

WORKER COOPERATION & COMMUNICATION & FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION



CHAPTERS FROM THE BUSINESS TOOLKIT

This is only two chapters of the toolkit. You can download the full document or any of the other chapters from the Partner Africa website.
www.partnerafrica.org/business-toolkit

WELCOME

This toolkit provides practical assistance on how to improve **Productivity, Quality and Workforce Management - areas which are inextricably linked**. People are a core and valuable asset for every business and in order to have an efficient, productive business, employees need to work in good conditions. Partner Africa, through its extensive auditing, training and consulting work have found that workers who are safe, respected and content in their work are more efficient and productive. For instance, productivity is increased by reducing the need for sick days and constant recruitment and onboarding due to high worker turnover. The connection also flows in the other direction: as productivity and efficiency improves, there are opportunities to improve wages and reduce excessive working hours without impacting price.

Productivity, Quality and Workforce Management are all essential elements to building a lasting business and a strong partnership with purchasing companies into the future.

The group of companies and organisations behind this toolkit want to share best practice and learning across the industry. This toolkit gives suppliers practical assistance on how to improve productivity, quality and workforce management in production sites. It will enable you to understand each issue and why it matters for your business, what is required, what that means in practice and will also enable you to assess your current situation and provide you with practical tools to make the necessary improvements.

Written and produced by Partner Africa

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Produced by Partner Africa for The Coca-Cola Company, Diageo, ABInBev and Aim-Progress

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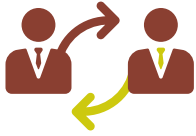
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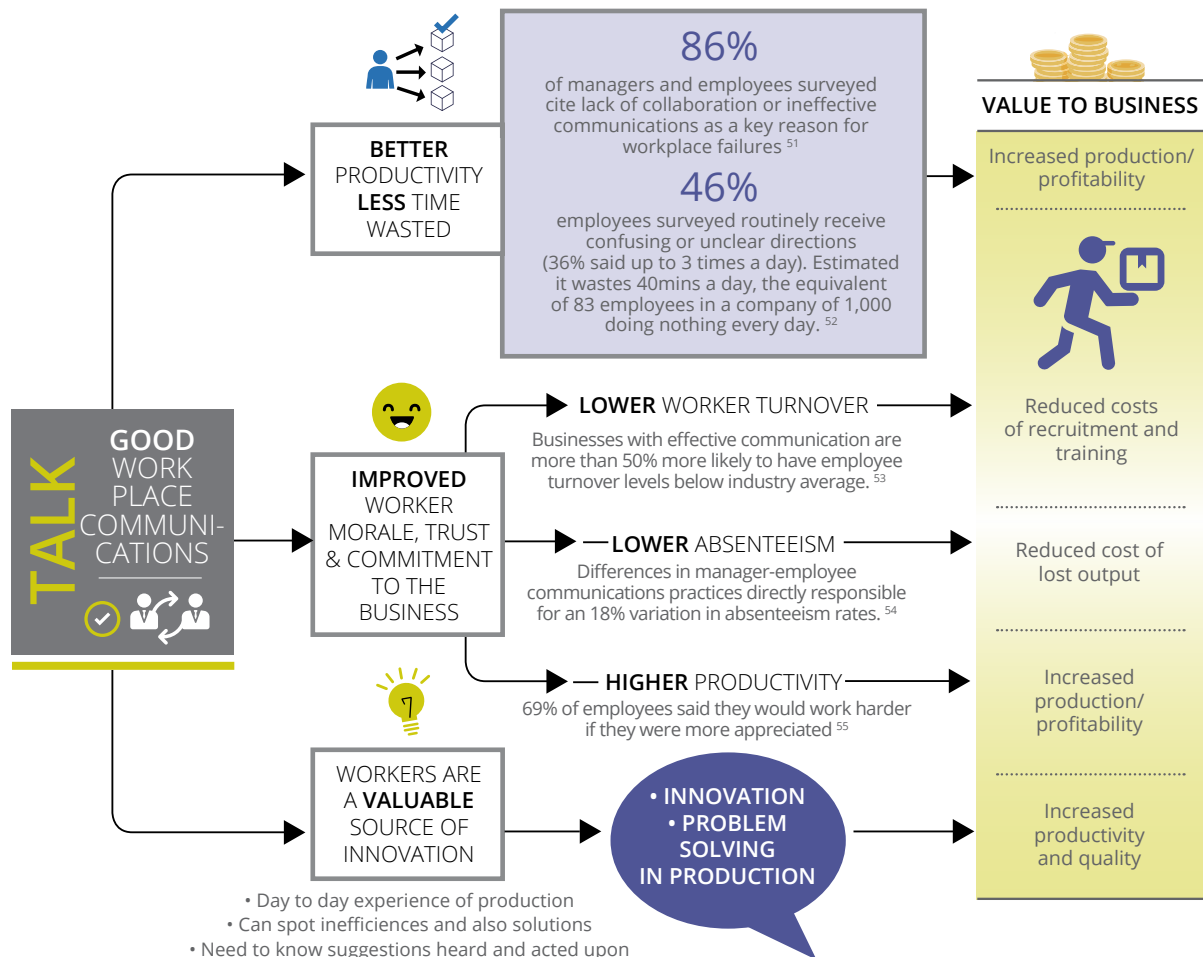


