

## CAN JOINT TRAINING INCREASE UNION KNOWLEDGE AND POWER?

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### INTRODUCTION

Globalization has presented many challenges to unions, but, as Levesque and Murrary note (2002), evidence that globalization weakens unions is not conclusive. Rather, they argue that the effects of globalization on unions depend on the ability of unions to mobilize their power. For many workers, the first goal is economic survival: retaining a (decent) job in a climate of plant closures, outsourcing, and offshore relocation. Some companies have only reluctantly sought worker and union support, and others have discovered that it makes good business sense to tap into the knowledge of the people doing the job. In either case, unions and their members are encouraged to identify with the company's goals and productivity needs, and to enter into "competitive alliances" with management against other plants, including plants of the same company represented by locals of the same union. Globalization may place "winning hearts and minds on the table," but workers' interests for company survival spring from a more basic need for employment. In rare instances, workers and unions are actively engaged in both enhancing firm performance and improving their own working conditions.

While a joint union-management relationship may appear to be symbiotic - productivity gains secure continuing employment and, potentially (though rarely), higher wages -- union identity often diminishes as the company's needs and goals are internalized by workers. As Levesque and Murray (2002) note, unions "have been invited to internalize a new set of competitive norms" in the global economy. But, for many unions, this "invitation" carries a hefty price: the compromise of union autonomy and strength as the benefits of increased productivity accrue only to the company while workers see wage stagnation and job loss.

While the employer benefits from the knowledge and commitment of employees to achieve productivity gains, the union faces the dilemma of partnership:

Is the union likely to secure increased employment security and an increased level of worker participation in and satisfaction with jobs, or is it aligning with many manifest negative effects of the drive to greater productivity? (Levesque and Murray, 2002)

Research conducted by the School for Workers (Mericle, et. al., 2001) indicates that many joint employee-management partnerships do, indeed, go sour for the union. While workplace changes require employee cooperation and union consent, in many instances, the union feels that the company extracts this cooperation and consent, often with the threat of plant closing. Often, the workers receive nothing in exchange and are expected to be grateful simply to have a job. Or, once management has secured the changes it desired, it no longer has an interest in working with the union.

The union walks a fine line in cooperative ventures. Levesque and Murray (2002) also note that both approval and opposition of the union to management initiatives can weaken membership support. Approval of management initiatives can be seen as "mature" labor relations and necessary to save jobs, or it can be seen as a sellout. Opposition can be seen as a principled union stance or as obstructionist, even contributing to the loss of jobs and plant closures.

A proactive stance on the part of the union, by contrast, can serve the firm's needs while simultaneously enhancing members' identification with the union. However, it is important that unions retain - and members perceive -- a proactive approach. One of the prime reasons that joint union-management relationships disintegrate is that union members perceive that the union leadership is too cozy with management and not looking out for members' interests (Mericle, et. al., 2001).

The dilemma of partnership embodies the essence of the challenge of globalization for unions. If they do not cooperate, there is a threat of plant closings, shown to be a very real threat. On the other hand, if they engage in joint activity, there is the danger of co-optation, both real and imagined. It is not necessary for the union to be co-opted by management, only that union members perceive that it has been, for the union to be weakened or starkly divided.

Several researchers have identified factors that contribute to successful - and sustainable - labor-management ventures. Levesque and Murray (2002) argue that the union agenda is key in building union power, and that internal democracy is a necessary condition for such a proactive response. Haddad (2004), in a study of labor's participation in plant modernization in small- and medium-sized firms, found that union proactivity could not sustain joint projects in plants with poor labor relations or financial instability. She found that an active, representative joint committee with mutually agreed-upon goals,

management and union commitment, and a track record of effectiveness were necessary correlates of successful joint projects.

Frost (2001) also proposes that unions take a proactive stance in dealing with workplace restructuring. She identifies four capabilities necessary for unions to deal with management and represent members' interests: accessing information, educating and mobilizing members, balancing cooperation and conflict, and accessing management decision-making at multiple points.

