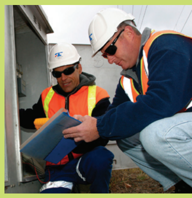
PARTNERSHIP
RESOURCE
CENTRE

WORKPLACE PARTNERSHIPS: DIAGNOSTIC TOOLKIT



Department of Labour
TE TARI MAHI

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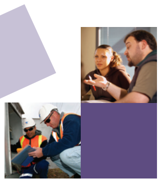


1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 IF YOU ARE READING THIS…

…you probably have a fairly advanced idea of what workplace partnerships are and what they might contribute to the way work is carried out and rewarded in your organisation. Also, you have probably made an initial decision to try and use them.

Despite both of those things, we urge you to take stock. What are you trying to achieve and how do you expect partnership to help you achieve it?

A careful consideration of motives and intentions will help you to refine how you do things, get a better match between what you want to achieve and the instruments you use to achieve it, and lower the risks of false starts and blind alleys.

This toolkit is designed to help managers and trade union partners assess the state of the organisation and their own relationship in terms of making progress towards more constructive workplace relationships. The overall aim of partnership is to continually improve levels of participation and involvement in ways that contribute to improved organisational performance and better workplaces for all.

This action-oriented toolkit can be used to:

- evaluate the current state of the management/staff/union relationship at a workplace level
- help identify the areas for improvement on which to focus
- assess progress in developing the partnership over time.

Early warning: false starts and blind alleys are the close relations – but not necessarily the offspring – of partnerships. Workplace partnerships are not easy to start or to manage and they seldom bring immediate and obvious returns, although early wins can help build confidence among those involved. The trick is not to avoid any frustration and failings – nice as that would be – but to reduce and minimise them.

1.2 WHY DO YOU WANT A PARTNERSHIP?

(Note: you may not need to read this section if you are already clear about your answer to this question, but it might help)

The sort of partnership you want, how you prepare for it, how you resource it, and how you move into it are all shaped by the reason/s you want it in the first place.

Both in New Zealand and overseas, there are four basic circumstances that might lead the parties to launch a new partnership initiative:

- to move existing relationships to a new level
- to respond to an external threat
- to find better ways of doing things
- to manage a crisis.

Moving to the next level

Partnerships tend to develop and mature. They can be left as is, if arrangements suit the parties, or they can be lifted to a new level, where the matters that are subject to discussion and agreement between the parties become more substantial and more relevant.

By way of example, the Irish distinguish between "first generation" and "second generation" partnerships.

First generation partnerships are "something we do" to solve mutual problems or achieve mutual goals. First generation partnerships:

- are an add-on to existing communication and decision-making systems
- operate over a narrow range of issues
- build trust, but don't displace conflict in all areas (say over pay)
- work through named individuals with defined roles
- are accompanied by training to improve participation in the structures.

Second generation partnerships are "the way we do things" to facilitate effective change. In second generation partnerships:

- decision-making and communications structures are re-positioned around a partnership approach
- conflict is reduced in other areas, because trust is sufficiently enhanced to have that impact
- partnership is part of everyone's job description
- partnership competencies are mainstreamed into all induction and personal development programmes.

It would be nice to think that "things are okay around here" and that partnership can lift the game, but in New Zealand:

- we have had a very short period of developing and learning from partnership approaches
- we have a recent history of highly contractual workplace relationships
- we have tended to use partnerships to deal with very specific issues rather than overall organisational performance.

As a result, for most organisations it will be unusual to be thinking of moving towards a second generation partnership. It is tempting to try and move past the rather structured first generation stages of defining roles, doing the training, defining the scope, etc, but leaping to the second stage when the basic building blocks are not in place can be a very high risk strategy. However, while this diagnostic is primarily targeted to support the development of first generation partnerships, it can still be usefully adapted for checking the state of more mature workplace partnerships.

Responding to an external threat

New Zealand is a small and distant economy with a thin resource base: be that capital or skills. Most organisations face threats of one sort or another from time to time: falling world prices, competition from lower wage countries, rising demands for services when budgets are limited, rapidly changing technologies, and so on.

A conventional (management-led) response to change is to "restructure": to introduce new machines, close production lines, lay off workers, reduce some allowances and the like. Restructuring tends to be reactive and typically provokes resistance. It is a slow response to an external threat.

In these circumstances, adopting a partnership approach can be an attractive alternative. Taking a proactive approach, isolating the issue that will be the focus of the response to the threat, agreeing on a sharing of the costs and benefits, and accepting that some contribution needs to be made by both sides in the interests of survival, all offer a more constructive alternative.