5. WORKER COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION

5.1 WORKPLACE COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION – OVERVIEW

? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS?

Your business can only really thrive and excel if you have your workers' minds and hearts (ideas, motivation and commitment) as well as their hands (physical capacity). If your workforce is not engaged you are only reaping a small part of the potential business benefit of the wages you pay.



✓ THE EXPECTATIONS

Effective and regular cooperation and communication between all levels of employees.

? WHO

Who needs to be involved and informed in tackling this issue?
Senior management, production manager, supervisors, line managers, shop stewards, HR Manager, workers representatives, union representatives.



A RECENT POLL

by Gallup showed that 70% of U.S. employees are not engaged at work. That's a startling figure and has massive implications for productivity.

70%
U.S. employees **=** **NOT**
engaged at work ⁵⁶

What do you think the figure would be at your business?

Can you imagine the productivity benefits of increasing the level of real engagement and commitment at work?



CASE STUDY

WORKER COOPERATION IN SMALL INDONESIAN FACTORY

A small factory in Indonesia worked hard to improve the working environment and respect between workers and management, introducing regular consultation with workers, who are encouraged to give their ideas.

They have managed to decrease their defect rate from 5% to 2% within just 3 months.

"In the past we never knew about the process of worker cooperation. We never considered it important to engage and consult with workers. Before, the workers had no understanding of the company's targets, while the management did not understand the needs of works. Now it has changed, we communicate better and it also boosts our productivity." – H. Suwarno, Director of PT Laksana Teknik Makmur. ⁵⁷



WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

This section can be used as a tool to self-assess your site.

Put a if you think that point is in place in your business and put a if it isn't or needs improvement. You can then create an action plan, to assign and follow up an action for every (sample action plans are given at the back of the toolkit).

- Information is shared widely across your organisation
- Two-way communication is actively promoted
- Managers communicate regularly and in a variety of ways with workers
- Communication is in a simple, understandable form, in a language all workers can understand
- Workers generally know and understand the goals of the organisation
- Using notice boards and visual information sharing to the best capacity
- Daily team meetings
- Workers able to identify and have opportunities to raise issues and suggestions for improvement in the production site (productivity, quality, H&S, other issues)
- Employees are encouraged to make suggestions and these are listened to and acted upon where relevant
- Workers feel confident to share ideas and suggestions
- Good suggestions are often implemented
- The leadership style empowers workers as a source of innovation and welcomes problems as opportunities for improvement
- There is a good level of respect and trust



PRACTICAL TIPS AND TOOLS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Some types of workplace cooperation and communication – formal and informal ⁵⁸

As you read through this list, ask yourself:

- ? What forms of workplace communication and cooperation already exist in our facility?
- ? How well are they each working?
- ? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach we take?
- ? What needs to change to make them more effective?
- ? What new/different form(s) of cooperation and communication should we try out?



