

HOT TOPICS

Future Worker Management

July 6, 1993

Workplace Committees

The Commission on the Future of Worker/Management Relations, as announced, intends to hold hearings on July 28, 1993 on workplace committees and other workplace innovations at which the experience of a few cases will be separately presented and explored. These arrangements include, but are not limited to, committees and quality circles, employer participation teams, total quality management programs, team-based work structures, safety and health committees, training programs, productivity and cost reduction programs, ESOP, information sharing forums, etc. The joint-committees and other joint arrangements invited are to include some from large enterprises and smaller enterprises, from the manufacturing and the service sectors, and from those operating under collective bargaining agreements and in non-union settings.

The Commission presents the following questions to indicate the sort of information it seeks from each of the joint labor-management committees or other arrangements. The Commission requests a brief paper incorporating information about the particular workplace in advance of the hearing so that the oral presentations may be better understood and appropriate questions prepared for discussion. The Commission would appreciate these brief papers by July 27th.

1. What were the circumstances that led to the establishment of the committee or other joint arrangement? When was it formed? Who selected the Management (Supervisor) members and the worker members? What procedures were used? How often, if at all, are the members changed? If the joint committee includes health and safety issues, was it mandated by state law?
2. What is the principal focus of the Committee or other joint arrangement? Thus, joint committees have a variety of purposes - eg., quality, safety and health, training, information sharing, employee participation, cost reduction, gain sharing, etc. Why was the principal focus chosen, and has it changed over time?
3. How often does the committee or joint arrangement meet? What are its procedures? How formal are they? Is there an agenda, and prepared in what way? Where does the committee meet? In regular working hours? How are members compensated?
4. What effects have committees had on such performance measures as -- quality, training, union/management relations, productivity, cost, customer satisfaction, safety, employment & income security, and employee motivation? Do you regard the committee or other joint arrangement as a permanent feature of your enterprise?
5. What advice would you provide to others considering the establishment of joint committees or other joint arrangements?
6. Are there joint committees above the immediate workplace in your enterprise that consider broader issues of company or industry policy? Or, does the same workplace committee consider such questions?
7. What were the most serious problems you have encountered with the operation of the committee or other joint arrangement?
8. Was the initial establishment of the workplace committee or other joint arrangement influenced by the experience or reports of other such committees or arrangements? If so, what were they?
9. Have other managements (or unions or both) come to visit to explore your experience? How did they learn of your committee?

If there is a company policy statement, a mission statement, or a collective bargaining agreement or provision governing the work of these committees, or other joint arrangements, please furnish a copy.