First generation partnership type structures and processes are ideal if the reason for the partnership is a response to a threat to the viability of the organisation.

Finding a better way of doing things

Organisations get by. It is not always pretty, it is often not as effective as it could have been, but it works. That is by and large the story of how workplace relationships have been organised and managed in New Zealand. It is time-consuming, often petty, ritualistic and rhetorical, but it's often the way we have done things.

Partnership can be an alternative to the tried and tiring niggling and adversarial sniping of conventional New Zealand industrial relations practice.

It isn't easy to start up a partnership for these reasons:

- Both parties need to agree to try a different approach at the same time. Typically, one would tend to want to change because the system isn't working for them; and, almost by definition, it isn't working for them because it is working for the other one!
- Partnerships often develop by starting small and expanding the scope: the whole IR system is too big a place to start at
- There are suspicions about the motives of the party initiating a partnership
- Parties have different resources of time and personnel: the suspicion is that it will inevitably be a partnership among "unequals" and that the weaker party will get "done over"
- It is hard to find the basis for mutual advantage that will justify the new approach.

All of that is true, but at the same time it is important not to be too negative. **Both** parties can tire of the negativity of adversarial IR.

This has happened in a New Zealand context when either:

- A particular dispute has ended up as unsatisfactory to both parties. The "lose – lose" outcome creates an incentive for both to agree to avoid a repeat.
- There is unfinished business in the negotiations: some last remaining detail could not be sorted out, but it was not important enough to hold up the entire deal. The unfinished business is sent off to a working party process.

In the first case, the parties can agree to trial a partnership approach for the future. Then, a lot of preparatory work has to go in to ensure that the process is not discredited by having to meet unrealistic expectations; a way to guarantee failure is to set impossible targets.

The second case is better suited to partnership without the same level of preparation, **but** in this case, the challenge is to have an idea of what comes next. Partnership will not develop if it is time and issue bound.

Crisis

Ironically, a major crisis – a breakdown of relationships and morale – can be the most effective reason to embrace partnership! At a macro level, it was a major economic, social, and industrial relations crisis in Ireland that "forced" the social partners to find a joint solution to their joint problem, and partnerships have evolved and become embedded since then.

In the context of a specific organisation, this crisis typically involves a significant threat to the organisation, or where there has been a loss of trust between management and workers, or between management and unions, and sometimes even between workers and the union.

In a crisis of internal cohesion, trust and confidence, there is no obvious place to start because the parties are not even talking to each other.

In these circumstances, some third party intervention to facilitate dialogue is usually required. There is also inevitably a slow build: overcoming deep-seated mistrust, training in dispute resolution and problem-solving techniques and the like.

Whatever your motivation for adopting a partnership approach to workplace relationships, gaining a better understanding of your current state through the use of this diagnostic tool will be an essential part of the process.

1.3 SO, YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE STARTING FROM...

Having given some thought to why you are entering into a partnership, you should next think carefully about…

…where do you want to end up?

It's important to take stock of where you are starting from, but equally important to have some idea of where you want partnership to take you.

Partnership can be defined as:

"the kind of relationship you want and need when you are committed to each other's success."

It is not just another way to carry out collective bargaining or a quick way to achieve either management or union objectives. It has a strong "win-win" expectation underlying it and, ultimately, only works if each party is committed to the success of the **other**. In that way the interests of the management and the union are nevertheless secured, but not at the **expense** of the other party.

Are you comfortable with what partnership can deliver for you and do you accept what you should **not** expect from it? In most circumstances, partnership can be viewed as a means to an end: a certain way of conducting an organisation's business that is based upon constructive workplace relationships and that contribute to sustainable high performance and a better place to work.

A partnership approach is more likely to succeed if it is accompanied by the following:

1. There is a commitment by both parties to the process at the top level. If not, one is going to be frustrated by the fact that the other is lukewarm on the deal. Either that or an enthusiast gets so far and is over-ruled by a superior.
2. That commitment is expressed in the need to achieve a change in the organisation's culture. It is not simply a fix to a problem that is on the table, even though that is often a good starting point. The parties learn from fixing the problem and change the way they behave as a result. If the culture changes, the chances are that the same problem will not arise in the future.
3. Both parties are genuinely empowered to make the key decisions that fall within the scope of what it is agreed that partnership should cover.
4. The parties are independent of each other.
5. Front-line managers and union delegates support partnership. It is no use having buy-in at the top if the process is going to be blocked at the workface by middle level managers and union representatives.