Information sharing: Notice boards, newsletters, announcements. One-way and no opportunity for feedback or clarification. Notice boards can be used to communicate work targets and progress as well as many other topics.

Visual information sharing: Translate vital information, instructions and warnings into visual devices as close to the point of use as possible. Minimises need for supervision and process management.

Two-way communication: Management provides information and gives workers opportunities to discuss, ask questions and seek clarification. eg a query on the details of a payslip. This could be in meetings, conversations, workshops or training.

Line/cell team meetings: Production line/cell team members and their supervisor meet for 10 mins at the beginning of a shift to discuss the previous day's performance (safety, quality, productivity, using actual data), solve any issues (including opportunity for workers to make suggestions for improvements), discuss the plan for the day, share other information. Short and productive. Facilitated in such a way that workers can contribute.

Daily production meeting: Similar to above but with supervisors and production managers. Especially important for shift handovers.

After-action review (AAR): Brief team meeting after a particular project/delivery (workers and supervisors involved), to discuss:

- Did everything go according to plan?
- Did unforeseen problems arise?
- How did the team address these problems?
- What can we learn? How would we do it next time?

Employee suggestion schemes: Ideas on performance improvements can come directly from workers with first-hand experiences of the issues on the production floor. Employees participating in improving the productivity have increased sense of pride and ownership of their work. e.g. Suggestion boxes, dealt with by management regularly, with a quick response time.

Joint problem-solving: Interactive process to identify a problem between two or more parties. Recognise any overlap in desired outcomes, understand what's causing the problem, brainstorm options for solutions, evaluate options and agree viable solutions.

Joint decision-making: Discussion between managers and workers that results in a binding decision. Can be in formally established committees or a specially created task force.

Teamwork and cross functional collaboration: Often input from different functions is needed to solve a problem. This can be in formal workshops and projects but also on a daily basis. e.g. production and maintenance or procurement and quality.

Consultation: Information is shared and discussed but one party retains the right to make the final decision. e.g. management asking workers for input and suggestions on how temperatures could be made more reasonable in a section.

Dispute/grievance resolution: Formal mechanism, mediated by human resources or senior management, to resolve disputes and address employee grievances, ensuring root causes for disputes are understood and addressed while treating all parties fairly and respectfully.

Consultative Committee: Elected representatives of workers meet regularly with senior members of management to discuss problems, changes in operations or new initiatives and to consider joint solutions and ideas. Agreed minutes can be shared with the whole business where appropriate.

Negotiation and bargaining: Two or more parties come together to resolve an issue by making compromises and reaching an agreement. Collective bargaining is a formal process where workers (union representatives) discuss and negotiate with management representatives to reach a legally binding agreement (Collective Bargaining Agreement CBA). This normally involves pay, benefits and hours but can include other matters.



Meeting agenda:

DAILY PRODUCTION MEETING (OR LINE/CELL TEAM MEETING) AGENDA

5-10 minutes. Assign a scribe to take notes.
Time managed according to agenda.

