

FYI for your information

Automation Prompts Union Action, Conflicting Projections

Labor unions have responded to actual and predicted plant and office automation in a variety of ways, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. The Communications Workers of America focuses its activities on retraining, opening a training center in Indianapolis to teach computer literacy, career planning and automated office skills to phone-company workers. The union plans to open four more centers this year.

The Machinists and Aerospace Workers have adopted a workers' bill of rights which demands sharing the savings that result from automation with workers, as well as with stockholders. The document calls for increased worker participation in work-place changes and a tax on robots that replace people.

The Service Employees International Union and the Office and Professional Employees International Union are active in organizing workers in automated offices, most of which are not currently organized. The unions concentrate on banking, insurance and credit-card companies and on other organizations with large data-processing requirements.

Workers in automated offices have complained of eye and back strain due to an improper work environment and of concern with microwave

radiation from the cathode-ray tubes inside their terminals. Other complaints center on perceived productivity pressure and dehumanization of the work place. Some data-entry systems have programmed time standards for each type of entry into the system, in

order to monitor workers. Employees say this results in a "sweatshop" atmosphere, and, because they are compensated according to their level of productivity, they say a piecework mentality prevails.

There is some encouraging news for those who fear the loss of jobs due to automation, however. In *Fortune* magazine, Ronald E. Kutscher of the Bureau of Labor Statistics debunked widespread predictions of millions of working robots by 1990. His high estimate is 150,000 robots in U.S. industry by the end of the decade.

Kutscher's projections are supported by reports of decreased attendance and sales at a robot-industry trade show held in Chicago last April. This was in spite of double the number of exhibitors at the 1982 show.

A study conducted by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, Kalamazoo, Mich., focuses on job opportunities created by a projected mild robotics explosion. The study predicts some 70,000 people will make, sell and maintain robots by 1990, up from about 5,000 today. The study's results were published in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Improved Employee Involvement in a Health Care Facility

The human resource department and the communications department of Methodist Medical Center (MMC) in St. Joseph, Mo., have planned, developed and adopted an approach that addresses the complex issue of communication and motivation in a health care environment.

The approach can be summarized in two words: "no surprises." Employees know what is going to happen before it occurs, and, in most instances, they have some input into

a decision or plan before it becomes final.

In order to ensure good two-way communications, the two MMC departments designed the "Semi-Annual Report to Employees," a multimedia presentation which complements other communication tools already in use.

The program is best understood in the context of the medical center employees' overall understanding of and support for the organization and its goals. The program's principles are based on Maslow's notion of higher order needs. MMC believes that when higher order needs are met, employees are much more likely to give support in the form of reduced absenteeism, volunteer service and positive attitudes toward change.

A condition of providing that support is understanding. An individual must know what the organization stands for and what its goals are before he or she can be expected to support the organization.

The alternative is for the organization to demand support. In some cases, this type of demand is warranted, for instance, in complying with patient care standards. However, through effective communications, MMC seeks commitment instead of mere compliance.

The semi-annual report is designed specifically to help support the organization's corporate mission and philosophy of providing the highest quality patient care at the most reasonable price, and of providing a work environment which is highly satisfying and rewarding to staff.

The format for the semi-annual report to employees was developed to incorporate major accomplishments and progress in the areas of patient care, employee relations and administration. Probably

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most important, the report features MMC's plans and strategies for the next six months.

The method of presentation of the semi-annual report is vitally important. Because patient care cannot be compromised, presentations are made over the course of an entire week, during all three shifts. This amounts to 38 one-hour meetings over a five-day period, and more than 90 percent of the 1,600 employees are involved.

The semi-annual report meetings use three very different methods of communication. The first part of the program consists of a slide presentation by the CEO and the assistant administrator of human resources, which outlines accomplishments of the past six months and what can be expected during the next six months.

The second, and perhaps most important, part of the program is a discussion with the CEO, who listens to ideas for future direction and growth of the medical center. This has proven to be a highly effective method of communication and has led to a continuing commitment to MMC by staff.

The third part of the program and the third method of communication occurs at the meeting's close, when each employee receives a written copy of the "Semi-Annual Report to Employees."

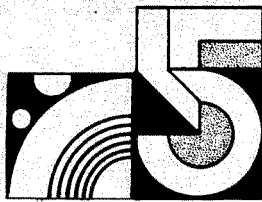
The meeting times are set well in advance and announced through management meetings and employee publications. Notes are kept at all meetings, and they are reviewed by the executive management.

Assignments are made for items or issues which can be responded to quickly. Issues with long-term implications are considered during the center's annual strategic planning process.

Most suggestions can be responded to quickly, so a commitment by all managers is important to assure that prompt action occurs. This reinforces for the staff that they are being heard.

Administration is careful to complete the feedback loop.

*—Submitted by
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Five Decades of Participative Management

While all participative management programs differ, a central idea is common to all: that employees know something unique about work being done and that, when properly directed, that knowledge will result in better work methods and more committed workers.

Multiple Management, the participative management program of spice-maker McCormick & Company, recently entered its second 50 years of successful application. In order to draw attention to the program's success and invite other organizations to benefit from its experience, McCormick & Company published a booklet outlining the background, principles and operations of Multiple Management. The following is abstracted from the booklet.

