom-up" style which seems disordered to some. Line managers must be informed of this, and a briefing early in the planning process is recommended.

At this stage, however, it may not be feasible to ask for an endorsement of the concept, but rather for support for more detailed planning.

### Forming a Planning Committee

Because quality circles have an impact throughout the organization, it is wise at the early stage to develop a planning or advisory committee. The committee should represent those who will be most affected if the program is implemented. Thus, including department heads, division managers, representatives from the supervisory ranks, and union officials is a good idea. If it is feasible, the potential coordinator should be chosen early and be actively involved with the committee. Quality circles programs in large organizations require a full-time coordinator, and in mid-sized or smaller agencies, a person should be assigned on a part-time basis. Often a person is assigned to act as staff to the planning committee and later becomes the coordinator. (*The Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Transportation Steering Committee is made up of all division chiefs, office director, circle coordinator, and a representative from the director's office. The committee has adopted a rule that members may not designate others to attend meetings for them.*)

As one considers the membership of the planning committee, decisions must be made concerning the nature of union involvement. There are two general approaches to union representation on the committee: (1) the union as an equal partner, and (2) the union as an advisory group. In the first situation, committees may have equal numbers of union and management. Both have full responsibilities—choosing the coordinator, picking pilot circles—and both take credit for success or the blame if the program fails. In the second situation, managers may request the union to participate by naming one or two individuals to the planning committee. Here, management has the full responsibility for the program, but wants to keep the union informed and to hear of problems identified by the union.

Both approaches have been used successfully. Problems develop, however, where the two approaches are confused. Management, for example, cannot "blame" the union if the program fails unless the union had the ability, through equal representation, to influence policy decisions concerning program development. The union, on the other hand, cannot take credit for success if it has had only token representation on the committee.

Managers and union leaders should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each approach before reaching a final decision on the composition of the planning committee. The matter assumes added importance because the planning committee often becomes, with minor changes in membership, the QC steering committee.

#### Committee Responsibilities

##### *Judge Feasibility of QC*

The committee's first steps are to familiarize itself with the quality circle concept, find out what is required for a successful program, and then determine the feasibility for application in the agency. The committee must recognize, for example, the absolute necessity of top management commitment. A QC coordinator from a federal program stated, "Managers are required to be completely receptive to the ideas of subordinates." If management favors a "top-down" style and is not inclined toward open communications, and if this style has been working in the organization, quality circles, which stress openness and bottom-up problem solving, will probably not work.

Other elements to be considered as the committee judges the applicability of QCs include the receptivity of middle management and first line supervisors to change, the availability of funds to pay for materials, the ability of the staff to conduct training, whether an outside consultant will be needed, and if funds are available for the consultant.

Particularly important in the assessment of one's own organization is union-management relations. If an attitude of trust prevails, and if union officials have been willing to be involved in the planning process, chances of success will be increased. Quality circles have an ill connotation among some unions because the program has been used to undercut union leadership or prevent unionization in some companies. In other places, union leaders have made concerted efforts to endorse the program and encourage participation, then found top management pulled back and decided not to get involved. If an existing relationship is highly adversarial, quality circles are not recommended because they will probably be viewed as a technique to undermine the union. On the other hand, if existing labor-management relations are good or even neutral, early involvement of the union leadership in the planning process can have positive results.

One final factor should be considered in the committee's feasibility analysis. This is the stability of the organization, both in terms of leadership and finances. If the organization is undergoing rapid change, or if the financial situation is highly politicized or tenuous in other ways, quality circles are not recommended. The long time lag between initiation and measurable results argues against implementation in a rapidly changing environment.

##### *Set Policies for Quality Circles*

The planning or advisory committee is responsible for establishing the policies of the quality circle program. There are a number of policy questions that must be considered, including the following:

1. *What are the goals of the program?* Some organizations choose to stress productivity improvements, while others emphasize employee motivation and development. Of course, these two are not incompatible, but stating one goal and pursuing the other will lead to confused expectations, inconclusive results, and anger among the participants.

Goals that have been set by other organizations engaged in QC programs have included: enhance service by making service more responsive to community needs; increase employee participation in the development and achievement of organizational goals; improve the quality of service; improve communications within the organization; provide educational and self-development opportunity for hourly employees and supervisors; and increase on-time service. Clarity in the goals will provide direction as more specific objectives are set and evaluation criteria are determined. (*George Caria, Director of Equipment Maintenance and John Diers, Manager of Maintenance Administration MTC, St. Paul, Minnesota, state their organization's goals. "In implementing quality circles in the equipment maintenance division, our expectation was to improve communication among all employees, both managers and workers, and to build a total team approach in solving the problems of the workplace." (Transitions, Autumn 1982, p. 25.)*

2. *What boundaries should be set?* Along with setting the goals of the program, the committee should consider whether any areas are to be "off limits" for circle projects. Three general guidelines are suggested. First, items that are contained in the collective bargaining agreement should not be considered by any circle. For example, if the contract specifies a dollar amount for clothing allowances for mechanics, that amount would not be an appropriate item for discussion in a circle meeting. But the type of clothing to be purchased could be an acceptable item for discussion (e.g., if the Purchasing Department usually specifies which safety shoes are acceptable for purchase, mechanics in a QC may try to identify shoes better suited for their needs).

A second rule involves the prohibition of discussions of individuals. Talking about the number of times Mike or Jean are absent would not be allowable, but investigating reasons for a high rate of absenteeism within the work unit would be a legitimate topic for circle members.

The third rule that is commonly adopted involves focusing on work unit problems. Circle members are generally directed to discuss problems in their own area, and to discuss problems outside their area only insofar as those problems impinge directly on their work.

3. *What will be the nature of the evaluation?* Quality circles programs always contain an evaluation component, so the committee is not deciding whether there will be an evaluation, but how it will be carried out. The goal statement is crucial; without goals the committee will not know what should be evaluated. If quality, cost savings, participation, improved communications, or a combination of these are the goals, different types of evaluations will be appropriate. For example, if improved communications is a primary goal, an attitude survey would be useful as a benchmark before the program is put in place. But where improvements in on-time service is the goal, different kinds of information would be needed as the benchmark. Usually there are a number of goals and a variety of approaches to evaluation.

The committee must decide whether to stress direct results of circle activities or a comprehensive evaluation plan. For ex-

ample, the committee may wish to recommend that evaluation be focused on the output of the circle activities, that is, the cost savings or improved morale that results from implementation of circle recommendations. The committee may wish to combine this approach with an overall cost/benefit ratio. How much has the organization invested in the program, taking account of training, time off the job, materials, etc., and what have been the total cost savings from all circle recommendations. Those programs with a strong productivity emphasis will be more interested in the latter type of evaluation. The planners of a QC program should be aware, however, that while the first year total cost/benefit ratios are rarely expected to be positive because of the amount of up-front training that is required, this does not preclude a comprehensive evaluation.

Not every organization will want to stress cost/benefit ratios. Goldberg (1981, p. 69), CEO of the Mount Sinai Medical Center, Miami, Florida, says,

Within a short period of time, our investment started to pay dividends in a swelling enthusiasm where we had previously seen lackluster behavior. What kind of price tag do you put on behavioral changes? How do you calculate dollars when a group of employees, who were previously disinterested or criticizing, become actively involved in identifying, researching, and developing solutions to the nagging day-to-day problems they fight?

*Plan the Structure*

Some of the structural elements of quality circles efforts are quite standard, but on other elements, the committee must make decisions to tailor the program for its own organization. Among the standard elements, for example, are certain roles that must be filled:

1. Circle members, usually six to ten for each circle, all from the same work area, e.g., air conditioning mechanics, information clerks (not all mechanics or all clerical unless the organization is small and work areas are not differentiated).
2. Circle leaders, usually the first line supervisor of the work group.
3. Circle facilitator, usually a person trained in group process who attends every circle meeting, but comes from outside the work area.
4. Circle coordinator, usually from outside the work area, responsible for the entire program. In mid- to small-sized organizations or even in large organizations during the start-up period, it is often the case that the coordinator also acts as the facilitator.

