

Labor Management Committees

A Labor/Management Committee (LMC) is a committee composed of management and workers from a company that is either closing permanently, or is about to lay off a substantial number of workers.

The true value of the committee lies in its composition. Because the membership of the LMC is derived from the workplace, members are familiar with the workers and are in the best position to market their talents effectively. A LMC addresses the needs of dislocated workers at the most critical time—before the layoff or closure. In general, LMC have a higher placement rate for their employees. Other benefits include reducing administrative burdens, maintaining productivity and preserving corporate and union images.

The structure of a Labor/Management Committee is composed of:

- Equal number of management and labor representative (size is determined by the members)
- Committee members selected by the union in a unionized company
- Committee members selected by the workers in a non-union company—and may be selected by the company
- Neutral Chairperson

The neutral chairperson is selected by the committee and is someone with no previous financial or business relationship with the company or workers. Ideally the chairperson is someone perceived as neither pro-management nor pro-labor. The neutral chair should have knowledge of organizational, interpersonal, and facilitating skills, local employers and labor markets, employer-employee relations, collective bargaining, organized labor structure, educational system of the community and collective bargaining agreements, fringe packages, seniority, recall, etc.

Neutral chair should have the ability to:

- Make consensus decisions
- Draw everyone of the LMC members into committee discussions and deliberations
- Lead the committee to group decision making
- Provide leadership and direction
- Assist other people
- Have experience serving other people
- Have an understanding of dislocated worker needs, interests
- Have time, energy and talent to lead the LMC
- Have an understanding of the business community's job and be acquainted with labor market information
- Be respected by community leaders

Neutral chair's duties include:

- Chair the LMC
- Conduct the LMC meetings
- Serve as chief spokesperson
- Conduct the business of the LMC
- Call meetings as needed
- Set committee meeting agendas in consultation with the committee members
- Organize the meeting agenda in response to the level of job readjustment activity taking place
- Coordinate committee activities with Department of Labor and Workforce Development Program staff
- Prepares committee meeting agenda, minutes & program schedules
- Assigns tasks
- Provides required reports for the committee, and State & Federal Government

Some of the qualities and characteristics of workers serving on the committee should include a genuine interest in the welfare of their fellow-workers. Are leaders within the organization and familiar with the way in which the organization functions (how to get things done). They are knowledgeable about the skills and capabilities of the workers and are committed to the success of the overall adjustment effort.

The principle responsibilities of the committee are to develop employment and training opportunities for the workers. Maintain contact with the workforce, serve as an information link or conduit through which all affected workers are kept apprised of employment and training activities and serve a support function such as finding help for personal problems.

The principle duties include expediting basic worker readjustment services such as speed outplacement, reduce time lost from work, minimize income loss and reduce length of time that workers need to receive unemployment benefits.

Other duties include:

1. Organize the workers outplacement activities.
2. Promote a healthy employee-employer environment.
3. Help maintain productivity.
4. Serve as a communication forum.
5. Coordinate service delivery to displaced workers.
6. Personalize dislocated worker services.

7. Provide the dislocated workers and or the workers representative an opportunity to design the appropriate services.
8. Provide a forum for labor/management to discuss and develop outplacement strategies and reach consensus on the best approaches.
9. Provide a cooperative effort to address the effects of dislocation in a positive and responsible manner.

The bottom line is that the committees must be perceived to be representative and fair in order to be effective.

Other Labor Management Committee resources include the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service. <http://www.fmcs.gov/internet>