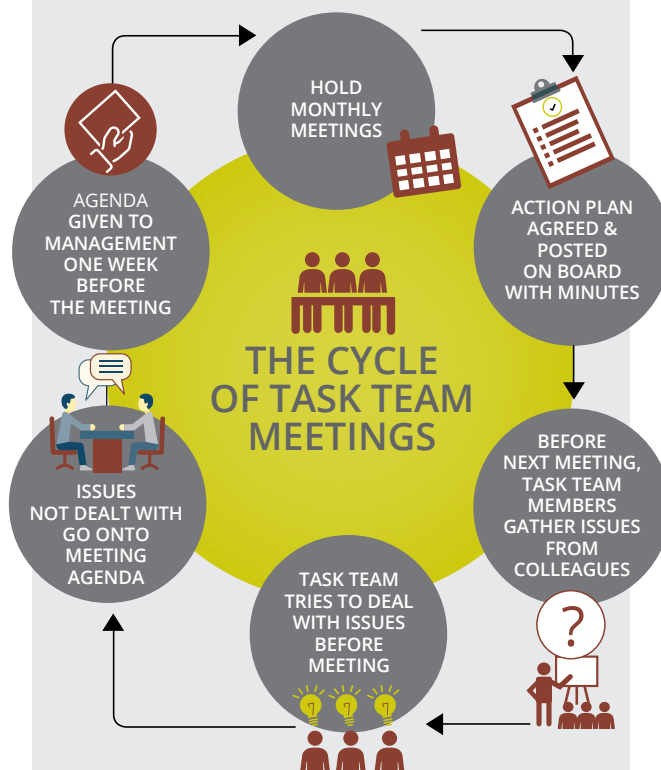
- **Call to order** - Production Manager/ team leader
- **Review of the previous day** (led by the team leader/production manager but with brief input encouraged from all attending)
 - ◆ **Were production targets met?** (share actual data)
 - ◆ **Were there any issues in terms of productivity/efficiency? any bottlenecks?**
 - Briefly brainstorm solutions - what needs to be different today?
 - ◆ **Were there any issues in terms of quality?**
 - eg. high number of defects in a particular part of the process?
 - Briefly brainstorm solutions - what needs to be different today?
 - ◆ **Were there any issues in terms of health and safety?**
 - Briefly brainstorm solutions - what needs to be different today?
 - ◆ **Were there any other issues?**
 - Briefly brainstorm solutions - what needs to be different today?
- **Plan for today**
 - ◆ **Production targets** (as part of production targets for the week overviewed)
 - ◆ **Identify any foreseen issues** - what actions need to be taken?
- **Review action items** and ensure they are recorded
- **Close**

Task team:

Partner Africa and Tesco have produced a document on how to set up a 'Task Team' as a channel of communication in the workplace.

It includes the reasons why such a team would be of benefit to the business, how it can be set up and run and also gives sample templates of Terms of Reference, a sample meeting agenda, minutes and action plan.

https://www.siza.co.za/documents/Ethical_Workplace_Communication_Channel.pdf



The cycle of Task Team Meetings, Sustainable Agriculture in South Africa ⁵⁹



Quality/effectiveness of cooperation and communication

Leadership mentality and style has a significant impact on whether you will have successful two way communication with workers and cooperation from them, which is essential to the productivity and growth of your business.

- Recognise the value of workers as a source of innovation, since they have a direct day-to-day knowledge of the production process, issues and potential solutions
- Eliminate a 'blame culture' - instead of asking 'who's

to blame' when an issue arises, rather ask 'why did the problem occur?' By focusing on fact-finding, process, systems and improving capacity, the real issues can be seen and resolved. 95% of problems in an organisation are process and systems driven and only 5% are due to people issues ⁶⁰

- Welcome problems as opportunities for improvement. If you get angry about a problem and blame someone, issues will be hidden and go unresolved in the future because people will be too scared to raise them. Increase people's confidence and capacity to identify and solve problems on a daily basis



CASE STUDY

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME BRINGS BUSINESS BENEFITS IN INDIA ⁶¹

Synthite Industries, a spice ingredient provider in Kerala, India, believes that employee engagement is essential to building a stable workforce. The site engages and has good relationships with two unions.

Synthite's HR Manager Raeez K.A says *“it is vital to use meetings and committees to ensure good two-way communication and to foster inter-level engagement.”*

My Voice, launched in 2009, is a formal employee engagement programme initiated by the workers themselves. It is a monthly opportunity for employees to feedback confidentially on anything work-related. *“The results have been positive, with many minor issues being brought to attention of management that might not have been noticed otherwise. Implementing My Voice has improved the quality of the management process.”*

How 'My Voice' works:

- Formal guidelines were produced to ensure workers and staff understood the objective and process
- The monthly session is chaired by representatives from the HR department

- Details discussed in the meeting are properly documented and shared with the relevant Heads of Departments
- Workers raising issues are kept confidential
- Communication is sent to all employees once the grievance or query is addressed, through notices
- Documented minutes are sent to the corporate office every succeeding month

“Our employees have suggested new ideas including a system for flexible leave, especially for our female workers. Employees are now entitled to one hour, a half day and a full day leave, once a month, if they have something urgent to do or an appointment to attend. The result is much higher satisfaction and lower level of absenteeism. In the first session, the employees weren't confident and were skeptical; the breakthrough came after two or three sessions when management reviewed the previous sessions, proving that issues were being tackled and solutions being made.”