The planning committee must decide whether to use a steering committee that will be responsible for establishing any necessary policy, monitoring and evaluating the program, and for general supervision of the program and the coordinator, or to have the coordinator be responsible for these things and report to the General Manager or another designated official. While it is generally useful to have a steering committee that reports to the General Manager, small agencies may find this cumbersome and prefer a direct line from the coordinator to the General Manager.

The planning committee must also determine the make up of the steering committee, again considering who will be influenced by the program once it is implemented. Many times the planning committee simply converts itself into the steering committee.

*Locate Pilot Circle*

The planning committee must decide where to locate the pilot projects. It is rarely the case that an organization begins with QCs in all departments. The selection of pilot areas is important to the success of the program. It is particularly important to consider the receptivity of the middle level managers and supervisors in this decision. Some organizations have provided a brief orientation on quality circles to all middle level managers and supervisors, then surveyed that group to identify the individuals with the most enthusiasm for the pilot circles. In smaller agencies, informal interviews can accomplish the same results. Middle level managers can make or break a QC program, and some method must be used to test for their support.

The difficulty of scheduling bus operators for regular QC meetings of one hour per week over a one-year period (considered a minimum time for program results) raises questions about the applicability of this quality-of-work-life technique to transportation departments when the pilot locations are being identified. Most QC programs in transit have been pilots, located in maintenance departments. Excluding operators, however, may cause problems within the bargaining unit where one group of employees may be seen as receiving favored treatment. The union leadership must consider these problems before the planning committee reaches definite conclusions on the location of pilot circles.

At the Metropolitan Transit Commission (St. Paul, Minnesota), the steering committee reviewed an organizational chart, then wrote down advantages and disadvantages of locating a pilot QC in each of five different work areas before choosing one. An example follows:

Engineering and Facilities Division	
<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There seems to be interest already.</li> <li>• Exposure is good.</li> <li>• Dissemination of information good.</li> <li>• Enthusiasm.</li> <li>• Involvement in project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added time for travel.</li> <li>• More costly.</li> <li>• Departure from what we said we would do.</li> </ul>

One decision that the planning committee should not make is the membership of the circles. An important element of quality circles is the voluntary nature of the program. It is desirable for decisions about circle membership to be voluntary. The recommended procedure for determining the circle leaders is to ask for volunteers after all supervisors from a particular work area have attended an orientation, or, better yet, a training session. This ensures that they fully understand what their responsibilities will be as leaders before they volunteer. If there are more volunteers than can be accommodated in the pilot project, the steering committee should interview and select leaders.

After a brief orientation provided for all employees, employees are asked if they wish to volunteer. Generally there is no "term" on the QC, but some large organizations encourage staggered rotation to allow fullest possible participation.

### *Choose Training Materials*

One other major area of decision-making for the committee is the choice of training. Quality circles training materials are fairly standard—there are training materials commercially available for the facilitator, circle leaders, and circle members. A list of some organizations from which training materials can be acquired is included at the end of this chapter.

Facilitators and leaders are trained first; this training may be expected to comprise up to 40 hours. The leaders, with the assistance of the facilitator, then train the circle members. This training comprises approximately 8 hours: one hour per week over 8 weeks.

The training focuses on how to conduct a meeting, how to communicate, how to encourage communication, and specific problem identification and problem solving techniques. The latter two components include brainstorming, cause and effect analysis, and Pareto analysis (a technique to determine which item among many possible causes is the major contributor to the problem). The training also includes techniques for making group presentations. Circle members learn to use charts and graphs for their presentation to management.

If an organization is large, there may be staff already experienced in training. If so, that individual may be able to acquire QC training materials and develop the program. Perhaps someone can be sent to a workshop to learn the necessary techniques. If neither of these seems possible for an agency, it may be desirable to contract with an outside consultant.

However one decides to go about offering training for facilitators, circle leaders, and circle members, do not cut the process short. It can be expensive (materials and time off the job), but experience shows that without the training, the trial and error approach that develops in circle meetings prolongs problem solving and, in the long run, leads to frustration and failure.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Once the steering committee has set the policy, decided on the structure, chosen the pilot areas, determined who the coordinator will be, and established plans for training, it is time to begin implementation.

#### **Conduct an Orientation**

Many organizations that have used quality circles recommend that a first step in implementation is a presentation to all levels of management and to all hourly employees to explain the quality circle concept, the goals of the program, and the mechanics of circle operations. Although this sounds easy, it has been estimated that it takes nonparticipants 6 to 9 months to understand the program. Providing the orientation to all managers and hourly employees will cut down on rumors about the amount of time off the job by circle members, will encourage input of ideas to circle members, and will demonstrate the relationship of the program to the regular hierarchy of the organization.

This orientation need not be held simultaneously for everyone, nor should it be lengthy; in fact, it is preferable to hold a series of small orientations in different work areas and during different shifts. Smaller meetings will allow for questions about the pro-

gram. Slides, graphs, or other visuals can be particularly effective in conveying what the QC program is all about.

#### **Begin Circle Meetings**

Once the circles have begun meeting, activity shifts from the planning or steering committee to the coordinator, facilitators, circle leaders, and the members themselves. Usually the first project after completing training is to select a name for the circle. Then circles settle down to identifying and solving problems in the work area. Managers have many topics that they would like circles to consider, but it is important that circle members be free to choose their own projects.

#### **Responsibilities**

During the operational phase, responsibilities of the parties are clear:

1. The members' responsibilities are to meet, on work time, one hour per week; identify and solve problems; solicit ideas from coworkers; and contribute to the management presentation.

2. The leader's responsibilities are to demonstrate the importance of the circle by regular attendance at all circle meetings, developing the agenda in advance of the meeting, encouraging participation from all members, and responding to members' suggestions in a constructive fashion. The leader must also keep other members of the work group informed of circle activities, and participate in management presentations.

3. The facilitator attends all circle meetings, but is not a direct participant. One facilitator may be responsible for five or six circles. As the title implies, the responsibility is to facilitate the group—keep the group on the topic, remind them of the problem-solving process learned in training, keep the discussion away from personalities, and so on. If the meeting is going well, the facilitator should rarely intervene. The facilitator also acts as a "go-between" if the circle requests information from outside its own work area.

4. The program coordinator (who may also be the facilitator) is responsible for the overall administration of the program. That person must follow up with the pilot areas to plan and schedule the first meetings, reserve meeting space, and make sure materials (e.g., flip charts) are available. The coordinator receives reports from the facilitators and keeps track of the activities of each circle. There is considerable record keeping because the coordinator should have knowledge of the facilitator, leader, and members of each circle, their meeting times, locations, and their project activities. The coordinator will schedule management presentations. The coordinator also should make regular reports to the steering committee or to the general manager.

5. Middle level managers also have responsibilities once a program is underway. First and most importantly, they must support the supervisors who have volunteered to be circle leaders and give supervisors time to fulfill their responsibility as leaders. Further, they must avoid the common reaction of blaming supervisors for problems identified by the circle. This error may take the form of listening to a supervisor report on circle activities and responding, "But that's so simple, why didn't you

handle that before?" Middle level managers should also be interested and support the activities of circles in their area. They should regularly review the minutes, support data-gathering efforts, and attend meetings when invited.

6. Top managers must also support the program. If top management does not actively demonstrate its involvement, the program will not reach its potential. Management support may take the form of occasional visits to circle meetings, posted bulletins, or comments in the in-house newsletter. Top managers, at least at the departmental level, must be committed to attending management presentations. Beyond listening, managers must respond, usually within an established time frame, by asking for more information on the circle's recommendations, agreeing to the recommendation, or explaining why they are rejecting the recommendation.

### Typical Quality Circle Projects

What kinds of problems do quality circles consider? Recall that the members are from the same work area and have learned of the program goals during orientation and training. They have also learned that certain issues are "off limits." It is common for circles to choose initial projects dealing with irritations of their daily work. Examples of projects that QC members have taken up include the following:

1. At the City of Dallas Convention Center, circle members set a goal of reducing lost cleaning supplies. The circle established a check-out procedure for all cleaning supplies, and the problem was eliminated.