The challenge to unions, then, is to embark on union-management cooperative ventures with an independent agenda, grounded in the needs of its members. The balance between cooperation and conflict, always an issue for unions, remains problematic. An appropriate balance between cooperation and conflict not only must be found, but also must be communicated to an informed and involved membership. Furthermore, union involvement must be integral, and not merely tangential, in the operation of the firm. Obviously, for both the union and management, the firm must be financially stable and labor relations good if labor-management cooperation is to be sustainable.

The literature suggests that "pre-work" in structuring and setting up a joint union-management committee may be a pre-condition for success. In particular, the committee must establish equality, share information, identify mutually beneficial goals, demonstrate that it is listening to employees, and deliver on a plan of action to demonstrate its effectiveness in order to implement and sustain successful joint union-management projects.

For unions, taking part in joint ventures may no longer be optional: survival and growth of companies depends on worker input. However, union survival also depends on unions adequately representing workers' interests, even when that places them in conflict with management. How unions juggle these demands may well be critical to their survival: globalization has raised the stakes for unions in getting the balance between cooperation and conflict just right.

This paper examines a case of plant-wide, inclusive training agreed to by a joint labor-management steering committee. Benefits of the training accrued to the union and employees because of the history of the steering committee in guiding the development of the training and because the design and delivery of the training carried the elements identified in the literature for successful joint processes.

## **THE CASE BACKGROUND**

### **THE INDUSTRY**

The U.S. paper industry is a mature, well-established and stable industry. However, between 1980 and 1993, seventeen of the top 51 pulp and paper

companies – fully one third of U.S. companies -- were merged or acquired (Slinn, 1993). This trend has continued and in recent years companies are finding changes in ownership to be a way of life. Technology has also had a major impact within the paper industry. The capital intensity of the industry requires that mills function at relatively high operating rates, running 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Computer process control has affected both labor requirements and skill needs. In the last two decades, while the number of pulp, paper and paperboard mills decreased by 21 per cent, material throughput increased by 51 per cent, and the average output per establishment increased by 90 per cent (Smith, 1997). Employment in primary sector paper industries has fallen consistently since 1973 (BLS, 1994). Changes in technology, domestic and foreign competition, pressure from the financial community for improved rates of return on large amounts of invested capital, and mergers and acquisitions have strained industrial relations. The paper industry by the turn of the century had moved from relatively peaceful industrial relations to a climate of increasing tension and uncertainty.

The paper industry in North America is suffering from serious over-capacity and escalating costs. Since 1998, “North American producers shut 5.8 million tons of capacity”. Mills in the northern U.S., especially, have a large number of older, inefficient mills and have only begun to address problems of over-capacity (Barynin, 2004). In addition, the costs of pulp, recovered paper, and energy soared in 2004 while product prices were held down by aggressive competition (Battista, 2004).

## THE COMPANY

The paper mill described in this paper is a tissue mill which has experienced many of the industry-wide phenomena noted above. The mill, a Midwestern U.S. plant, had undergone two changes in ownership in five years, first a merger followed by a buy-out in 2001. As with much of the North American industry, the mill introduced technological changes similar to those industry-wide while continuing to operate old equipment. The most recent owner undertook a number of steps to regionalize production, including closing some mills, shifting capacity, and building a new mill. The effects of these changes, combined with rising costs and stagnant markets, were beginning to be felt at the start of the 2004 training.

Employment at the mill has been fairly stable for several years with approximately 300 employees. Union membership is also stable at around 85 per cent with the remaining employees being salaried (either excluded or managerial staff). Approximately 10 per cent of the workforce is female. The union-management relationship is mature and the joint union-management committee has existed for many years.

## **PREVIOUS TRAINING**

The collective agreement at this mill specifies that several hours of training per year will be provided in non-job-specific areas. Beginning in 1999, the School for Workers conducted one or two days of experiential training per year in topics such as communication skills, problem-solving, conflict management, and managing change and stress. The effectiveness of the training in conflict management has been described elsewhere (Olson, et. al. 2002). Briefly, questionnaire results measured statistically significant improvements on seven of eleven items measuring employee perceptions of conflict at the mill, findings which were robust given workplace events, and which held and even improved slightly over additional years of observation.

