

Lessons Learned from Labor-Management Success Stories

The National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations frequently hears from successful labor-management partners at its public meetings. In 2015, the National Council asked its previous success story presenters to answer a series of questions about their use of pre-decisional involvement (PDI), their labor-management relationships, and the advice they would offer to other labor-management groups. This document provides a brief summary of the responses received.



General Trends

- All respondents indicated information was shared while engaging in PDI. The information was shared via
 - Meetings
 - Conference calls
 - Emails
 - Documents
 - One group created a SharePoint site so information was “readily shared and disclosed”
- All respondents indicated the information exchange was “timely and adequate” without identifying any barriers
- Almost all of the respondents indicated that the union was invited to offer pre-decisional input

Examples of union involvement included:

- Joint meetings at the beginning of the planning cycle prior to committing anything to paper
- Weekly meetings through a labor management forum
- The agency drafting a policy and sharing it with the joint labor council for input prior to final review and incorporating the feedback in the final review draft utilizing a “joint policy writing committee”
- PDI can take a variety of forms:
 - Formal, such as through a labor-management forum or another process, or
 - Informally between representatives of labor and management



Metrics and Mission Performance

- Only 18% indicated the use of metrics to measure the impact of PDI success. Some examples included:
 - Tracking the impact of changes on the productivity of the agency as compared to previous years
 - Accident injury rates
 - Costs
 - Decreasing pendency
 - Decreasing inventory
- All respondents indicated the instance of PDI positively affected the parties' labor-management relationship
 - One party stated that PDI allowed them to reach an agreement on a CBA that had been in continuous negotiations for 13 years.
 - It was also clear from the responses that PDI led to an increase in trust between the parties through enhanced communication, collaboration and by listening to each other's interests and addressing those interests by finding the "common ground"
- ≈94% indicated that PDI positively affected the work lives of employees. Some examples of how PDI positively affected the employee's work lives included:
 - Examples where employees were able to have their concerns about policy changes addressed
 - Increased bonuses by establishing clear goals
 - Allowed for sharing work amongst employees
 - Established telework programs
 - Provided safety equipment to officers
 - Workspace designs that lead to improved morale and productivity.
- ≈88% said PDI positively affected the agency's mission performance. Examples were numerous, but in summary respondents indicated that:
 - Employees were more satisfied
 - Attrition rates dropped
 - Building numbers (e.g., reduction in real property footprint) were reduced
 - Safety was improved
 - The workforce felt included in the decision making process



Keys to Success

- Communication
- Trust
- Transparency
- Willingness to meet the interests of the other side
- Support from top levels of management
- Collaborative decision making
- Commitment from the parties to be honest and make a good faith effort to find the best solution for both management and the union



Overcoming Barriers

- For each barrier or problem, the parties took responsibility to find a solution
- When the problem concerned untruthfulness, distrust, or a lack of transparency, the parties took responsibility to address the issues “immediately”



Lessons Learned

- Open, early and ongoing communication was indicated most often in the responses
- Both parties must treat each other with respect and honesty, with a true commitment to partnership
- Other comments included
 - “Start with a clean slate”
 - “Strong support from leadership”
 - “A willingness to compromise”Suggesting a correlation between shared expectations and its importance to the success of PDI
- Over half of the respondents said that training or facilitation played a role in the success of PDI.
 - Those that used a facilitator said that the facilitator helped them “keep on track”
 - Others received training either from the FLRA or FMCS.

Advice to Others

The last question asked participants, *“What advice would you offer to others who have not tried PDI in their labor-management matters?”*

- The respondents were all very supportive of PDI and most recommended that parties use PDI methodologies at least once, observing that if PDI doesn't work the parties still have the traditional bargaining process available to them if needed
- They also stated that PDI is “faster and less hostile” than traditional bargaining and often leads to fewer unfair labor practice charges and impasse proceedings Respondents agree that PDI requires a commitment from the parties to be honest and make a good faith effort to find the best solution for both management and the union

In Summary

- The participants were overwhelmingly supportive of PDI
- They recommended the parties get trained together, have regular meetings and approach the process with an open mind, a willingness to listen, and address the other party's interests
- By focusing on the interests, one commenter wrote, “We were able to work out our issues without our lawyers”
- It is clear from the responses that PDI led to a better labor-management relationship and built trust between the parties
- It also leads to an increase in employee morale by making the workforce feel heard and appreciated
- There is nothing to lose by trying PDI as the intangible benefits are clear and the parties still have the statutory bargaining process to fall back on for any issues that can't be resolved through the PDI process
- PDI often results in a better agreement in less time than traditional bargaining