6. The structures through which partnership discussions take place line up with the matters that need to be addressed.
7. Partnership delivers genuine benefits to both parties.
8. The benefits are consistent with what might realistically be expected from the partnership project.
9. There are adequate resources applied to the exercise, the parties have the capability to engage effectively, there is continuous learning from experiences, and effective networks operate to share experiences from other areas.

That will not happen overnight. If these conditions exist in your organisation, you will probably not need this toolkit.

This toolkit will help you move towards that set of arrangements.

1.4 YOU ARE NOW ON YOUR OWN

This toolkit will help you, but it can't "do" partnership for you.

However, there are some steps that have to be taken, regardless of the scope of partnership or the way it is operated. These include:

- Identify the need for partnership (what are the drivers?)
- Someone has to take the lead to get it going
- There has to be an agreement to start. (Partnerships do not work if there are too many conditions and caveats and exit clauses built in to the process)
- There must be agreement about the structures through which partnerships will take place
- Ideally, the parties should acknowledge that when there are failures or false starts, they will learn from them and not use them to abandon the partnership.

It is easier to get these preparatory agreements if the party initiating the process is not overly ambitious. Do not over scope what partnership can do, or try to drag in the unwilling.

2 A PARTNERSHIP RESOURCE

There are many different ways to approach partnerships. It is possible to set up a project team from within the resources of the main parties and for them to work out a way forward for themselves. Some partnership approaches use external facilitators. It is reasonable for the partners to go some of the way and then to contract in specialist assistance for specific functions (training, communications, problem-solving, conflict resolution skills).

This toolkit is just one way to structure the approach. It puts a lot of emphasis on:

1. the sequence through which you develop a partnership and
2. the use of checklists to monitor how you are going.

The checklist approach is **not** supposed to be linear – that is, ticking the box and moving on. It is only really of value if you use it to pause, reflect, revise, and adjust your practices as you go along.

You do **not** have to start at the beginning and move laboriously through every stage to the end. You can pick and mix according to your circumstance.

We **do** recommend that, as a minimum, you follow the checklists that:

1. examine the state of workplace relationships both before a partnership process gets under way and at regular intervals thereafter
2. examine communication processes and
3. monitor the benefits that are expected to emerge from partnership.

2.1 HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Using this tool in ways that promote constructive staff, management, and union relationships means the process needs to be:

- jointly undertaken
- involve representative people and groups from across the whole organisation (so it's seen as credible)
- jointly analysed and acted upon by the partners and
- evaluated as a matter of course for its usefulness and for how it might be improved.

It is not designed to measure or compare individuals or groups, or to provide a stick to beat each other with.

It can be used on an on-going basis to help assess progress in areas marked out for attention.

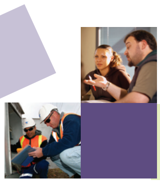
Detailed guidelines to assist the parties in using this tool to get the best value from it have been provided in Appendix 1 with a series of checklists to assist with planning and delivery set out in Appendix 2. An evaluation guideline to assess the effectiveness of the diagnostic process has been provided in Appendix 3.

2.2 FOCUS OF THIS TOOL

This diagnostic tool focuses on **7 different but over-lapping standards:**

1. Workplace relationships (including between managers and staff, managers and unions, unions and staff) are robust and constructive.
2. Effective leadership provides clear direction and helps staff to see what and where they contribute to the organisation's purpose. It also promotes staff involvement in decision-making.
3. Effective communications regularly occur up, down, and across the organisation, as well as being able to deal with the hard issues.
4. Staff morale and motivation is consciously assessed and developed.
5. Work is organised in ways that assist people to work effectively and which meet their preferences.
6. Both parties have the capacity and ability to deliver on the promise of partnership including having workable structures and resources in place that assist partners to undertake their responsibilities (including the ability to evaluate effectiveness and benefits).
7. Both parties ultimately need to point to the real benefits that have been achieved to ensure there is an incentive to continue with a partnership approach.

These standards are designed to assess both the character of the partnership between the two parties, as well as some of its practical consequences.



3 DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

SECTION 1: WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

In the typical workplace, there are big gaps between what parties think the other thinks about them. Managers, for example, might think that staff have open access to them and feel free to raise issues, but the staff might think that an open-door policy is window dressing, or that access is only real on trivial issues. Unions might think that they are in touch with their members, but the members may think that they only see the union when the organiser wants to recruit members.

