



Workplace Communication, Inc.

CASE STUDY

Major Automobile Component Division

Client Results

Creating a participative management structure

The Challenge

Over the past 50 years, workers at this assembly line factory were asked only to do their job with no input into the overall manufacturing of the end product. An outside threat caused by the oil embargo and foreign imports caused the organization to rethink how they ran the business. Union and management had little trust or respect for one another and only dealt with each other as adversaries. Managers realized that without union support, the change required would be difficult. Workers on the other hand only knew their jobs and nothing about the business.

Our Approach

As consultants we needed to introduce a change methodology which would affect all aspects of the organization starting with the upper union leadership and management. A meeting, held off-site, was designed to try to establish some common ground between the two groups. Through heated discussions common ground was found and through consensus the group developed a plan. The plan consisted of:

- An offsite committee to oversee the process and meet regularly to determine if the changes were becoming instituted.
- A mission statement to drive the change and help focus the efforts of all employees, and determine the future state of the organization.
- An opportunity for all employees to attend meetings to help understand the change process and what it meant for them.
- Subcommittees jointly staffed with union and management co-chairs to oversee various aspects of the change process.
- Education for hourly workforce regarding the budget accounts of the organization, problem solving techniques and how they could impact the bottom line.
- Training for first-line supervisors to help them recognize their vital role in the change process and how to coach employees.
- Various ongoing communication activities to generate an understanding of the change status.

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- Ongoing opportunities business and social activities to help integrate employees into a well-functioning team

Outcomes

- Trust between union officials and management dramatically increased.
- Communication between the two factions became more open and honest.
- Business information was openly shared between union and management.
- Hourly employees took an active role in problem solving and quality issues.
- Hourly employees were educated in the overall function of the product so they could more appropriately perform their jobs.
- Absenteeism of some problem employees decreased.
- A task force identified 1.3 million dollars in savings.

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