All of the training was deliberated over, chosen, and championed by the joint Union-Management Steering Committee. In 2003, the training became more job-specific, featuring training in organizational communication, a presentation by the Plant Manager on the state of the industry and the company, and an afternoon of focus groups centered on communication within the mill. Forty-five focus groups were needed to ensure that all Plant employees had an opportunity to participate in a small group.

The focus groups in the 2003 training were asked specific questions about mill communication and how it could be improved. School for Workers faculty analyzed over 300 pages of data from the focus groups and, drawing on these data and research results from studies of work communication, recommended training which featured an information exchange across all functional areas of the mill for 2004, to be entitled "Total Mill Process".

## **TOTAL MILL PROCESS TRAINING**

### **TRAINING DESIGN AND PREPARATION**

Previous plant-wide training and discussions with the joint Union-Management Steering Committee revealed that many employees did not have a thorough understanding of the entire production process. The Steering Committee and the School for Workers faculty saw this as an impediment to efficient production because work processes are inter-related. The focus groups had identified tensions between departments and between shifts which suggested that a lack of a thorough understanding of the production process can also contribute to reduced solidarity and employee dissatisfaction. Not understanding others' jobs contributes to communication problems and frustration: if one worker does not know how his (her) decisions and his (her) work affect another area, s/he is less likely to pass on information. Workers and supervisors who are unaware of the information needs of others may be unable

(or unwilling) to pass along information because they do not realize its importance. Failure to understand the total process also leads to a decreased sense of ownership and belonging for employees, resulting in reduced commitment. The company loses the ability to utilize fully the knowledge base of first line employees to discover creative solutions to problems, workers' pride and satisfaction in their jobs are diminished, and tensions between workers, between workers and supervisors, and between managers are unresolved.

The School for Workers was hired to provide training on an annual basis. Based on the focus group results and discussions with the Steering Committee, in 2004, the School proposed an inter-active day of joint, plant-wide, union-management training designed to reduce communication barriers in the mill and promote understanding of the total manufacturing process across all positions and among all employees. The goal of the training was to increase each person's understanding of the total work flow, their contribution to the whole process, and the inter-relatedness of everyone and all jobs at the mill. The training was thus designed and undertaken in response to challenges facing the industry and the company, and was informed by comments solicited from employees in the plant-wide focus groups conducted in 2003. As with past training, the School for Workers functioned as trainer, participant-observer, and analyst of the effectiveness of the training, based on several methods of evaluation.

Also consistent with past training, the joint Labor-Management Steering Committee was thoroughly involved with the design of the training. Both the union and the company could foresee benefits to plant-wide training in the total mill process, and all members of the Steering Committee contributed to the program content.

Scheduling the training so that representatives from each function across shifts and departments, considering days off, absences, and production needs was difficult. In some instances, certain functions are performed by very few people, for example, boiler operators, waste water treatment plant operators, and some office and support functions. The Committee decided to make sure that some representatives of these functions attended the first training session so that their information could be captured by the School for Workers faculty and shared in groups where they were not represented.

The major component of the training featured workers describing their jobs to each other. Mill workers are not generally known for verbosity, but the stable nature of employment at the mill meant that nearly all of the employees were familiar with experiential training previously used by the School for Workers. Cryptic responses such as, "I make pulp," or "I make paper," were anticipated. Three strategies were employed to elicit "appropriate" responses; that is, sufficiently descriptive to be informative, but not so lengthy as to be tedious or too time-consuming. Initially, small groups, organized by function prepared answers to written questions which could then be used to guide their

responses, so that individuals would not feel they were being put on the spot. The instructors also had additional, prompting questions to help respondents tell their full story. And the Company developed large “story-boards” to provide visual aids to assist in describing the mill process.