If there are mismatches in perceptions about the actual state of relationships, partnerships will be bedevilled by communication breakdowns, frustration, and rising tensions.

Even if relationships are poor, it is important that the precise nature of those relationships is known. It is also critical to monitor how those relationships are changing over time because partnership activities have to change in line, both with the extra ground that can be covered if relationships improve, and if they are not making headway in improving those relationships.

There are two checklists provided below that you can use to assess the state of workplace relationships. The first asks for the opinions of the parties. The second looks at whether there are systems in place that produce hard evidence that the parties can use to test whether those opinions are valid.

It is important that answers to the questions are given from both sides of the fence. For example, on the questions about the relationship between managers and unions, both some managers and some union officials should fill out the questionnaire. It is as important to know where perceptions of the state of the relationship differ, as it is to know what the agreed state is.

By way of example, if the issue is early notification of issues and both union and management think it happens to some extent, there is a basis for working out how to improve early notification systems. If, though, management thinks it happens a great deal and the union thinks only to some extent, there is a misunderstanding that needs to be talked through before remedies are discussed. Failure to do that will inevitably lead to recriminations and hurt feelings later, and the partnership relationship will erode.

1.1 TO WHAT EXTENT ARE WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUR ORGANISATION ROBUST AND CONSTRUCTIVE?

Top level managers and staff

Relationships between top-level managers and staff are characterised by:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Openness and honesty				
Friendliness				
Genuine acknowledgment of staff contribution to business				
Acknowledgment of organisation's contribution to quality of working life				
Sense of goodwill towards each other				
Early notification of issues and opportunities to contribute to resolving them				
Constructive approaches to resolving differences/problems				
Willingness for give and take by both parties				
Learning and dissemination of good practice				

Front-line managers and staff

Relationships between front-line managers (including supervisors and team leaders) and staff are characterised by:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Openness and honesty				
Friendliness				
Constructive approaches to resolving differences/problems				
Genuine acknowledgment of staff contribution to business				
Sense of goodwill towards each other				
Early notification of issues and opportunities to contribute to resolving them				
Willingness for give and take by both parties				
Learning and dissemination of good practice				

Managers and unions

Relationships between managers and unions are based on:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
A real commitment to each other's success				
Openness and honesty (not rhetoric)				
A sense of goodwill towards each other				
Constructive approaches to resolving differences/problems				
Early notification of any issues and information sharing by each party				
Learning and dissemination of good practice				
Genuine understanding and respect for each other's imperatives and constraints				
A real understanding of the respective visions, goals and roles of the union and the business by both partners				
Jointly influencing and deciding upon changes in work organisation and practices				
Regular review of the state of union/ management relationships				

Unions and staff

Relationships between unions and staff are based on:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Staff understanding the role of the union in the organisation				
Constructive approaches to resolving differences/problems				
Openness and honesty (not rhetoric)				
The union appreciating the views and issues of members and other staff				
The union encouraging support for partnership amongst their members				
The union modelling constructive and innovative behaviour				
Learning and dissemination of good practice				
Regular review of the state of union/ staff relationships				

1.2 WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

In the previous section, the checklist sought to clarify opinion. The opinion is just that: what the person filling out the form thinks. This checklist looks for facts (or hard evidence of actual processes) that can sit alongside the opinions. This evidence needs to be jointly collected and assessed so as to minimise any hints of bias.

Are staff attitude surveys undertaken and do the results reflect robust and constructive relationships between:	**Evidence**
Top level managers and staff?	
Front-line managers and staff?	
Unions and managers?	
Unions and staff?	

What evidence is there of:	**Evidence**
Performance assessments reinforcing the value of constructive workplace relationships?	
Written material that reflects the importance of constructive workplace relations to the organisation e.g. in-house newsletters, annual reports?	
Formal agreements on partnership that are working well?	
Training and development forums for managers and staff at all levels in understanding the union, the business, partnership behaviour and practices (problem-solving, planning, etc)?	

What is the evidence that unions:	Evidence
Keep members informed about what is happening?	
Set up and regularly review structures and processes for member participation?	
Regularly involve delegates and members – and have rigorous and varied systems to do this, e.g. project work, meetings, surveys, chat rooms, open space?	
Review and publish their contribution towards partnership?	
Organise training and development forums for members, staff and representatives in understanding the union, the business, partnership behaviour and practices?	