2. At the Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Transportation, mechanics set a goal of reducing time lost in searching for tools. The circle conducted an inventory of all tools in the shop, then established set locations for storage of all tools and equipment.

Circle projects may take a few weeks or a year to examine fully and develop recommendations for the management presentation. Circle participants with considerable experience note that often the first projects deal with issues stemming from the immediate environment, but as circle members become more sophisticated, they deal more with operating procedures and issues involving relationships with other work areas.

### BENEFITS

What benefits may be expected from a successful QC program? The most immediate benefit is often an improvement in morale and job satisfaction among all those directly involved—from steering committee members to hourly employees. A spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm is often evident which stems from the underlying philosophy of quality circles: employees are valued parts of the organization and can make important contributions to it.

Employees can gain a sense of control over their work. If management or a consultant had implemented check-out procedures for cleaning supplies in Dallas, employees may have resisted the change and considered it part of management's failure to trust employees. But it was the employees who identified, analyzed, and recommended solutions to the problem that affected their work.

Most programs expect cost savings, and some are documented. Reducing the rate of increase of expenditures, however, is more likely than dramatic savings.

Service-providing organizations often see benefits in better quality of service provided. Reductions in passenger complaints and better on-time service are examples of possible benefits.

Benefits must be perceived by top- and mid-level managers, the union, and employees. Any one of these groups within the organization who feels the program is "a lot of trouble and sure doesn't help us out" is likely to undermine future activities. *(For example, a mid-level manager in Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Transportation commented, "All the men in the circle now know what cost/benefit means. This is a big help and cuts down on a lot of hassle for me.")*

### BARRIERS

The facilitator and the coordinator will be keeping track of all circle activities. There are certain danger signs that things are not going well: absence from meetings; other meetings scheduled to conflict with circle meetings, particularly if those meetings involve the leader (supervisor); postponing regular circle meetings; failure of other work units to respond to requests for information; criticism of circle members by nonmembers; management regularly refusing to accept circle recommendations or accepting but never getting around to implementing the changes. These problems may be symptoms of other problems blocking success. Barriers must be identified and removed for QCs to continue.

Any one of the following barriers can effectively put an end to a program. Some can be overcome by involvement of those affected by QCs and careful planning, but others may be related to the nature of the organization and cannot be changed. It is best then to look for other approaches to productivity and quality of work life.

1. A prevailing attitude exists that the lines of authority run from top to bottom; allowing employees to participate will lead to chaos.

2. A hostile labor-management relationship exists. The adversarial nature of bargaining is extended to contract administration and precludes cooperative problem solving. Union leaders fearing accusations of co-optation and managers overly concerned with preserving "management rights" contribute to a hostile environment.

3. A nonhostile labor-management relationship prevails, but managers prefer to "control" the program while giving the appearance of union support. Union leaders will often decline to participate if the program is presented as a joint labor-management program, but the union has only token representation on the steering committee and is expected to take responsibility for steering committee decisions.

4. An unwillingness to commit the necessary resources to get the process underway: an unwillingness to commit time for a coordinator, a wish to short cut training, pressure for early evaluation of output. These danger signals suggest that QC efforts do not have top management commitment.

5. An expectation that quality circles "will solve all our problems," is held by members of steering committee.

6. An overemphasis on the productivity aspects of the program and a failure to recognize the importance of the human

resource development components. This attitude leads to an emphasis on results and, consequently, a failure to properly recognize the contributions of the participants.

7. Top management fails to recognize the middle level managers who have successful circles working under them. Circle leaders, in this situation, are encouraged to communicate directly with top management. Middle level managers feel left out, and may even be concerned that if circles are successful, their jobs are in jeopardy.

Quality circles, where carefully planned and implemented, can be helpful to transit organizations seeking ways to improve productivity and employee morale. This program, however, appears best suited to agencies that already are committed to participatory management styles. Further, because of the time between start up and results, QCs appear best suited for departments with a stable (i.e., no shift rotations, route picks) employee group. Most transit agencies have put pilot projects in maintenance departments, but they also seem appropriate for clerical and administrative employees.

Quality circles are best used to make a good organization better.

## RESOURCES

### Printed Material on Quality Circles

BURTON, C., "How to do Quality Circles in the Unionized Workplace," *Transactions*, International Association of Quality Circles (1983). This article points out that quality circles (QCs) are a growing phenomenon. Approximately half of the QC programs are found at unionized worksites. The article explains the rationale for involving the union, as an equal partner, in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. The author suggests practical check points, e.g., if a decision is made to go ahead with a QC program, union and management must decide what resources they each have to contribute, whether the program is to be experimental, whether they want a third party, etc. Including all the parties at the worksite—management, union, and employees, "directly and actively"—makes the program more complex and doubtless more time consuming to implement, but conflict will be minimized and it is more likely that the program will flourish.

CARIA, G. G., and DIERS, J. W., "Quality Circles: Problem Solving in the Shop," *Transactions*, ATE Service Co., Cincinnati, Ohio (Autumn 1982) pp. 21–28. The authors are managers in the maintenance division of the Metropolitan Transit Commission, St. Paul, Minnesota. They provide a case history of the needs assessment, problem identification process, and development of quality circles in their division. The guidelines developed for their program are included and are useful since they appear transferable. One example follows: "How will management respond to Quality Circle recommendations? All replies by management to Quality Circle recommendations will be in writing. The manager will meet with the members of the circle for explanation. . . . All management personnel must respond as soon as possible. If response cannot be made within 10 business days, a memorandum will be sent . . . advising the date the decision will be made."

COLE, R. E., "Value of Quality-Control Circles for U.S. Work Organizations," *Transportation Research News No. 95* (July-August 181) pp. 14–17. The article describes the quality circle

technique and its advantages for the self-development of employees and for the organization. The author also discusses the limitations of such programs and a preliminary evaluation of their success in the United States. He points out that American organizations must focus on the role of the union, potential problems with middle management, and on voluntary participation. Despite these potential problems, he feels the technique can make an enormous contribution to organizational productivity.

GODSEY, W. M., *Employee Involvement: A Local Government Approach to Quality Circles*, International City Management Association, Washington, D.C. (1982) 27 pp. This handbook is part of an ICMA training package. Its particular utility lies in linking theories of motivation (Maslow, Herzberg, MacGregor) to quality circles. The remainder of the handbook outlines the roles and responsibilities of program participants with emphasis on the various levels within management. Appendix A is an overview of the problem solving and problem analysis techniques used within a QC. Appendix B is several brief cases of QCs in local government.

GRYNA, F. M., JR., *Quality Circles: A Team Approach to Problem Solving*, Amacom, New York (1981) 96 pp. This short work is extremely useful in introducing quality circles. It explains what QCs are, the benefits that may be derived, and the structure of QCs. It also gives an overview of how to determine whether QCs are feasible in an organization, designing a program, and training for participation. The author touches on barriers. Experienced trainers could use this book to set up a program. Others would find enough information to be able to evaluate consultant proposals.

JOHNSON, D. E. L., "Quality Circles Put Workers in Charge of Their Productivity," *Modern Healthcare*, Vol. 11, No. 9 (September 1981) pp. 68–69, 74. The first hospital to initiate quality circles did so in October 1980. Mount Sinai Medical Center of Greater Miami, in Miami Beach, Florida, began with six QCs and one year later they had twelve. Since it normally takes at least 18 months for quantifiable results from QCs to appear, the hospital is not quite ready to give firm figures on cost savings or improved quality and productivity. Some results have been noticed. Dietary workers proposed changing the time by which meal orders had to be in the kitchen in order to ease the rush which caused the omission of food items from patient trays. Errors are being reduced in charting menus. The QC in the transportation department has an improved attitude and an increase in the number of wheelchairs returned to the transport area. Alvin Goldberg, CEO of the hospital and advocate of participative management, sees a great enthusiasm in hospital workers, which is a change from before QCs were instituted. Management is involved at every level. The bottom line is to produce excellent patient care.