## **THE PILOT PROJECT**

In December of 2003, the training program was delivered as a pilot to a selected group of union and management participants specifically recruited to critique the program. The pilot was critical not only in refining the program but also in gaining union support beyond the Steering Committee members.

The pilot was critical to gauge the amount of time required for an exchange of a sufficient amount of information and to allow for testing and revision of prompting questions. In addition, the pilot served to test each component of the training day by presenting the program to a mixed union-management group for their critique.

The critics performed their function well. At the outset, one union member challenged the necessity for the entire program, stating that it was well known what work was performed in the mill. By the end of the day, however, he had become a major champion of the training because of the amount of new and valuable information which was exchanged. He and other participants enthusiastically provided numerous suggestions for improvement.

The Company had put considerable time and resources into developing large “story-boards” that provided a visual representation of the mill process. The pilot revealed, however, that, with a full day of training, the boards were not given much attention thus under-utilizing the information they provided. The Plant Manager suggested a contest and offered lottery tickets as prizes. The instructors devised three different 10-question quizzes, to which the answers were provided by information on the boards.

## **THE TRAINING**

The final format for the training had several components: introductions, a presentation from management, exchange of information on jobs and related frustrations, solicitation of suggestions for improvement, discussion of specific, problematic work events, and evaluations. Consistent with previous years, a union member of the Steering Committee introduced the training. Union members in the pilot session had raised the issue that some workers in the mill believe that “nothing ever changes.” In anticipation of this comment, the union representative read a list of accomplishments and projects underway in response to feedback from the focus group reports. There is no doubt that these interventions were beneficial in setting a positive tone for the training.

The School for Workers instructors gave an overview of the day, the goals of the training, and the role of the focus groups and of the Steering Committee in designing the training. The floor was then turned over to the Plant Manager for a presentation on the industry and the current state of the company, followed by a question and answer session. A similar presentation had been part of the 2003 training on organizational communication and had been well received; all 45 focus groups had indicated that they wanted regular updates. The Plant Manager's presentation was important for another reason: it demonstrated a strong commitment on the part of upper management to the training, and to listening and responding to employees' input. The major time commitment required to deliver the presentation fourteen times solidified for employees that upper management was serious about the training and prepared to commit considerable resources to ensure its success. The time and investment in the story boards also illustrated management's commitment to and investment in the process.

The union also took a very large role in the training. In addition to active participation in the development of the concept, the union has always had a representative present at every training day. Over the years, their function has grown. In addition to introducing the training, the union representatives, many of whom are extremely familiar with multiple jobs in the plant, stood in to speak for functions on those days when representatives of small departments were not present. These activities and interaction with participants throughout the day provided solid evidence of the union's active support for the training and reinforced the proactive role of the union in the training. The role of the union representatives also provided the union with the opportunity to speak to groups of workers and to be available, informally, throughout the training day and through lunches and breaks.

Participants were seated by function at tables arranged in circles according to the general flow of the operation. Functions, roughly in this order, were: office and support positions, waste paper receiving, pulping, cleaning, boiler, waste water treatment plant, maintenance, paper machines (wet end and dry end), and warehouse/shipping. To facilitate group processes and thoughtful dialogue, each group (and some individuals, if their functional area was small) was given worksheets with specific questions to discuss in their group. After this initial preparation time, each group (or individual) described their work and frustrations in their job to the rest of the group. The trainers drew out responses, working around the room according to the flow of the process, asking for descriptions from each table of their function, prompting for specifics and elaboration, and encouraging interaction among participants. Several tables also had physical props supplied by the plant which were useful in explaining various processes.

As noted earlier, the Plant Manager had suggested a lottery to encourage participants to study the detailed, prepared story boards, and this idea was implemented. Following one of the breaks, participants were given some time to study the boards and then returned to their tables where they received a questionnaire based on information on the boards. The “contest” was designed to reward both study of the story boards and collaboration in answering the questions. Answers were submitted and prizes awarded by table. Participants enjoyed the contest, despite the fact that winnings totaled \$12 for the entire program.

