

What to know | about Labor Management Committees

A labor management committee (LMC) is an ongoing forum for representatives of staff and management to meet, share information, ask clarifying questions, solve problems, and respond jointly on subjects of mutual concern.

What are the benefits of investing in a robust LMC?

From manufacturing, to healthcare, to education, LMCs have been created to pursue productive partnerships and keep communication lines open between labor and management.

As a complement to the collective bargaining agreement, an LMC has the potential to be a powerful way for management and the union to work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Where relations have broken down or come under stress, the LMC can serve as an avenue to repair and rebuild the relationship.

As with any relationship, a strong LMC is the result of hard work. It takes intentionality to develop a partnership mindset and approach. Meeting together on a regular basis provides an opportunity to get to know each other as human beings and establish shared understanding and respect.

What does the Labor Management Committee do?

The LMC is not an extension of bargaining or a forum to renegotiate elements of the contract. Neither is it a place to resolve grievances that are going through the formal process. It is a place for management to seek input from staff, to hear about issues of importance to them, and to address issues not covered by the collective bargaining agreement.

The following are examples of topics that **management** brings to an LMC:

- *Staff engagement with the strategic planning process.*
- *Restructuring of the organization that results in changes in supervision.*
- *The agenda for the staff retreat.*
- *Changes to the hybrid work policy [if not covered by the contract].*

The following are examples of topics that **unions** bring to an LMC:

- *Clarification of a new policy and how it will be implemented.*
- *How the union will be involved in new hire orientation.*
- *Staff union participation on internal organizational committees.*
- *Concerns about the impact of a change, such as an office move.*

5 pitfalls to avoid with the LMC

- #1** To act as if all topics that come up in the LMC become subjects of bargaining. Just because management is willing to discuss a topic does not mean the parties need to reach agreement. The key is to be clear at the outset on the purpose of discussion - i.e. to gather input or make a decision.
- #2** To slip into a renegotiation of an issue already settled in the current collective bargaining agreement. The union may surface topics that are subjects for negotiation, but management is not obligated to amend or reopen the contract. Should there be a mutual desire to create memorandums of understanding (addendum to the contract), the parties should discuss those intentions and set a time for bargaining. Most organizations do not renegotiate contracts until they are about to expire.
- #3** To call meetings of the LMC only when there is a problem to address, and otherwise to let it be dormant. Regular meetings provide the foundation of the relationship and norms that you can draw on when there are problems, and can enable the LMC to act proactively and preventatively.
- #4** To accept behaviors that undermine the purpose and norms of the LMC without addressing them. When the LMC becomes a place for any party to act out frustration and perpetuate conflict, it is important to pause and reset. The more difficult the behavior has been, the more it may benefit from outside facilitation.
- #5** Lastly, avoid the pitfalls that occur because of lack of clarity and poor record keeping.

10 Success Factors for the LMC

#1 A “Charter” or “Operating Agreement:” A high-functioning LMC has a clear purpose, scope, roles, and norms - written down in an agreement that everyone can reference. Sections would include:

- **A preamble** that describes the purpose of the LMC as it reflects the organization’s values and its culture as a unionized organization.
- **The scope of the committee.** For example, “to collaborate regarding the implementation of the CBA, and to jointly identify and address problems and opportunities that impact working conditions and labor-management relations.” [see sample LMC contract language below]
- **Committee roles.** This includes co-chairs (can be rotating), note-takers, and time-keepers, along with a process for creating agenda.
- **Working agreements.** This includes decision-making processes and expectations regarding transparency and communication.

#2 A standard check in. Routines help people plan and know what to expect. Which is why standard practices like check ins are useful. A good practice is to always ask if there are any “elephants in the room” during the check in. This helps to normalize the bumps in the road, rather than seeing them as disruptions.

#3 Frequent meetings, with agendas. Meetings are during regular work hours, with agendas that are circulated in advance by the co-chairs. Monthly or quarterly meetings. Meeting length can be extended in advance if needed to deal with complex issues.

#4 Consistent representation and participation. Consistency is how trust is built. And the more the committee membership reflects the larger workforce, the more likely the discussions will be informative.

#5 A vehicle for engaging staff. Start with the LMC when seeking staff engagement on internal processes and committees, such as culture change, caucuses, strategic planning, and staff retreat planning. When setting up new task forces, ask them to nominate their representatives using criteria.

#6 A timeline and benchmarks for addressing topics that are within the scope of the LMC, including other events that impact labor management relations and availability for meetings.

#7 Curiosity. Prioritizing a commitment to being curious over being right leads to good listening and collaboration.

#8 All-staff communication. Agree about what and how the committee will share outcomes with bargaining unit members, managers, and staff as a whole. End the meeting with an agreement on what will be shared with all staff members and send out an update from the LMC as a whole.

#9 Authentic appreciation. Recognizing work that was done, as well as outcomes, is a way to build trust and understanding on the committee.

#10 A debriefing practice. At least twice a year, and after addressing a particularly difficult topic, assess how you are doing as a committee. Identify what helped and what got in the way, and offer suggestions for the future.

Helpful tools and references:

- ☐ FMCS [Website](#)
- ☐ [Interest-based Problem Solving Methodology](#)
- ☐ Scobel, Donald N. (1982). [Business and Labor – from Adversaries to Allies](#).
- ☐ LMC Contract language: [Sample contract article on LMC 1](#); [Sample contract article on LMC 2](#); [Sample contract article on LMC 3](#)
- ☐ Short Training Videos from NYS and CSEA's Labor Management Committee:
 - [The Benefits of an LMC](#)
 - [Creating an Operating Agreement \[or Charter\] for your LMC](#)
 - [Three levels of Development of LMCs](#)
 - [Building Intentional Relationships on your LMC](#)
 - [Effective Problem Solving for your LMC](#)
 - [Understanding Each others' Worlds on the LMC](#)