

Implementing Contract Language

Joint Commitment through Boundaries & Guidelines

The need. A 2006 study by Michael Schuster at the Syracuse University revealed the top 4 reasons why union-management partnerships continue to fail implementing successful change:



1. Conflicting legal interests of both parties.
2. Joint decisions are forced into local plants.
3. Nobody taking responsibility.
4. Internal union politics.

And yet, unions and management continue to see below average results out of the package they negotiated.

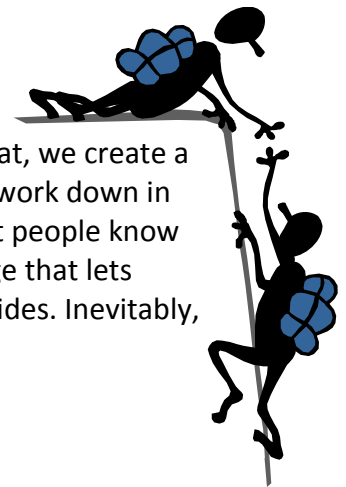
What typically results is a group of employees discovering loopholes in the vague, legalistic contract language. Some start behaving in ways that the union and management do not like. The joint leadership team then decides to create new rules. The employees cry foul and say that the joint leaders are just making up self serving rules as they go. The employees ultimately reject the change because of their disillusionment.

Labor relations departments, because of fractured relationships with their union counterparts, retreated into a policing mentality.

Something *different* needs to happen. Labor relations personnel need to transition their role from *policeman* to *helping hand*. Of course, their union counterparts need to give the same level of support and respect right back at them. This is what the Boundaries & Guidelines Process does for organizations. It is the missing ingredient in the labor management results recipe.

What is the Boundaries & Guidelines Process?

Contract language is legally binding. It's mission is to protect, not to enable. Given that, we create a binding (but not legal) agreement about exactly how to make the contract language work down in the trenches. The document includes almost every possible loophole or problem that people know will happen with almost any change. A joint leadership group then agrees on language that lets supervisors and committeeperson alike to work out problems in a fair way for both sides. Inevitably, unforeseeable problems still come up and there is an escalation process.



How does it work?

Rather than force feeding an Encyclopedia sized training manual to employees, our Implementation starts with employees reading and discussing the Boundaries & Guidelines. There is a base document, but each local can put in their own language, addressing their unique circumstances. We write it with insider only terms so employees know it applies to their real work. We have seen leaders try (and fail) to implement this by themselves. Leaders need experienced third party facilitation.

Who are Fenwick Koller Associates?

Rick Fenwick (rick@fenwickkoller.com), PhD, pioneered this approach over the last 10 years. He built the approach on his 30 years of experience as a represented worker and UAW member. Ron Koller (ron@fenwickkoller.com) has worked with Chrysler for 10 years and trained over 4,000 executives/employees.