The entire training process was extremely well received. The previous years of training and familiarity with the trainers, and a conscious effort to put participants at ease helped establish an informal environment for information exchange. But, most importantly, the expertise of the participants enabled them to articulate a description of their jobs, and to identify their problems and frustrations. Participants listened respectfully and took part in dialogue between functional areas. Despite the fact that many employees have been at the plant for many years, not very many have performed multiple jobs in the plant, and the process was very informative.

While sharing of information was the main focus of the day, all groups were also asked to envision improvements that could be made. These discussions generated a long list of recommendations, ranging from small quick-fixes to long-range visionary recommendations for the plant and the company.

In some instances, the information exchange, delineation of frustrations, and recommendations for improvement lasted the entire day. Other groups had time to discuss one or more specific “work events” that had been identified as problematic in the focus groups. These work events were shift change, (paper) grade change, and shut downs. As the training progressed, it became apparent that most of the groups addressed these issues during the information exchange since they are among the major sources of frustration.

The School for Workers initiated two forms of evaluation at the end of the training day: formal, anonymous evaluation sheets, and comments solicited by the union representatives in the absence of the instructors. These comments were recorded by the union representative and later shared with the instructors. Both forms of evaluation were included in the report on the training given to the joint Steering Committee, and provided a significant amount of information detailed in this paper.

The instructors used a lap top computer and overhead projector to capture participants’ frustrations, suggestions for improvement, and general comments. These data were organized by function and topic and appended to a summary report presented to the joint Steering Committee. The summary report emphasized, in particular, “quick hits” for immediate results, and problem areas for research and resolution. As with similar projects involving first-line workers,

there were numerous far-reaching suggestions for improved quality, efficiency, and cost effectiveness. The full report of nearly 100 pages compiled findings by functional area, frustrations linked to major work events, all evaluation results, and recommendations. The report served to transmit the full text of participants' comments to the Steering Committee, or "the good, the bad, and the ugly" as one participant noted. This is an important point because one of the major benefits to the union was the integrity of the information transmitted from workers to management via the report.

## DISCUSSION

In a climate of globalization which has put the struggle for the hearts and minds of workers on the agenda, and decreased the need to obtain collaboration through negotiation (because of dramatically unequal bargaining power), unions need to leverage joint union-management ventures to benefit the union. This section will discuss the Total Mill Process training as an example of joint union-management training that has the potential to increase union knowledge and power. This case provides an example of the circumstances under which joint training can benefit the union. Recent literature on union power in a globalized economy suggests that this training model could be appropriate for other industries.

The training described in this paper is an example of a proactive union agenda. It is also clearly an example of workers being invited to internalize the company's needs and goals. More importantly, from the union's viewpoint, this training provided a channel to present workers' perspectives and needs to management, and to increase union solidarity through worker-to-worker dialogue.

Any training undertaken by the School for Workers is designed to benefit the union. The School believes that a strong union makes a strong company and the School's "tagline" is "education for a democratic workplace". The instructors communicated this position to the Steering Committee and to all classes before training began.

How can training in the total manufacturing process benefit the union? First, union jobs may well depend on survival of union companies and survival of companies depends on their ability to compete in global markets. Joint training may contribute to the survival of union companies. If employees understand the business and understand not only their own jobs but those of co-workers, they may be in a better position to contribute to the company in ways that improve that company's chances for survival. In this case, information also flowed from workers to management. If workers feel that they are an important and respected part of the company, they are more likely to be actively involved in ensuring its success. The training was designed from workers' concerns, and

the report produced clearly conveyed workers' concerns to management, strengthening workers' voice. The amount of information and the detail conveyed to management was more specific than information which is typically bargained, either at the table or in ongoing discussions.