MANNING, G., and CURTIS, R. K., "The Why of Quality Circles," *Transitions*, ATE Service Co., Cincinnati, Ohio (Autumn 1982), pp. 1–20. The authors describe the structure, operations, and history of quality circles. Although less detailed than Gryna (1981), the same outline is followed. Potential benefits of quality circles are discussed as are the barriers to a successful program. Of particular interest are the problems caused by individual participants. The conclusion of the article is steps for implementing a program.

METZ, E. J., "Caution: Quality Circles Ahead," *Training and Development Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 8 (August 1981) pp. 71–76.

This article discusses the dangers of the tremendous growth of interest in quality circles. If quality circles become a "fad," firms may try to institute them without proper preparation. The first potential problem is not assessing managerial and organizational readiness for quality circles. This could result in insufficient support for the program; management may not listen to workers' suggestions, or may be too restrictive with information made available to circles. Feeling threatened, unions might tell workers not to participate. The second danger is not doing adequate start-up and implementation planning. A steering committee should be the first step to define program goals, policy, and support. This is especially important for unions and workers to attain their participation. Third, not exercising care in the selection of a facilitator will create a problem. The facilitators should have enough background and knowledge to be able to train circle leaders, initiate the circles, keep management informed, and promote program growth. Last, there are dangers in not recognizing the organizational development implications of quality circles. This recognition is necessary for reinforcement of the participative process. Without participation, the program falls apart.

ZEMKE, R., "What's Good for Japan May Not be Best for Your Training Department," *Training*, Vol. 18, No. 10 (October 1981) pp. 62-65. Despite the proquality circle press, quality circles may not be the answer to reverse the decline in American productivity. Even in Japan where the idea started, some companies have dropped QCs, and product quality has not declined. Word has spread quickly about successes without QCs; people with reason to be threatened by QCs are upset. Unions are suspicious about losing their standing with workers, middle level managers are threatened because QCs solve the crisis that their jobs were created to solve. Quality circles may not work in the United States because workers in the United States think differently from Japanese workers.

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#### National Associations and Nonprofit Organizations

International Association of Quality Circles  
 801B West 8th Street, Suite 301  
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 (513) 381-1959  
 (Membership organization with annual conference.  
 Clearinghouse for QC information, training materials.)

International City Management Association  
 1120 G Street, N.W.  
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 Ms. Christina Becker, Director of Training  
 (202) 626-4627  
 (Training materials on QCs.)

American Productivity Center  
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## CHAPTER FIVE

### TASK FORCES

Task forces are a commonly used technique to expand participation in decision-making. The purpose of most task forces is to provide a fresh perspective on an identified problem by bringing together people from different departments or divisions.

There are two common types of task forces. (1) Management task forces are the most familiar. In this type, top management appoints task force members, usually managers at the same level of the organization from different departments. (2) Crossorga-

nizational task forces. Appointment to this type of task force may be by management, or by management and union. Task force members come from different departments and different levels in the organization. As the concept of employee participation has become more widely accepted, the crossorganizational task force has been recognized as a useful technique for structuring that participation.

If an organization has not been accustomed to involving employees in decisions or if union leaders and managers have not worked well together in solving problems, task forces are a low risk technique that deserve attention. On the other hand, if an organization is quite advanced in use of participatory techniques, task forces are a useful adjunct to labor-management committees or other QWL programs.

## INITIAL ACTIVITIES

### Setting Program Goals

The impetus for development of task forces may come from many different sources:

1. A problem is recurrent and frequently discussed at management staff meetings. Batting around ideas has not worked, and too much time is taken up in the staff meeting. Someone suggests a task force to come up with recommendations.

2. The policy or operational procedures of one department are seen as limiting the effectiveness of another. After months of complaints, the departmental manager approaches his counterpart to suggest a joint problem solving team.

3. A manager sees signs of declining morale in certain work crews (or on certain shifts). He or she talks with the union steward about setting up an employee task force to consider the problem.

These examples illustrate a few of the ways task forces may be started. As was noted, most of the initiative to set up a task force will come after a problem has been identified; although task forces may also be used in a proactive fashion, identifying organizational needs. Task forces are particularly useful in increasing communication between different departments and different geographical locations. Large agencies may find task forces more useful than small ones where informal lines of communication may already exist across departmental lines. Large and small organizations should be clear about their expectations for task forces. Is employee participation, increased communication, and improved morale a primary goal? Or are improvements in service, cost savings, or new efficiencies the goals?

## ISSUES CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING TASK FORCES

The task force study should consider certain issues for inclusion in the ground rules.

### Who Initiates

Can any department manager set up task forces as needed or must clearance come from the top of the organization? In small- or medium-sized organizations there is less need for formality,

but in large organizations it is a good idea to have a coordinator, one person who knows the topic and meeting time of each task force. Then, when new groups are started, they "register" with the coordinator.

### Who Chooses the Members

Membership should be related to the topic. If new purchasing procedures are at issue, for example, it would be foolish to exclude people from the purchasing department.

Crossorganizational task forces are effective in involving employees in the decision-making process. But not everyone wants that responsibility, and a common principle is that membership is voluntary. Where bargaining unit employees are to be involved, it is best to have the union leadership solicit participation.

Task force membership that pulls together different perspectives from different parts of the organization with expertise related to a particular problem is ideal. (*The Corpus Christi Transit System uses "focus groups," multidisciplinary task forces, to work on specific problems. For example, a problem with the bus air conditioning systems might bring together such diverse employees as operators, body shop workers and air conditioning repairmen. Because the agency is small, a relatively casual approach is possible, and success can be measured in terms of noticeable attitude changes—setting a style rather than establishing a formal process.*)

### Who Chooses Topics

Task forces have been formed as *ad hoc* groups that report to an established labor-management committee (LMC). These groups are assigned issues by the LMC. Top managers may assign problems that arise at staff meetings. An organizational diagnosis or needs analysis, perhaps conducted by staff or an outside consultant, can generate a variety of topics to be studied by task forces. In some agencies, certain topics, such as route changes, new vehicle specifications, changes in employee appraisals, are routinely assigned to task forces. (*Spokane Transit establishes "focus groups," task forces whose purpose is to advise the agency on specific issues. For example, when new routes were being planned, five groups consisting of drivers, a supervisor, and telephone information operators, were formed. Group suggestions were incorporated in the new plan. Focus groups have also been used to advise on marketing plans and an improved customer information system.*)

### What Topics Are Appropriate

It would be easier to list the topics that are not suitable than to take the pages necessary to list those that are appropriate for task force review. The most common prohibitions are that task forces do not deal with issues covered in the union contract, do not deal with civil service regulations, and do not deal with problems of individuals. It should be noted, however, that there have been task forces, set up at the request of union and management negotiators, to study complex bargainable issues and to make recommendations back to the negotiators. More commonly, however, the previously noted prohibitions apply.



The range of topics dealt with is surprising. At Metropolitan Transit Commission, St. Paul, Minnesota, close to 20 task forces may be meeting at any one time, each considering a different issue. In Hillsborough, North Carolina, operators and supervisors participated in a task force that successfully influenced the passage of a referendum involving tax support for the transit authority. In Billings, Montana, operators were involved in a task force to recommend standards for a new performance evaluation system.

#### *What Will Be the Timeframe*

Obviously, the nature of the problem being addressed by the task force will influence the time needed to study and make recommendations. Usually the person or group with the authority to establish the task force will have some idea of the complexity of the problem and will request a recommendation within a specified time.

Task force members are released from their regular work to serve on a task force for a certain amount of time (i.e., a certain number of hours per week or a block of time, as is the case of temporary assignment to a task force).

The flexibility of scheduling and the predetermined "lifespan" of task forces make this technique particularly adaptable for use with bus operators.

#### *Is Training Required*

Task force members rarely receive formal training for their assignment, but one should consider devoting the first meeting or two to learning (or reviewing) the steps and techniques of problem solving and the nature of group process. This training need not be elaborate and may consist of a discussion led by an in-house trainer skilled in group process, or a review of printed materials on problem solving (several are recommended in the resource section).