Is there evidence that unions and management:	Evidence
Regularly and jointly review the progress towards a partnership relationship?	
Jointly participate in strategic and operational planning of organisational change?	
Have developed an agreement with principles for working together?	
Have defined and agreed on structures, forums, roles, and functions of the union and management for all levels of the organisation?	
Have developed an agreement that covers recognition, time off, relief, and facilities for union representatives?	
Undertake joint training and development forums for managers and staff at all levels about the role of the union, the business, the partnership agreement and plan, partnership behaviour and practices?	

Options/ideas/suggested actions

Please record below any ideas or suggestions that have occurred to you in considering these questions:

SECTION 2: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

As we noted earlier, commitment from the leaders of both parties is crucial to the success of partnership. However, leadership in this instance needs to go beyond a simple authorisation of either a diagnosis of workplace relationships, or the commencement of partnership processes.

In practice, many organisations simultaneously practice a mix of paternalistic, authoritarian and participative styles of leadership and management. This is confusing to staff and can be demotivating.

With partnership, we are talking about leadership that is both inclusive and empowering, and, leadership that demonstrates and builds trust and respect across the different cross-currents inside an organisation. Above all, it is leading through learning and doing, rather than leading by blaming. This form of leadership can be evident at any and every level within both the organisation and the union.

This style of leadership is difficult to impose and sometimes quite hard to see. It is leadership that permeates the organisation and becomes "what we do around here".

"Effective leadership" is accordingly hard to diagnose and harder to prescribe. The checklists we have here are mainly designed as a check on perceptions about leadership and where the strengths and weaknesses in the leadership style lie. We do provide a checklist for gathering evidence on the leadership style, but even here you need to be aware that much of the evidence will be qualitative, rather than hard data.

2.1 IN YOUR ORGANISATION, TO WHAT EXTENT CAN YOU SHOW THAT LEADERS (SENIOR MANAGERS, FRONT-LINE MANAGERS, TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES) ARE COMMITTED TO AND DEMONSTRATE AN INVOLVING CULTURE?

In your organisation

Leaders:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Act with integrity				
"Walk the talk" by modelling the values they espouse				
Are accessible and responsive to staff individually and collectively				
Acknowledge staff/members individually and collectively				
Acknowledge staff/member contributions to the organisation				
Encourage staff/union involvement in issues that affect them				
Provide constructive reflection and feedback on staff/member contributions				

Leaders ensure that whenever mainstream activities are undertaken or reviewed, union and staff involvement is:

Staff	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Considered				
Built-in				

Union	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Considered				
Built-in				

Leaders of the organisation and union actively encourage innovation and creativity by:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Encouraging and recognising team and individual efforts				
Not blaming people for mistakes				
Ensuring the organisation learns from mistakes				
Being accessible and responsive				
Encouraging new ideas, considering and following up on them				
Ensuring equal opportunities for all in the organisation (culture, gender, ethnicity, disability, nature of work, shifts)				

Staff/members:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Understand and relate to the organisation's purpose and goals (product or service)				
Have a role in developing and/or influencing the organisation's purpose and goals				
Have the opportunity to take on leadership roles as project leaders, team and work group leaders				
Understand how the organisation intends to achieve its goals				
See where they fit and what they contribute to the organisation				
Have an active role in developing and reviewing business planning for their unit/department				
Identify with the leadership of the organisation and take pride in what the organisation delivers				

2.2 EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Is there:	Evidence
A written policy on staff involvement including goals, processes, review mechanisms?	
A written policy on staff development that was jointly developed with management, staff and their representatives?	
Regular involvement of unions and staff in key workplace issues that affect them?	
Evidence that staff have an equal opportunity to influence the decisions that affect them?	
Regular review/s of the effectiveness and quality of staff/union involvement in planning and decision-making?	
An objective that is set for line managers at all levels about involving staff as part of the appraisal and development process?	
An action plan that identifies joint activity, resource allocation, development needs?	
A leadership development plan for staff, managers, and union members?	

Options/ideas/suggested actions

Please record below any ideas or suggestions that have occurred to you in considering these questions.

SECTION 3: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communications are critical to partnership processes. In many ways, the rationale for partnership is to get people to talk **to** each other rather than past or at each other. If we take as a given that there is always an element of mutual interest in the employment relationship (the employer needs the work done, the employee needs the wages), then if communications are working effectively, there is an almost natural partnership state operating.

Communications involve more than formal exchanges of words and data. They have to be relevant to the need, in the right form, timely, and be communicated to a receptive informant.

Assessing the effectiveness of communications is very hard: it requires a very clinical, self critical and objective approach. Checklists can only guide: it is the integrity of the answers to the questions that will determine how relevant and useful they are.