In November 1932, Charles Perry McCormick established the first Multiple Management board, which he called a Junior Board. (A Sales Board and a Factory Board were created later.) This first board supplied innovative ideas for packaging, sales and products. Within a year, McCormick's business had moved from losses into profits, at a time when 14 million people were out of work and the national economy was greatly depressed. Some 2,000 board suggestions were accepted during the first five years.

Today, Multiple Management is a network of small teams of management employees meeting regularly on a voluntary basis to discuss innovative ideas and procedures. Each of the teams functions like a junior board of directors. Currently, there are 13 Multiple Management boards at McCormick—roughly one for each major unit of the company.

A Multiple Management board can have as many as 20 members, who usually meet every other week to help identify, analyze and solve work-related problems. The range of subjects includes new product development, quality control, safety, productivity, cost reduction and inventory control, among others. Boards are free to explore every

aspect of McCormick except compensation and benefits, because such activity could be construed as illegal in-house bargaining.

At the end of every six-month term, each member of a Multiple Management board is ranked by every other member. Rankings are based on judgment, creativity and achievement, and results are confidential. The six members who rank highest become a membership committee, which forms the next board. Rotation of people on the board is achieved by requiring that a minimum number of board members be dropped when each new board is formed. Those dropped are eligible to be considered again for board membership after being off the board a full six-month term.

Participants are classified as regular members or associate members. Orientees are employees invited to observe Multiple Management boards for a term. After spending a term observing board work, an orientee is eligible to become an associate member. Associates are evaluated the same as regular members, and both associate and regular members vote to elect board officers.

A typical board meeting lasts two to three hours. In addition, a board member commonly spends several hours a week of his or her own time on board work. Regular members receive \$100 a month and two extra weeks of vacation for their participation. They head committees, make up the executive committee of the board and guide and counsel new members. Associate members receive \$50 a month and one week of additional vacation.

More than 80 percent of project recommendations are accepted and adopted by senior management, although approval of recommendations is not always the most important aspect of board work. What is most important about Multiple Management is that a group of individuals works together toward a common goal. Even if a project is abandoned, it sometimes inspires other investigations which are successful.

A typical Multiple Management committee might be composed of a research chemist, an auditor, a member of the human relations department, an engineer and a marketing administrator. Board members frequently find themselves working on problems in areas of the company that are new to them.

Often their fresh, unprejudiced ideas prove valuable.

Final recommendations must be approved by a three-fourths vote of the entire Multiple Management board. Then the recommendations undergo a review by senior management. Such reviews often involve an oral defense of their recommendations by committee members. These encounters can be clinically severe and tough, as senior management seeks to determine if the recommendations are practical and sound.

Senior management does not abdicate authority and accountability. Instead, it meets those responsibilities more effectively because of the shared process of decision making.

The McCormick experience suggests four characteristics for successful participative programs:

- Results which have merit must be adopted and have a significant impact on operations.
- There must be commitment by top management.
- The program must become a part of the managerial style of the firm.
- The program must be modified with changing conditions and circumstances.

—From "Step Back Into the Future: Fifty Years of Multiple Management—1932-1982" and the Spring 1983 edition of The Sibson Report, by Robert E. Sibson and contributing authors.

What the Client Really Thought



How often do you wish you knew

what the client really thought of you and your services? When you aren't invited back, do you wonder why, but lack a formal way of getting direct information about what went well and what didn't? Here are suggestions for getting specific positive and negative feedback in a predictable, timely and constructive manner.

- Give the form shown to

Consulting Feedback Form

Client:

Feedback from:

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree NA = Not Applicable

The Product

Was practical and just what we needed
Was easy to implement back home
Was on time
Gained me status or impact
Was well worth the investment
Looked first class

Circle One

SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA

The Process

Clearly defined the problem/opportunity
Minimized my risk and kept me in control
Addressed my needs and concerns
Involved us at each stage as partners
Specified what each party was to do
Sparked us to think about other options
Removed road blocks constructively
Specified products, outcomes and inputs
Built in mid-course corrections and feedback

SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA

The Consultant

Was supportive and easy to work with
Respected confidentiality
Knew his stuff
Projected the right image
Will be used by us again

SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA
SA A D SD NA

Suggestions for improving product, process or consultant behavior:

the client before starting to consult, and ask him or her to begin evaluating your performance from day one.

- Ask for written feedback at regular intervals, so you can make mid-course corrections.
- Encourage the client to talk through the ratings to get sensitive feedback he or she may not want to write down.
- Make a copy of completed forms for the client to keep as a reminder of your performance and improvement.
- Invite the client to add any rating criteria he or she feels are essential.
- Tie the feedback ratings to your performance contract, conditions for rehire and compensation.
- If you co-consult/co-train, have you and your partner fill out the form on each other as part of debriefing.
- When making consulting sales

calls, ask the prospective client to fill out and talk through the form to crystallize impressions and give you immediate feedback.

- Use the form at times of conflict with clients to clarify issues in an open and nondefensive manner.
 - Develop a modified form for the consultant to give feedback to the client.
 - Ask the client's permission to use the completed form (with the client identified) in marketing efforts as specific testimony of your impact.
- Just because your consultant doesn't ask for feedback, it doesn't mean he or she doesn't want or need it. The absence of negative feedback isn't positive feedback.—Submitted by Charles B. Maclean, president, Applied Foresight, Lewisville, Texas.