The productivity of the group will be enhanced if everyone has some exposure to these techniques and is operating with some sense of knowledge of the problem-solving process.

#### *What Will Be the Output*

Task forces are usually formed to study and make recommendations on a particular problem. The group should keep a record of its activities and problem-solving process as a way to back up its recommendations. It is also advisable that the recommendations be in writing. The larger and more complex the issues dealt with, the more important that written records be kept.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Typically, task forces disband after making recommendations to management. If employee participation is one of the goals in the use of task forces, a series of follow-up meetings might be considered a few weeks after recommendations are made. Follow-up meetings can be used to assist with implementation, to plan for evaluation, and to disseminate information. An important benefit of task forces will be lost if employees are not

aware that their representatives participated in the solution of the problem at hand. Furthermore, these follow-up meetings "close the loop." They allow the task force members to review the problem-solving process, watch the consequences of their decisions develop, and learn from the experience.

### **BARRIERS**

There are few barriers to the use of task forces—they are low risk (set a time to disband in advance if there is concern about a commitment of time), low cost, and flexible.

There are some potential barriers, nonetheless. For example, management will undermine its own purposes if it desires employee participation but does not consult with the union on the ground rules and makeup of the task forces.

Task forces will not be able to operate constructively if a pattern of rejection is perceived. Of course, not every idea can be accepted. However, if there are, for example, many recommendations that are not implemented, at a minimum, management should explain to task force members why the recommendations were not implemented, why changes were made, or in case of a delay, when things will begin to happen.

Task forces can be a waste of time if members are not clear on the purpose or goals of the task force. Further, no training is provided, the learning curve is flattened, and considerable time will be wasted.

Expectations for change may be too high. Managers, union leaders, and task force members alike should be realistic in their expectations for what task forces can accomplish. Sometimes enthusiasm is too high, and the results cannot fulfill the expectations, then no one wants to participate.

Care should be taken when setting objectives and assigning employees to a task force. It is important that a task force is not perceived as a rival organization to regular line and staff operations.

Careful consideration of the ground rules, commitment of time, follow-up to recommendations, and giving credit to participants can go a long way toward avoiding the barriers described above.

### **BENEFITS**

Although the use of task forces has not been carefully evaluated in transit, they are recommended as a useful technique, particularly in large- or medium-sized agencies. There are several reasons for the recommendation:

1. Task forces are low risk investments for management and union. There is a definite beginning and end, costs are low, and outputs are the recommendations. When an aura of mistrust or adversarial relations prevail, task forces are a useful first step toward changing the organizational environment since both sides may be willing to participate in low risk ventures. The success of the task force may form a basis for changing attitudes.

2. Task forces can be used for many different groups of employees because of the specific focus of the problem addressed and the flexibility of scheduling.

3. Task forces can deal with one of the major problems of transit agencies—lack of communication across functional responsibilities and geographical divisions. Task forces can bring together managers and hourly employees from different work

units, and all may gain from the interaction of different perspectives on the identified problem.

4. Task forces may be used in conjunction with other approaches to organizational change. For example, problem solving techniques learned in quality circles may be utilized in task forces, or labor-management committees may appoint task forces to make recommendations on specific problems identified by an LMC.

5. Task forces may reduce line/staff conflict by increased interaction and line managers receiving benefits (e.g., problem solved) attributed to staff support.

In summary, task forces, particularly those involving participation across departments and across all levels of the organization, are seen as useful QWL techniques, especially for large agencies or where a low-risk first step is appropriate for initiating QWL. Task forces can improve morale by involving employees in decisions that affect their work and consequently can improve productivity of the organization in which they work.

## RESOURCES

### Printed Material on Task Forces

DONALDSON, V. D., "Participatory Management—Employees Are Creative!", *Strengthening Local Government Through Better Labor Relations Series*, No. 16. Labor Management Relations Service, U.S. Conference of Mayors, Washington, D.C. (no date) 8 pp. The author's thesis is that a management style must be adopted that recognizes and releases creative abilities in others. Problems with such an approach include managers feeling a lack of control, managers being hurt when an employee says he is wrong, and legislators thinking managers are creating anarchy. In spite of these bleak possibilities, 10 case histories prove the success of this style. One was in transit—an employee initiative in developing a low-cost bus locator system.

JANKA, K., *People Performance . . . Results*, National Training and Development Service, 444 N. Capitol St., Suite 349, Washington, D.C. 20001 (1977) 159 pp. This brief and well-written book is oriented toward local government practitioners who want help with the process of change. It is based on research findings, which gives more credibility to the step-by-step process for improving organizations outlined in this practical text.

TURNERY, J. R., and COHEN, S. L., "Participative Management: What is the Right Level?", *Management Review*, AMA-

COM, New York (October 1982) pp. 66–69. Participation should be seen as a continuum occurring in degrees rather than a dichotomy—participative or nonparticipative. There are task attributes, situational conditions, and supervisor/subordinate characteristics that should be evaluated to determine the proper degree of participation to produce optimum results. The article is useful in suggesting guidelines for task force formation. The authors' concern is with productivity rather than job satisfaction.

ZANDER, A., *Making Groups Effective*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass (1982) 188 pp. The author applies a solid knowledge base to practical, common issues in the effective functioning of business, professional, educational, government, and service groups. Drawing from recent investigations of group behavior, Zander offers detailed recommendations in many key areas including decision-making, goal setting, teamwork, motivation, communication, and superior-subordinate relationships. The author shows how the findings of numerous studies can be used by practitioners in everyday group supervision, leadership, and problem solving.

### Transit Contacts for Task Forces

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## CHAPTER SIX

# LABOR-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

A labor-management committee (LMC) is a structured group of union representatives and managers that meets regularly to solve mutual problems. Beyond this simple definition, however, lies a wide variety of types of committees with widely differing

goals. The most common type of committee, and the one focused on here, is the worksite (sometimes called "plant level") committee. Worksite committees usually involve an equal number of union and management members who deal with two kinds

of issues: (1) development—providing opportunities for individual growth and using employees' talents to make the organization a better place to work, and (2) organizational goals—improving the service provided and the productivity of the organization.

Labor-management committees are not new, although the focus on dual goals is a relatively recent innovation. Committees have existed as far back as 1920 and were extensively used in the private sector during World War II to improve productivity. Committees were established at the industry level in the late 1950s and early 1960s to deal with poor labor relations (e.g., the LMC in the steel industry was to consider ways to recover from the bitterness of the prolonged strike of 1959). Committees at the industry level were also created to allow union and management to work out jointly the impact of technological change (e.g., the food industry committee).

Large corporations and international unions began to consider seriously a cooperative approach to improving productivity and quality of working life in the 1970s, when a notable experiment was begun by General Motors and the United Auto Workers. More recently, Ford Motor Company and the United Auto Workers signed an extensive agreement to encourage and support employee involvement programs at all Ford plants.

LMCs are not uncommon in the public sector. As is the case in the private sector, the earliest committees were narrowly focused and rarely dealt explicitly with human development or expanded participation in decision-making. For example, the City of Memphis had a committee to study health and safety issues, but the committee could not consider topics beyond those. Detroit had an LMC to help institute a productivity program in the Department of Sanitation—again, a useful committee, but narrowly focused. Broader goals were evident in 1976 when the City of Columbus, Ohio, and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) established a labor-management committee program with a full-time coordinator in 1981; now more than 10 departments have active committees dealing with productivity and QWL issues.

LMCs have a record of success in transit agencies, too. Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 694, and VIA Metropolitan Transportation in San Antonio, Texas, have a broadly focused labor-management committee; a committee in Flint, Michigan, comprised of MTA management and Teamsters State, County, and Municipal Workers, Local 214 has been in operation for several years.

The GM-UAW Employee Involvement program, the public sector, and the transit committees cited above all illustrate the newest trend in LMC activities—an emphasis on employee involvement to achieve organizational effectiveness and provide opportunities for employee growth and development.