The improved trust, communication and cooperation has benefitted the whole team. Since workers are now more satisfied and happy to be a part of a company that listens to them, morale and productivity has improved, as worker retention has increased and absenteeism reduced.



Practical tool:

WORKER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Why is this important?

- Workers are more motivated, satisfied and productive when their job meets their needs in terms of income security, progression, self- respect and feeling safe
- There may be some issues you don't know about that need to be resolved and could make a big difference to workers' motivation
- Workers can be a valuable source of information to solve problems in production, if they believe their voices are heard and valued and their suggestions are implemented

How can it be implemented?

- Most sites would provide workers with paper forms that they complete by hand. Workers must be able to respond anonymously and be re-assured that there will be no retribution or penalty for any responses. These would be collated by the Human Resources department into a spreadsheet and statistics produced, to be reported to senior management
- If you are a larger business you may wish to investigate the possibility of doing a survey through mobile phones

What could be included?

You could include some of these questions, or others you think are relevant. To each question, the worker would have space to select/answer: with space to write a comment if they wish

What do you do with results?

- Data needs to be collated, analysed and statistics produced for each question
- The top issues can be identified from the responses (H&S, hours, pay, harassment etc)
- The results should be presented to a committee of senior management and production staff
- This group needs to discuss what the root causes of the issues found are and what possible solutions are. The practical tips sections in the various chapters of this toolkit should give you a starting point for some solutions and actions that can be taken
- Actions should be assigned to individuals, with timescales
- Any positive changes should be reported to workers

- *Is the money you earn enough to cover your basic expenses?*
- *Are you able to get to the end of the month without borrowing money?*
- *Are you able to save 10% of your total income each month?*
- *I feel that management takes my concerns and complaints seriously*
- *I can leave the site whenever I want*
- *How would you rate your relationship with your supervisor / manager? [Positive /Neutral /Negative /Not applicable]*
- *Have you noticed any issues that limit your productivity and ability to make products that meet the quality standards? [Space for free text response]*
- *What solutions can you think of to improve these issues? (these need to be small and practical where possible, and not involve large investments)*
- *Have you noticed any health and safety issues that impact you or your colleagues?*
- *What solutions can you think of to improve these issues? (these need to be small and practical where possible, and not involve large investments)*
- *Have you noticed any other issues that impact you or your colleagues?*
- *What solutions can you think of to improve these issues? (these need to be small and practical where possible, and not involve large investments)*

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5.2 FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS?

Freedom of association is an important right according to international labour conventions and in many cases is a legal requirement. In addition to this, trade unions can assist in communication and negotiation with your workforce and disseminating information to your employees.

✓ THE EXPECTATIONS

- Respect employee's right to join, form or not to join a labour union and to bargain collectively without fear of reprisal, intimidation, or harassment
- Where employees are represented by a legally recognised union, establish a constructive dialogue with their freely chosen representatives and bargain in good faith with such representatives
- Workers representatives are not discriminated against and have access to carry out their representative functions in the workplace
- In countries and/or situations where the legal system prohibits or severely restricts the right of freedom of association, suppliers should support, within the framework of applicable laws and regulations, the establishment of alternative means to facilitate the effective representation of workers interests and communication between workers and management



CASE STUDY

FRUIT PRODUCER CHIQUITA DEVELOPS 'CULTURE OF DIALOGUE' AND REDUCES STRIKES ^{61.5}

Chiquita produces fruit and vegetables from Central and South America. In the late 1990s there was concern with negative media coverage about working conditions and allegations of anti-union activities, particularly in banana plantations.

Chiquita, the International Unions for Food Workers (IUF) and the Coordinating Committee of Banana Workers' Unions (COLSIBA) signed a Framework Agreement in 2001, which commits Chiquita to supporting the ILO Core Conventions (including protection of worker representatives) and to a framework for dialogue. The Agreement affirms the right of each worker to choose to belong to, and be represented by, an independent and democratic trade union and to bargain collectively.

