
CWA Issue Brief

Stress Relief Committees

CWA Goals

Labor-management committees can be an effective mechanism to address stressful working conditions for customer service employees. CWA has been at the forefront in negotiating joint labor-management initiatives designed to improve the quality of life at work. CWA has negotiated labor-management “Stress Relief” committees with specific mandates to propose solutions to alleviate conditions that cause stress, reduce absenteeism and turnover, reward sales effort in a fair manner, improve customer service, and generate revenue. These committees have addressed sales quotas, adherence, monitoring, work/family balance, flexible scheduling, guaranteed offline (“closed key”) time, job redesign, training, absenteeism, and other issues. Committee recommendations are reviewed by the appropriate union and management representatives before final approval for implementation. The solutions may be incorporated into contractual agreements.

Stress relief committees are most effective when the mission, structure, leadership, and process are clearly defined. CWA has adopted principles to ensure that labor-management committees operate in a manner that extends rather than circumvents the existing union-management relationship and collective bargaining process. These principles include:

- There is a genuine partnership. The union and company are committed to their mutual success, and agree to consider the values of all stakeholders (customers, owners, and employees) in making decisions.
- The union shall select worker representatives, with equal representation of union and management
- The employer shall pay for time and expenses related to committee work
- The labor-management committee shall not adopt or implement policies that circumvent the collective bargaining process.

CWA Negotiated Stress Relief Labor-Management Committees

AT&T Midwest

The Customer Service Response Team is a committee comprised of equal number of members representing the union and the company. The committee shall discuss matters related to scheduling, adherence, stress, monitoring, sales, among other issues. The committee shall meet quarterly.

AT&T Mobility (Districts 1, 2-13, 4, 7, 9)

The 2013 agreement established a joint committee “to discuss enhancing all aspects of job satisfaction.” The committee shall consist of ten members (five management and five union) to discuss strategies to improve job satisfaction. Employee representatives shall be paid for time and expenses incurred for committee work. The Committee shall provide joint recommendations to the company and union in an executive report within six months after it is formed.

AT&T Southwest

The Service Representative Review Committee includes three service representatives, a local union officer, two managers, and the VP of Sales Channel to discuss methods to improve sales and reduce employee stress and turnover. In the past, the Service Representative Review Committee's recommendations regarding average handling time measures, closed key time guarantees, sales quotas, emergency time off, adherence, and other issues were tested in a series of pilots and then incorporated into negotiated agreements.

AT&T West

The Quality Work Life Committee includes three members designated by management and three members designated by the union. The committee discusses issues regarding scheduling, adherence/productivity, overtime and work processes to formulate policies to be considered by the union and management.

Verizon California

A joint committee operates to "explore ways to ensure that employees can balance their work and family obligations while maximizing their contribution toward achieving key departmental service and sales goals."

FairPoint

A Joint Quality Steering Committee, composed of representatives from the union and the Company (with membership jointly agreed by the Company and the Union), operates with the objectives to encourage greater employee participation in the conditions of the working environment so that jobs are made more satisfying; to encourage, through employee involvement, development of a corporate culture of quality - doing things correctly the first time - to ensure superior quality service to meet competition and provide opportunities for business growth; encourage the initiation, growth and perpetuation of cooperative activities and to sponsor the continuing exchange of useful information between the parties; recommend long-range plans and strategy for Quality of Work Life and Quality Work approaches and their integration into the policies, methods and practices of existing and new organizations; and encourage all levels of Union and Company organizations to recognize that their involvement is absolutely vital and necessary for the success of these joint efforts.

Pawtucket Times

A joint committee composed of representatives of the publisher and the union develops health and welfare programs, including, but not limited to, stress management. The committee develops and schedules programs, paid for by the publisher and on the premises of *The Times*.