## INITIAL ACTIVITIES

### Planning for LMCs

Labor-management committees often grow out of the bargaining process. Labor contracts may be used to set the ground rules for committee membership, procedures, and goals. Others have preferred a separate agreement, such as a letter of understanding.

In the public sector there is considerable variation within union-management relations because of the absence of national

law governing those relations. Provision 13(c) of the Urban Mass Transportation Act was adopted in recognition of the differences between public and private sector labor relations as private bus companies were coming under public control. Nevertheless, the language and legal implications of labor relations are different for transit in different states and even within states. What is a “contract” in some is a “memo agreement” in others. “Meet and confer” is more appropriate terminology than “bargaining” for some jurisdictions.

What is important in considering labor-management committees is not the legal distinctions behind the appropriate language, but that labor-management committees are made up of two distinct parties, and each of those parties recognizes the legitimate right to existence of the other. If the legal or personal dynamics in an agency are such that the management does not favor the existence of the union, or if the union's purpose is to usurp legitimate management rights, then labor-management committees are not appropriate.

If this key issue is not a barrier, exploratory talks with the other side should be considered. Prior to getting an agreement in writing, both union leaders and top managers should learn about LMCs and consider why they would want to participate.

There are a number of ways to begin these explorations:

1. Management may take the initiative, and designate individuals from the labor relations division to conduct research on labor-management committees, develop an initial plan, and present it to the union.

2. A joint study group may be formed to look into the possibilities. If this is the preferred approach, be sure to allow some time for managers and union members to discuss the recommendations in separate caucuses so each side may consider the advantages and disadvantages frankly and openly.

3. Union presidents or business agents may initiate planning for LMCs. At least five LMCs in central Kansas have been initiated by the business agent of the Service Employees International Union who operates out of Wichita.

4. An outsider—a neutral third party, perhaps a consultant, college professor, representative of the state or federal mediation service—may recognize the potential benefits of a labor-management committee and recommend its adoption. A third party is particularly helpful if labor relations in an agency have been negative and there is some desire to improve the situation, but a history of distrust prevents either side from taking the initiative.

Labor-management committees, especially in small or mid-sized organizations, often develop in an informal manner. One side or the other suggests meeting, often to open lines of communication. The meetings, which usually focus on an exchange of information, are felt to be productive, and they continue. There are no clearly established goals and no evaluation of results. This kind of committee has benefits, but is limited in impact. It may be desirable to start this way, or if this kind of committee already exists in an agency it may be profitable to expand its activities. As one begins to explore the possibilities of forming or expanding a labor-management committee, the list of readings and organizations that support labor-management cooperation at the end of this chapter will be helpful.

### Setting Policies

When the planning group of LMC begins, consider writing

a policy statement that will guide the committee's development or an expansion of activities. The policy statement should cover the goals, the location of the committee in the organization, the type of participation, boundaries of activity, evaluation, and resources that will be used to support the committees' activities.

### *Establishing Goals*

Labor-management committees have been formed to further a variety of goals. As was noted earlier, the newer committees tend to have somewhat broader goals than did committees formed prior to the 1970s. But improving labor relations was a common goal then and is still an important goal. (*A formal mechanic apprenticeship program, approved by the U.S. Department of Labor, was instituted and is monitored by a joint labor-management committee at the Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority, Des Moines, Iowa. The four-year program required 8,000 hours of on-the-job training, plus 144 hours of classroom instruction. Benefits include improved labor/management relations, more miles between road calls, fewer major breakdowns, and continual opportunity for employees to improve their skills.*) Another goal of LMCs is to improve productivity. Improving communications is also a goal of LMCs. This goal involves not only communication between union and management, but between departments and various levels of the organization. (*The 4Rs committee at the Flint, Michigan, Mass Transit Authority is concerned with improving communications. One approach they use to fulfill this goal is to plan agencywide social and sporting events to bring people together from various parts of the organization in situations where being a good pitcher, bowler, etc., is more important than being a good union member or good manager. The 4Rs committee also has the responsibility for monitoring the progress of two worksite LMCs, one in transportation, one in maintenance. These committees identify, study, and decide on solutions for day-to-day issues affecting performance and morale.*) Committees have been formed for a variety of other reasons, including dealing with employee problems (Employee Assistance Plans have been established by LMCs), studying personnel administration issues (cross training, performance evaluation), and improving the organization's image to the public.

The labor-management committee will have a much better chance of success if both the employer and the union are clear about what they want and then reach consensus on the goals.

### *Structuring the LMC*

The policy-making group must decide between two different, but commonly used, approaches to structuring the LMC. One method is to establish a top-level committee, open to input from anywhere in the organization, but keeping decision-making at the top as is the case in a traditional hierarchy. Top-level committees of this sort are found at VIA Metropolitan Transit where the committee is made up of the Assistant General Manager, Director of Operations, Assistant Director of Maintenance, and the Union President and Executive Board.

The other commonly used approach is to have several levels of committees located throughout the organization. Issues go to the top only when they cannot be handled at the lower level committee (e.g., where expenditures are required or where other

work units would be affected). MTA and the Teamsters Union in Flint, Michigan, have agreed to this approach and their structure includes a shop floor committee in operations, one in maintenance, and a top-level committee.

The structure must not be perceived as a way to "get around" the existing hierarchy, but should be parallel to the existing organization. Particularly if it is decided to use more than one committee, decision-makers at each level of the organization should be included in the committee structure (see Figure 6). (*The Columbus, Ohio, LMC includes provisions on structure and decision-making in their policy statement to set up a three-level committee structure. "Union and management agree to:*

- *The establishment of a city level labor management committee with regular top level involvement.*
- *The creation of a cooperative process with committees at several levels of the municipal organization.*
- *Adherence to a principle of encouraging decision making at the lowest possible level.*

*Most initiatives stem from the working level committees. The committee at the department level see their function as implementing the ideas sent to them from the work level group."*)

Several factors should be considered when deciding which structure is best for an organization. Top-level committees are less risky than multilevel committees, and where the relationships have been hostile, starting with a top-level committee is usually a good idea. Another reason for adopting a top-level committee is that the start-up costs in time and money are less than multilevel committees. Finally, a small organization may find that personal contact between levels of the organization already exists and that a top-level committee is sufficient to provide regular information exchange and input from all employees. However, benefits both to productivity and improved worker morale are greater where involvement is spread through the organization.

### *Decisions About Boundaries and Ground Rules*

Most labor-management committees establish boundaries, the most important being a separation of committee work from collective bargaining issues. It is not the committee's work to bargain or administer the contract. Committees may legitimately discuss a pattern of events that is producing many grievances, but a committee may not discuss any individual grievances.

There are, however, two exceptions to this practice of separating collective bargaining and LMC activities. First, an LMC is sometimes asked to study a complex issue that is expected to come up at the bargaining table. The committee may even be asked to make recommendations to the bargaining teams. Second, a few committees have the power to set aside a contractual provision for an experimental period in a limited work area to address a specific problem. Note that only top-level committees have this power, although they may assign the administration of the experimental period to a lower level committee. The new methods of work or operational procedures are not grievable and do not become the basis for past practice. At the end of the experimental period, practices usually return to contract specifications, and the decision to implement the experimental practices is negotiated.

