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*The influence of
cooperative labour-
management relations on
union leader roles*

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- **Labour-management partnerships**
- **Previous investigations**
- **Evolving roles**
- **Research objectives**
- **Methodology**
- **Overview of partnership experiences**
- **Results**
- **Conflict prevention strategies**
- **Conditions for success**
- **References**

LABOUR-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

- **Labour-management partnerships are defined as temporary social arrangements that involve several actors working together to achieve a common goal that requires sharing resources, ideas and social relations (Easton, 1992).**
- **Labour-management partnerships are defined as all cooperation or collaboration activities or processes between parties intended to ensure organizational success and secure stable quality employment (Roy, Harrisson et Haines, 2004).**
- **Quebec unions who generally support the adoption of Labour-management partnerships view them in the context of the democratisation of work (CSN, 1995), (FTQ, 1997), (CSD, 1997).**
- **The transition to more harmonious labour relations requires changes in the way work is organize.**
- **While labour relations and the organization of work are separate social interaction systems, they are connected.**

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

- **Rational for strategic partnerships (Applebaum and Hunter, 2003)**
- **Prevalence of labour-management partnerships (Gray, Myers and Myers, 1999)**
- **Mutual gains, extent of implementation of partnerships (Roche, 2000)**
- **Key conditions for successful labour-management partnerships (Chartrand and Ward, 2000)**
- **Trust as a critical condition to cooperation in labour-management partnerships (Harrisson, 2003)**
- **Different configurations of labour-management partnerships**
- **Labour-management partnerships and new work arrangements (flexibility, adaptability, social innovations)**
- **How Labour-management partnerships impact labour relations, job security, organizational performance**

EVOLVING ROLES

- **Few studies investigate the roles of union and management representatives in Labour-management partnerships**

- **Our hypotheses hold that labour-management partnerships foster**
 - **Role transformations**
 - **Challenges in adapting to those new roles**
 - **Role conflicts for union representatives**
 - **A lack of preparation of union and management representative (both old and new)**

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- **Describe new roles**
- **Better understand the challenges involved in adapting to those new roles**
- **Identify effective strategies to address the challenges involved in adapting to those new roles**

METHODOLOGY

- Exploratory interviews in two organizations (union & management)
- Workshop (8 organizations)
 - 8 union representatives
 - 8 employer representatives
- Two case studies
 - Convenience sample of respondents
 - Union and employer representatives
 - Individual face to face interviews with more than 20 respondents from each organization
 - Validation
- Additional interviews in three other organizations
- Meetings with the Quebec Ministry of Labour

OVERVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP EXPERIENCES

- **Critical preconditions that typically activate the need for partnership:**
 - ❑ **Shared realization that current labour relations are conflictual and dissatisfying**
 - ❑ **Economic challenge that threaten the organizations survival (current or projected crisis)**

- **Purposes**
 - ❑ **Involve employees and develop flexibility**
 - ❑ **Make work more interesting**
 - ❑ **Develop skills and knowledge**
 - ❑ **Adapt to new production processes (automation)**
 - ❑ **Increase productivity**
 - ❑ **Ensure stable quality employment**
 - ❑ **Improve labour relations and work climate**

RESULTS

Somewhat unexpected findings with regards to roles

- 1. No obvious role transformation
(everyone needs to know that the institutional role is unchanged)**
- 2. However, role is addressed differently
(union representative have more power and influence)**
- 3. Different types of relationships
(more personal, informal, based on trust as opposed to institutional,
formal and based on structure)**

FURTHER RESULTS

Challenges involved in adapting to a new relationship

- **Personal change**
 - Values, beliefs, principles, attitudes
 - Try to be more open, honest, and committed to the extent of putting job on the line

- **Adapt to new relationships based upon trust towards the other person and learn to address concerns and listen**

- **Integrate a different problem-solving approach**
 - From a philosophy of confrontation to one of collaboration**
 - Find solutions rather than objections**
 - Adopt the other person's view**
 - Integrate different perspectives into solutions**
 - Be objective, impartial and rigorous (facts)**

FUTHER RESULTS (continued)

Challenges involved in adapting to a new relationship (continued)

- **Accept the scope of role
Influence and not co-management**
- **Potential for tensions between union representatives and union members
Union representative perceived as being too close to management and
therefore “who is protecting our interests”?**
- **Efforts involved in maintaining member commitment and support for the
labour-management partnership**
- **The ability to control those who oppose the labour-management
partnership (the resisters)**
- **Implement practices that foster interaction and conflict resolution rather
than reliance on grievances and disciplinary procedures**

FUTHER RESULTS (continued)

Examples of such practices:

- ❑ **Harmonisation committees**
- ❑ **Upper management involvement in unresolved cases and continuously address dissatisfactions and problems**
- ❑ **Joint union-management problem-solving training**
- ❑ **Joint union-management meetings to inform employees of important changes and to ensure clear communication (no ambiguities)...**

CONFLICT PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- **Share information and make sure it is communicated to the union**
- **Do not lose sight of each party's interests and make frequent reference to shared interests**
- **Adopt a common framework relative to roles and responsibilities**
- **Demonstrate respect towards the union leadership and do not challenge its credibility**
- **Work to improve relationships between line managers and union representatives**

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

- **Strong mutual commitment from both management and union**
- **Strong leadership from representatives from both management and union**
- **Shared values that involve respect, openness, and honesty**
- **High trust based upon quality interpersonal relationships**
- **Quality of communications**
- **Respect of collective agreement**
- **All line managers and union representatives highly involved and committed to the partnership**
- **Willingness to agree and freedom to pull out (rather than co-management)**

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