

# LABOR RELATIONS SPECTRUM

ADVERSARIAL ORIENTATION

COLLABORATIVE ORIENTATION

## COMBATIVE LABOR RELATIONS

This approach to labor relations is characterized by the singular intent of both management and the union(s) to defeat each other. The day-to-day relationship of the two parties is antagonistic and potentially permanently destructive. Union and Management maintain separate formal structures where their internally directed messages of “rally the troops” and “defeat the enemy” drive a destructive downward spiral affecting the organization’s performance, employee and union member attitudes, customer satisfaction, and, in public companies, shareholder confidence. Decision making is autocratic, reactive, and unilateral; ignoring or working against the interests of the other party. Virtually no information is shared between organizations. Disagreements are managed litigiously and publicly.

## COOPERATIVE EXPLORATION

Management and the union(s) acknowledge their interdependence and agree to explore alternative approaches. Usually, some external threat has forced the parties to conclude their fates are linked and that they need to change their relationship. Union and management leaders are organized to explore more collaborative approaches through site visits, dialog and sponsoring temporary teams to address critical issues. There is a new openness to sharing information and ideas. Some decisions are by mutual agreement. There is exploration of consensus-based decision making on jointly agreed upon issues. Union and management draft a charter in preparation for collaboration.

## APPLICATION / EXPANSION

Union and management jointly identify mutually beneficial opportunities and champion operational application in specific areas. Both parties are openly engaged and working together on operational issues. Leaders collaborate on the formation, preparation, and development of joint support structures and mid level structures. Jointly identified areas are restructured to improve operational performance. Business understanding and operational data is shared and used to jointly improve performance. There is increased pre-decisional involvement in making operational improvements and decisions affecting the union. Leaders increase their exploration of interest based negotiating. The engagement environment influences the CBA track in a positive manner.

## INTEGRATED LABOR RELATIONS

Union and management collaboration has broadened to include strategic issues. There is deliberate harmonizing of the 2 tracks – contractual and collaborative. The relationship is mutually trusting. Union and management agree withdrawal is not an option. Joint redesign of critical support systems enables the collaborative, interest based approach. There is real time dialogue between strategic partners as union and management strive to make joint decision making the norm. Wherever possible Interest Based Bargaining or hybrids are utilized.

## TRADITIONAL

FIRST ABYSS

## OPERATIONAL

SECOND ABYSS

## STRATEGIC

## TRADITIONAL LABOR RELATIONS

Union and management are intent on protecting their interests. Their relationship is formal, cautious, and unilaterally strategic. Any capacity to cooperate is personality based. Union and management interactions and information sharing are confined to the contract and contractual issues. Decision making is limited to higher levels of the union/management relationship and runs between “win-lose” and compromising styles. Formal teams address safety, benefits, EAP. Issues between parties are addressed legalistically, rule-bound, and formally.

## DEVELOPMENT / EXPERIMENTATION

Union and management leaders work on developing methods and structures to improve organization performance and Employee/Member engagement. The labor relationship is open, hopeful, and cautiously optimistic. Management and union form joint leadership teams to promote collaboration by jointly shaping the engagement strategy and structure. Temporary joint teams address operational issues. Management and union leaders are sharing and discussing financial, operational data. They are building capability to improve communication of information at all levels.

## SYSTEM WIDE U/M ENGAGEMENT

Jointly sponsored change efforts are expanded to include the entire organization. There is a new tension – recognition of the points of misalignment between the two tracks. Management and union acknowledge and appreciate their counterparts’ priorities. Work across the entire organization is **jointly** restructured to improve engagement, collaboration, and performance. Line of Sight metrics are applied system wide to drive performance improvements. Decision making is relocated closer to the work. Most problems are solved before they become grievances. Union and management examine and experiment with interest based bargaining including hybrid versions.

## NON TRADITIONAL LABOR RELATIONS

Within legal limits, management and union are jointly managing all aspects of the organization. The labor relationship becomes a competitive advantage. Regular structures exist to assure ongoing dialog about commitment to success of both company and union. Everyone has easy access to the information they need to run their portion of the business. Joint business decisions are the norm. The parties have built broad amendable contracts based on guiding principles.