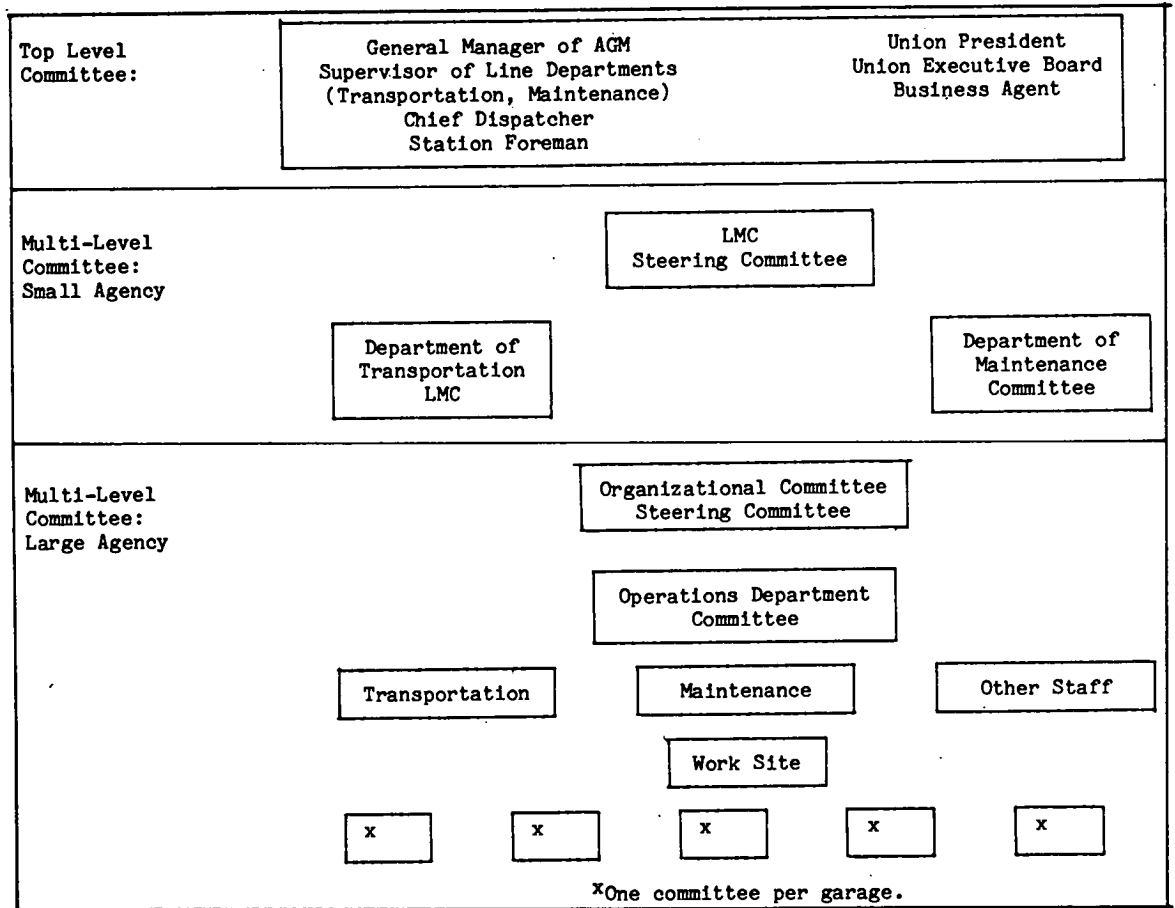


Figure 6. Labor-management committee structures.

Another common ground rule is that membership on an LMC depends on position rather than on the person (e.g., whoever is Assistant General Manager is the co-chairman or co-chairwoman of the committee). The purpose of this rule is to ensure continuity during periods of personnel change and to ensure that decision-makers are on the committee.

One may want to consider a rule providing for a veto power. Since it cannot be known in advance exactly what issues will come up in the committee, and since one side or the other may feel strongly that certain issues should be "off limits," a means to prevent discussion is useful. The method of veto should not require that anyone explain why he or she does not want to consider the issue. (In Flint, the LMC uses the following procedure for vetos: anyone may say that an issue is not a topic of "mutual concern." That statement is the veto, and the item being discussed is dropped.)

No matter what the level of trust, either side may have political considerations that preclude public discussion of certain topics.

**Evaluation**

Another issue that the policy-making group must decide upon is whether the LMC will be evaluated. This question is more

difficult for LMCs than for many other change efforts, and it is not uncommon for an LMC to decide not to conduct evaluations. It is usually the case, however, that even if formal evaluations are not conducted, judgments are being made informally by committee members, constituent groups, perhaps by the public, and certainly by any outside agency that may be assisting in funding the project. For this reason, it is often wise to decide to be formal about evaluation: decide what to evaluate (the process or the outcomes), and how to evaluate.

**Costs and Controls**

Finally, the policy-making group must identify resources that will be needed. Does the committee need assistance from an outside, third party? Who will pay for this person and who will select the person? (San Francisco Municipal Railway established a joint labor-management screening committee to select two persons to be hired to staff the LMC. Although the union did not pay salaries, the staff neutrality was guaranteed by giving the union a voice and a veto in the hiring and firing of the staff.)

Questions of resources should include explicit attention to orientation and training. The broader the participation, the greater the need for training. Training need not be an expensive proposition; New York City initiated its program with a briefing for top management and union leaders from the governing coun-

cil, a three-day training program for all committee members and facilitators. The total training package was planned and developed considering the needs of the City, and the contract was awarded through a competitive bid process.

In general, the costs of an LMC are borne by the employer. Some unions, however, have contributed a proportion of the budget.

Often those involved in establishing policy for their new labor-management committee feel bogged down in detail, but worried that they have not covered every contingency in the policy. "What if . . ." is a real concern. The planning group or committee members should agree upon methods for adding to or subtracting from the policy in the first few sessions. But, while it may seem a negative note to those involved in the planning or start-up of the committee, remember that each side does have an effective veto over the actions of the other. This is a joint labor-management committee; the veto is simply nonparticipation. Knowing that one cannot be forced to participate may allay those early fears.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**Setting up Procedures**

As the first committee meeting looms, other types of questions must be dealt with. Some of the first questions that arise are procedural questions. Who should be the chairperson? How shall the agenda be developed? Is a quorum to be required? Shall written minutes be kept? Committees have answered these and other procedural questions in many different ways; it is not possible to say there is a "correct" way to establish procedures.

The important element in setting up procedures is to remember that a cooperative process is being set up in which each side must be able to protect its interests. In dealing with the question of a quorum, for example, the procedure might take into account not only the required number of members necessary to conduct business, but also a required balance of labor and management members. That way neither side need be concerned that business can be conducted "behind one's back."

Once the committee is set up, it will be time to choose a project and start discussion of substantive topics. It is wise for new committees to establish criteria for choosing a project. Two useful criteria are low potential for conflict and high chance of success. Joint steward and supervisory training has often been an early agenda item for top-level committees because it fits their criteria. (See Figure 7.) As committee members at all levels of the organization become more accustomed to working together, they will want to undertake more complex issues and will be more inclined to anticipate problems and look for better ways of providing service instead of reacting to current problems.

Of course, what is discussed will relate to structure and location of the committee in the organization. LMCs at the work-site often operate a lot like quality circles, and they will usually start out with issues that are of immediate concern. Dirty rest-rooms, inadequate tools, and problems in dealing with the public are topics that are likely to come up. Often committee members are angry. Union members will wonder why management has not taken care of these simple matters, and managers are defensive and wonder why no one has brought up these problems before.

		Potential for Conflict	
		High	Low
Chance of Success	High		Best First Project
	Low	Worst First Project	

Figure 7. Criteria for first project.

Department level or organizationwide committees will have a different focus at their early meetings, although the anger and hidden agendas may be quite similar. These committees will deal with problems affecting a larger number of employees, and agendas will often include coordination of policy or expenditure of funds.

If a committee has not had staff support or an outside neutral to assist committee development, and the top-level committee (or any committee in the program) is constantly argumentative, seems to be bargaining rather than problem solving, or is not holding regular meetings, consider bringing in a neutral third party, at least for a short time.

The third party should be selected according to one's needs. If a particular problem such as how to project the payout for incentives exists, a subject expert could provide assistance. But if the committee is not working well as a group, e.g., it is difficult to pick a problem on which to work, irrelevant subjects come up, arguments simmer, or it is difficult to reach consensus, then a process consultant is best. Whatever the needs, select the person with great care. Both labor leaders and managers should interview and check references of the prospective third party. A person with some previous experience in unionized environments should be chosen.

**Keeping Supervisors and Stewards Informed**

Leaders of each side should be careful to keep their own constituent groups informed of "what's going on" during the start-up period. Middle managers feel threatened if they must depend on those they supervise for information on LMC procedures and activities. Union stewards are likely to have the same reaction if they are not sure about the topics of discussion in the LMC. Rumors are the worst possible source of information for supervisors, foremen, and stewards.