According to George Jaksch, Chiquita's Senior Director for Corporate Responsibility and Public Affairs, the Agreement creates a "culture of

dialogue". It established a formal steering committee which meets twice per year. Under the Agreement, the parties agree to "avoid actions which could undermine the process spelled out in the Agreement, such as public international campaigns or anti-union retaliatory tactics."

Since the Agreement was signed, there have been significantly fewer strikes in Chiquita's operations in Latin America, in large part as a result of the dispute resolution processes built into the agreement. The biggest impact has been the increase in union membership in Colombia, with 4,000 additional trade unions members added and 27 new collective agreements. In Honduras, the Agreement led to the formation of a new trade union at the Buenos Amigos plantation. In Costa Rica, the Agreement has facilitated an on-going dialogue between unions and Chiquita at the national level. As a result, fewer disputes have been reported to the Labour Ministry.



WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

This section can be used as a tool to self-assess your site.

Put a if you think that point is in place in your business and put a if it isn't or needs improvement. You can then create an action plan, to assign and follow up an action for every (sample action plans are given at the back of the toolkit).

- Every worker has the right to join a trade union or not, as they wish
- Workers are treated equally regardless of their association – this needs to be actively implemented into policies, training and procedures for staff responsible for recruitment, performance management, discipline, termination and wages payment (eg applicants should not be asked about their views on trade unions in an application process)
- The workplace allows access to trade union representatives, in accordance with local law.
- Workers are made aware of their rights to join and participate in a trade union and worker representation
- Where there are unions represented in your workforce you need to establish constructive dialogue with the representatives and negotiate with them. This includes:
 - Building relationship with representatives
 - Workers representatives are democratically elected by the workers rather than being selected by the company
 - Allowing representatives to carry out their functions in the workplace (including providing paid time for their duties)
 - Telling workers how they can find out about the union or other employee organisation
 - Setting regular meetings with representatives
 - Keep records of meeting notes including issues discussed and solutions/actions agreed upon (minutes should be reviewed and approved by both management and a union/worker representative)
 - Records should be kept of collective bargaining agreements with the union
 - Decisions made at meetings are communicated to the workforce
 - Being willing to negotiate key conditions such as pay and benefits
- Workers who choose to associate or not to associate with a union must not be in fear of reprisal, intimidation or harassment. If you notice or hear of any such intimidation or harassment this must be dealt with immediately
- If the legal system prohibits or severely restricts the formation of, or association with, unions you need to establish alternative means to allow representation and communication. This can include worker committees



PRACTICAL TIPS AND TOOLS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Resources

- The International Organization of Employers provide support and resources on labour issues including industrial relations
 - ♦ <https://www.ioe-emp.org/policy-areas/international-industrial-relations/>
- UN Global Compact
 - ♦ UN Global Compact Human Rights Dilemmas forum (includes information on risks to business, case studies, specific 'dilemma' situations and suggestions for responsible business action)
<https://hrbdf.org/dilemmas/freedom-of-association>
- International Labour Organisation:
 - ♦ ILO Helpdesk – Q&As on Freedom of Association: <https://tinyurl.com/ycxqr248>
 - ♦ ILO Helpdesk – Q&As on Collective Bargaining: <https://tinyurl.com/y9pyuvon>
- Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI):
 - ♦ Freedom of Association Briefing: <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/resources/freedom-association-briefing>

TACKLING TOUGH SITUATIONS

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE



You have discovered that it is common practice in your business for potential employees to be asked during the recruitment process about whether they support a union or whether they have engaged in union activities.



PAUSE



THINK



WHAT NEXT

Including this question in the interview process is an open door to discrimination against people who are involved in union activities, so it shouldn't be included in the interview process.

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE



It's come to your attention that certain managers have been subtly checking up on union activities. For example, standing outside a union meeting and keeping notes on who enters.



PAUSE



THINK



WHAT NEXT

Union activities need to be able to function without management intimidation or interference.

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE



As you review working hours records you start to notice a trend. It seems that union supporters are often assigned to the less desirable shifts.



PAUSE



THINK



WHAT NEXT

This means employees are being denied equal treatment based on their support of a labour union. Shifts need to be allocated based on a fair system that is not to do with gender, race, union involvement or any other factor.



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