Second, one of the biggest problems for unions is friction and animosity between members. Workers reported that the program served to increase their understanding of each others' jobs and to facilitate communication between departments and between workers. Understanding how their work is interdependent, and understanding how problems in one location in the production process flow through to other areas - and understanding the causes of the problems - promotes improved communication and reduces blaming. It is probable that this increased communication reduces friction, thereby contributing to increased solidarity. Indeed, at the end of the training day, many participants remarked on how much better they understood the challenges faced by their co-workers in other parts of the mill. As noted, workers perceived that conflict in the plant already had decreased after joint conflict management training as measured by longitudinal questionnaire data (Olson et. al., 2002). It might be assumed, therefore, that the Total Mill Process training would further reduce tensions between workers, especially since the training was designed to address sources of inter-departmental conflict identified in the focus groups.

Third, there is a sense of empowerment that grows as workers see just how important their own contribution is to overall production. As mass production reduced work to its simplest steps, workers experienced alienation from the production process. Work in the paper industry often entails responsibility for massive equipment, a staggering output, and relatively isolated, independent work. Training in the total production process has the potential to reduce worker frustration as workers better understand some of the decisions - made by co-workers, supervisors, and managers -- which have, hitherto, not made sense from a more limited perspective. On the other hand, decision-makers were made aware of the impact of their decisions and the need for greater consultation with others in the mill. Furthermore, this training, by participants' own assessments, allowed workers to feel that they were an important part in the overall process.

Fourth, union members benefit from any training, generally, in which communication and analytical skills are applied. For many manufacturing workers, there are few opportunities for continuing education that are compatible with shift work and life style, and fewer still that relate directly to their work. On the job training during work hours, at the company's expense, can benefit individual workers. Whether these benefits are realized by the union, collectively, remains an empirical question. However, at a minimum, even having all union members hear the same information from the company is valuable for the union, at least in terms of time required to explain the

company's position. From a common understanding of the company's position, it is also easier for union members to understand their union's strategy to deal with the company and to determine for themselves if the strategy is sound. Access to information from the company, therefore, has the potential for improving meaningful dialogue and strategic decision making within the union. Of course, without a proactive union and strong union identity, there is also the potential for workers simply to internalize the company's goals and perceptions.

Having union representatives present for an entire day's work, in their union role, also provides an opportunity for the union to strengthen its presence and increase connections between workers and union representatives. For the union, sadly, this degree of contact and involvement with all of its members is rarely achieved. Union meetings tend to be quite formal, are often poorly attended, and agenda items are limited. Outside of meetings, time constraints on union officials and members alike tend to limit the number of items discussed and the depth of understanding gained. The design of this particular training with the union representatives present all day provided an opportunity for union members to be together around a focused discussion relevant to all employees at the plant.

The Total Mill Process Training conforms to Haddad's criteria for successful joint labor-management ventures (2004). Although joint ventures have been the norm at the plant for several years, the relationship between the union and management is still fairly traditional. For example, Steering Committee members tend to sit with members of their "side" during meetings, bargaining is traditional, not consensus or interest-based bargaining, and strong union and management identities have been maintained. In keeping with Haddad's criteria, however, the union was involved in the training design from the earliest stage; and there was a strong, joint, representative Steering Committee with strong commitments on both sides to the training. Relevant information was shared, not just with Steering Committee members, but with all participants in every training session. The information exchanged included proprietary information dealing with the company finances and competitive strategies. The trainers, from the School for Workers, provided feedback from the training in the form of a comprehensive report to the Steering Committee, ensuring that contributions from the workers were captured and passed along. The goals of the training had been agreed upon, and the Steering Committee had a demonstrable track record of success. Furthermore, workers have been provided with evidence that the Steering Committee, in general, and management, in particular, is listening to -- and acting upon -- their concerns.

It is notable that the 2004 training was conducted while negotiations over the collective agreement were taking place. Despite rumours that the negotiations "were not going well", the union continued its support for the training and the rumours did not seem to compromise the participation during

the training days. In due course, a settlement was reached, although not easily; bargaining was characterized by both sides as far more protracted than in the past. However, given the challenges facing the paper industry at the time, this is not surprising. Indeed, by the end of 2004, plant closures, temporary shut-downs, and lay-offs were announced in the industry. As anticipated, over-capacity, market saturation, rising energy costs, and overseas competition for recovered paper forced this company and others to reduce production.