**Committee Activities**

LMCs will be involved in a variety of activities—exchanging information, reviewing recommendations, implementing and

evaluating changes. Committees may act as study groups, almost as a task force, but moving on to other topics when a solution to a particular problem is found. Committees have taken on the responsibility of monitoring other programs within the organization. Monetary incentives would not be possible in MTA at Flint, Michigan, without the underlying philosophy of fairness that has been generated by the LMC. Labor-management committees spent a great deal of time in problem solving activities. And many committees can document the success of these efforts. *(At VIA Metropolitan Transit, union concerns about the safety of a new trolley were voiced in a labor-management committee meeting. The result was an invitation from the manufacturer to the union president to visit the plant, review the design, and suggest changes. After input from the union executive board, the manufacturer made the recommended changes.)*

## BARRIERS

The organizations described above have had great successes with their committees. But there are many barriers to be overcome before a successful working committee is assured. Perhaps the greatest barrier is the failure to understand that labor-management cooperation is based on collective bargaining. Each side has an appropriate role that must be recognized by the other. Management has certain responsibilities to run the organization as efficiently and effectively as possible, and the union has certain responsibilities in representing employees' interests. It is basically an adversarial relationship because the interests of the two parties conflict. Participants in a labor-management committee are not trying to eliminate this basically adversarial relationship, but they are recognizing that other relationships, in addition to that one, can be useful and productive for both sides.

Another barrier to labor-management committees is impatience. Impatience manifests itself in many ways. Managers often become impatient with the political dynamics within the union. They expect union leaders to "deliver" committed participants. But union leaders are elected, and they must be concerned with their image among the membership. If participation in a labor-management committee is seen as a form of fraternizing with management, union officials can expect opposition from the rank and file. Union leaders must educate their members to the concept and practice of cooperation.

Another form of impatience is impatience for results. One of the most destructive comments a top-level manager can make about a labor-management committee is, "This doesn't seem to be paying off. I'm not sure I should continue the meetings on company time." Mid-level managers who have just assured supervisors that this is a permanent program and not a passing fad, look foolish, and their credibility is undercut. Union presidents who have encouraged their members to participate feel their authority threatened. No one will risk openness and innovation (and the related risk of failure) if the labor-management committee is expected to be a temporary and not a continuing activity.

Another attitudinal barrier is tentativeness. If either top management or union leaders are unwilling to risk direct participation, the chance of success is reduced. In bargaining, it is a common management strategy to leave the room and check the decisions with the boss. Union leaders, too, check with members, and contracts must be ratified by the union members. But con-

stantly checking with someone else slows the decision-making process, and LMCs operating in this mode quickly lose momentum. The top decision-makers need not meet face-to-face as frequently as do shop floor participants, but if they never meet, hovering on the outside to review all decisions, the committee is ineffective. (One of the most successful and long lasting committees in the public sector is Columbus, Ohio, where the Mayor and AFSCME District Director pledged personal attendance when the committee was formed and have kept their pledge. Michael Brower, Executive Director of the Northeast Labor Management Center, says that direct personal participation of the top manager is the single most important factor in success of a labor-management committee.)

Another barrier worth attention concerns failure to communicate with nonparticipants. Even where there is a serious attempt to broaden participation by using multilevel committees, few employees can be committee members. Failure to communicate with nonparticipants will lead to a dearth of agenda items with which the committee members must deal, suspicions, or more likely, apathy. The committee's impact is seriously reduced if there is no effort to solicit ideas or to show the relationship between the changes that are occurring and the committee's activities.

LMCs have a long history in the United States. In the past decade, LMC goals have broadened to encompass productivity and quality of work life. The variety of structures and procedures permit accommodation to almost any type of unionized environment. Where top managers and union leaders are willing to risk new styles of interaction, the benefits to unions, employees, and the organization can be many.

## RESOURCES

### Printed Material on Labor-Management Committees

BROWER, M., *Starting Labor-Management Quality of Work Life Programs*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office No. 029-000-00415-3 (1982) 21 pp. This document discusses experiences of the Northeast Labor Management Center (Massachusetts) in starting up and assisting a number of quality-of-work-life programs. Particularly useful is a section describing how internal union politics can affect programs.

BROWN, B., "The San Francisco Municipal Railway Joint Labor-Management Board with the Transport Workers Union Local 250-A," Paper presented to the APTA Western Conference (April 1983) 32 pp. This paper describes the Joint Labor/Management Board established in 1982, in which highest level managers and union officials participate in policy decisions, mid-level operations managers and the union executive board deal with problems affecting more than one division, and worksite divisional committees (rank and file, division level supervisor, manager, and union representative) deal with particular worksite issues. The paper focuses on the problems that demonstrated the need for such an approach, implementation issues, roadblocks, the potential for success, and transferability within the industry.

CLARK, S. G., *Executive Report on a Guide to Labor-Management Committees*, HUD-PDR-601 (August 1980), Available from HUD USER; P.O. Box 280, Germantown, Maryland 20767, 11 pp. This report summarizes issues to consider when

deciding whether to initiate an LMC. It is directed toward public sector labor leaders and government officials. Written in question and answer format, the publication deals with procedural issues (number of members, who should be on committee, minutes, voting) and questions of information dissemination, evaluation, problem solving. The report is based on federally sponsored research.

CONTINO, R., "Labor/Management Cooperation Steers a Course to the Bottom Line," *Productivity Brief 15*, American Productivity Center (July 1982) 8 pp. This article describes New York City's Bureau of Motor Equipment (a Division of the Department of Sanitation) labor/management committee program. The Division is responsible for the repair and maintenance of a fleet of over 500 vehicles. The author maintains that the key to productivity improvements they have attained is the direct working relationship between labor and the very top levels of management.

"Human Resources: Absenteeism," *Transit Actions*, Public Technology, Inc., Washington, D.C. (1981). This is a series of four reports documenting the problem; suggesting improved record-keeping to control absenteeism; describing techniques such as higher standards for new hires, providing in-house medical programs; and showing how improved labor-management cooperation can be a key in reducing absenteeism. Contact people who have used these techniques are identified.

KEIDEL, R., *How to Form an In-Plant Labor-Management Committee*, Philadelphia (October 1981). This document describes the principles of quality of work life and techniques used to implement QWL. A useful section on the structure of labor-management committees is included. One sees how a labor-management committee can foster QWL.

*Resource Guide to Labor-Management Cooperation*, U.S. Department of Labor, Labor-Management Services Administration, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, #029-000-00414-5, 198 pp. This document describes 181 in-plant programs and lists industry and area labor-management committees as well as productivity and quality-of-work-life centers. Entries are indexed to permit identification of programs by region, industry, and union. Several labor management committees in urban mass transit and other transportation agencies are identified.

SIEGEL, I. H., and WEINBERG, E., *Labor Management Cooperation: The American Experience*, W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (1982) 316 pp. Authors distinguish area committees, industry committees, and worksite committees as three types of LMCs. One chapter is entirely devoted to public sector worksite committees, and although transit examples are not included, concepts are applicable. Available from W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 300 S. Westridge Ave., Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007; \$9.95, paperback.

SUSMAN, G. I., *A Guide to Labor-Management Committees in State and Local Government*, Public Technology, Inc., Washington, D.C. 20036 (1980) 68 pp. The *Guide* is particularly useful if one is planning for labor-management committees, but it also has general utility because the question and answer format may be used as a guide to important issues in any change effort. It is concise and has practical advice that can be used by transit officials in planning, implementing, and evaluating organizational change efforts.

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#### U.S. Government Organizations

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(Free bibliography, some printed materials.)

Commerce Productivity Center  
U.S. Department of Commerce, Room 4706  
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Peter Regner, Director, Office of Labor—Management Grants Programs  
(Annual grant program to support labor management cooperation. Pamphlet, *How to Start a Labor-Management Committee*, single copies, free upon request.)

Most of the National and Regional Associations and Non-profit Organizations listed in Chapter One also provide information and/or technical assistance to LMCs.



# APPENDIX A

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