



Cornell University
ILR School

Cornell ILR Labor-Management Relations Services

CONTRACT NEGOTIATION

Interest-based Negotiation for Contract Bargaining

Contract negotiations were coming up for a manufacturing plant and its union. The parties had used interest-based negotiations successfully for the last round of talks. We designed and delivered a one-day refresher workshop. In addition to the bargaining committee, union and management invited engineers, production managers, general supervisors and stewards who were not on the bargaining committee so that they could better understand what happens at the negotiation table.

Facilitation for Interest-based Contract Negotiations

A large university and its union wanted a better approach to bargaining. Previous bargaining had been highly adversarial, resulting in impasse, a prolonged period of working without a contract and a time consuming fact-finding and arbitration process. Union management relations were tense, but both sides agreed they wanted to find a way to reach contract agreement without resorting to external involvement. We trained both bargaining committees in interest-based bargaining and facilitated the negotiation process to a successful conclusion that included innovative language and an ongoing labor-management committee. The parties were able to use the negotiation process to build a new basis for improved working relationships.

Single Issue Facilitation

As a preparation for bargaining, we provided a series of trainings in interest-based negotiations. The parties chose an issue that was particularly difficult and asked for our help in working their way through it.

Contract Negotiations

- Training in negotiation techniques and processes
- Technical assistance to design negotiation processes
- Facilitation of negotiations or issues

Contract Administration

- Training in an interest-based approach to grievance resolution
- Technical assistance to improve grievance processes
- Facilitation of grievance resolution
- Day-to-day problem-solving and conflict skills

Labor-Management Relationship Building

- L-M Relationship building workshops
- Start-up of L-M committees and partnerships
- Collaborative planning and goal-setting
- Technical assistance and training for L-M problem-solving and work design

Contract Administration

Interest-based Shop Floor Conflict Resolution

A successful labor management partnership wanted to improve conflict resolution on the shop floor and solve problems before they grew into labor relations issues. The leadership team at the negotiating level was already successfully using an interest-based approach in the joint partnership process. We trained union stewards and supervisors in interest-based conflict resolution. To help this approach become part of “the way we do things” on the shop floor, we developed and delivered a shortened two-hour version for the entire workforce.

Using IBB for Safety and Health

The joint labor-management safety and health committee wanted a better way to negotiate safety and health issues. We designed a customized workshop to illustrate the application of interest-based problem solving for safety and health grievances.

Building Skills for Day-to-Day Interactions

Union members in the public sector often have responsibility for supervising other union members and were looking for skills to help them be effective in their dual roles as leaders and supervisors. We provided numerous trainings for them in leadership, personal mediation skills, interpersonal and group conflict management, and facilitation. In a similar vein, we helped managers and frontline supervisors at a telecommunications company improve their skills in interpersonal and group conflict management, with the aim of improving effective communication, conflict management, and problem solving with union and non-union employees.

Training in effective grievance resolution

For a large utility, we designed a customized training curriculum and a train-the-trainer program on interest-based techniques for grievance resolution. Union stewards and front-line supervisors throughout the organization were trained by internal labor and management leaders to use interest-based problem-solving skills to address complaints at the 1st step of the grievance process.

Labor-Management Relationship Building

Building a Base for Better Bargaining

A school district and teachers union in New York State asked for our help to break out of a worsening labor-management situation. We are providing a combination of interest-based negotiations skills training and problem solving training to attempt to turn around the long-standing negative and damaging relationship that threatens both organizations. if it continues.

Implementing Labor-Management Partnerships

A national contractual partnership agreement between a major corporation and its international union provided the basis for local labor-management groups to work together. We provided relationship-building seminars in numerous sites across one division to help plant management and local union leaders create a vision and goals for their partnerships. In many locations, we worked extensively with the parties to create collaborative processes to achieve their goals.

Union-Management Partnership Building

The regional union-management partnership council of a large health care network met regularly, but interactions were strained and there seemed to be no clear direction or purpose. We consulted with the parties to design a two-day off site and facilitated the meeting that brought all unions and local administrations together to explore relationship issues, exchange needs, and reach shared understanding on purpose and direction for the future.

Collaborative Work Redesign

A Fortune 500 company and its local union had engaged in a 6 month participative redesign process that generated various redesign recommendations. The negotiating committee needed a way to negotiate a contract that would codify the designs as well as maintain fairness and equity across the contract. They asked specifically for interest bargaining. Because of our experience labor-management organizational change consulting, we were asked to facilitate the contract talks and implementation. Five years later they continue to use an IBB approach as they modify designs, resolve conflicts, and deal with day-to-day operations.

Public Sector Partnership Building and Work Redesign

We provide ongoing assistance to cities and human service agencies across the country to build creative labor-management partnerships, designed to enhance services to the public while reducing costs and improving the quality of work life for employees and managers. Some major US cities have seen dramatic improvements in service delivery as a result of redesigning work and committing to working in partnership.



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For more information, contact:

Sally Klingel E-mail: slk12@cornell.edu
Tel: 607/255-7022