While there was surprisingly little spill-over of tensions from bargaining to the training, this is also somewhat troubling. Perhaps there is a disconnection in workers' minds between bargaining and the day-to-day operation of the plant, a possibility that raises the issue of whether workers perceive the union to be relevant in their day to day work.

Discussions at a December meeting of the School for Workers with the joint Union-Management Steering Committee (to plan the 2005 training) indicated that the union leadership understood clearly the economic climate and business needs of the company and were therefore grudgingly reconciled to the changes anticipated during bargaining and enacted several months later. However, Haddad's (2004) elements for continuing, successful joint partnership remain in place: an independent union agenda, good labor relations, an active joint committee with mutually agreed goals, union commitment, a good track record of success, and (good prospects for) financial stability. The tenor of the meeting also encompassed a joint union-management vision for continued joint effort and more efficient production, and determination to ensure the future of the plant and to improve the quality of work life. To these ends, the Steering Committee engaged in planning for more joint training for 2005, an indicator that the union continues to support the concept despite the economic belt-tightening experienced.

It is notable that the union has established connections with the union of the parent company overseas. Furthermore, the union negotiated a neutrality agreement with the parent company and rapidly organized workers at a new plant built in the southern United States. The union in this instance is clearly proactive, a condition for successful joint ventures.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This paper does not present measurement data of union members' attitudes or labor-management climate. However, data were collected on participants' assessment of the training and the statements regarding the training success are based on those assessments. In previous years, a multi-year survey on perceptions of conflict at the plant was conducted. These data were summarized and presented elsewhere (Olson, et. al. 2002); similar data were collected in 2004 and data from 2002 to 2004 were also collected on

communication. This paper provides a description of the training rather than a presentation of that data.

The training was conducted at a single plant in a single company in one industry. It is possible that the outcome of the training may be dependent at least in part on the relationship between the plant and the trainers who had been involved with plant-wide training for five years.

The training was conducted across an entire system. Benefits may well be more limited for the union where training is more specific, includes fewer union members, and/or does not include both union and management personnel.

Until recently, this segment of the paper industry has been somewhat sheltered from the harsher effects of globalization because tissue is sold in regional rather than global markets due to high shipping costs. However, parent rolls of paper (the giant rolls which are converted into various tissue products) are now arriving on the west coast of the U.S. from China. The pressures of globalization and of aggressive competition, manifestations of globalization, clearly apply.

There is obvious potential for researcher bias. School for Workers faculty, as noted, designed and conducted the training, compiled the evaluations, and are presenting this analysis. However, the School also has an 80 year history of championing the causes of unions and workers. The hypothesis that joint training can improve union knowledge and power is put forward in the context of a chilly climate for unions in the United States, and in the search for creative approaches to increasing union strength.

## CONCLUSION

This case study provides evidence that joint training can enhance union knowledge and power. The union is in a better position to bargain with the employer if it knows and understands the company's economic position and strategy, and the union is better able to benefit from its own independent research if it understands the company's position and interpretation of financial and economic data. The union is also in a better position to recommend a contract settlement to its members if they all have the same information regarding the state of the company. And the union is potentially stronger as a collective if its members understand each others' jobs, and if they have a profound sense of their inter-relatedness.

The challenge this study presents is for labor to assess joint union-management ventures and take a proactive stance to leverage them to the union's advantage. If the only paradigm is based on power, unions are in grave danger of losing in the context of globalization. Without compromising on solid union principles and goals, it is critical for union advocates to explore these kinds of alternatives in addition to more traditional adversarial unionism to

ensure union survival and strength. Furthermore, unions need to look at various methods to mobilize their power if they are to resist the more dire consequences of globalization. This study demonstrates that using plant-wide, inclusive training has the potential to be one such alternative.

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