It is useful, particularly with this checklist, to have a full discussion within the project group after the results of the surveys have been completed. This is to help minimise the subjective assessments of willingness to listen and receptiveness to messages, how effective and genuine early notification and engagement processes are, and so on.

3.1 IN YOUR ORGANISATION, TO WHAT EXTENT CAN YOU SHOW THAT THERE ARE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESSES UP, DOWN AND ACROSS THE ORGANISATION THAT EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS AND CAN USE?

There are systems in place to ensure:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Staff can make their views known to managers at all levels				
Staff representatives can make their views known to managers at all levels				
Communications channels are regularly used				

Managers:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Are willing to listen				
Genuinely respond to what they hear				
Adopt a "no surprises" approach to communications				
Demonstrate a willingness to confront difficult issues				
Show they understand the day-to-day issues confronting staff				
Are responsive to the range of audiences/participants				

Unions and staff representatives:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Are willing to listen				
Respond appropriately to what they hear				
Adopt a "no surprises" approach to communications				
Demonstrate a willingness to confront difficult issues				
Are responsive to the range of audiences/participants				

3.2 COMMUNICATIONS: WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

What evidence is there that:	Evidence
All staff, including new staff (irrespective of when and where they work), are made aware of opportunities to become involved and have an influence on decision-making in their own area?	
Arrangements are in place to ensure relevant information is shared up, down, and across the organisation?	
All employees are encouraged to identify how the services they provide or the work they do can be improved?	
Good two-way communication (e.g. team briefings, newsletters) takes place?	
Staff feel informed (e.g. given feedback from staff surveys)?	
All staff, managers and staff representatives, have an opportunity to influence relevant decisions	
Managers have responded to what they have heard by changing their initial approach on some issues	
A communications policy is in place and is regularly reviewed	
Changes resulting from staff feedback are clearly attributed to that feedback	

Options/ideas/suggested actions

Please record below any ideas or suggestions that have occurred to you in considering these questions.

SECTION 4: MORALE AND MOTIVATION

Like "leadership", morale and motivation are intangibles, but in many ways provide the litmus test for a diagnosis of how far partnership has to go and how well it is progressing along that route.

Poor morale is a major brake on productivity, and is typically reflected in higher defect rates, poor customer satisfaction, higher rates of sickness and absence, and higher rates of staff turnover. In one sense, while it is not possible to attribute all changes in objective performance measures to morale and motivation factors, they are a good indirect (proxy) indicator. If, in general, performance indicators across the board are improving, there can be some confidence that morale is improving.

Morale and motivation considerations work at the level of commitment (of staff to the enterprise and of the enterprise to staff) that is beyond the formal contractual obligations of the two parties. They leverage the "free capital" or goodwill that staff bring to the workplace and the extra commitment that management displays to staff. This feeling of belonging, of pride in the offering and of community and camaraderie underpin the soft-wired element of morale and the self-starting element of motivation. It is the "give" that sits alongside the "take" element of the formal employment relationship.

The checklists that follow aim to capture how and to what extent these mutual commitment elements exist inside an organisation, and how they are fostered and developed.

4.1 IN YOUR ORGANISATION, TO WHAT EXTENT CAN YOU SHOW THAT STAFF MORALE IS GOOD AND PEOPLE ARE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE VOLUNTARY EFFORT?

Staff:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Are prepared to put in extra (voluntary) effort when required				
Feel they are encouraged to perform as well as they can				
Feel a sense of belonging when they are at work				
Are clear about their role and particular work responsibilities and how their work links to other work				
Are confident about contributing ideas and challenging the status quo without fear of victimisation				
Reflect, review, give and receive feedback				
Feel it's safe for staff and members to look for opportunities, to take some risks, to try something new				

Managers:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Regularly monitor the motivation levels of their staff				
Show an understanding of how to get the best out of their staff				
Encourage staff and union contribution of ideas and challenging the status quo				
Are looking for ways of improving staff motivation with union and staff				
Are looking, with union and staff, for ways of removing obstacles that frustrate staff				
Encourage reflection, review, giving and receiving feedback, with staff and the union				
Feel it's a safe place for managers, staff and members to look for opportunities, to take some risks, to try something new				

Unions:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Regularly monitor the motivation levels of members				
Encourage staff and union members to contribute ideas and challenge the status quo				
Are looking for ways of improving members' motivation				
Are looking for ways of removing obstacles that frustrate members and staff				
Encourage reviews of activity amongst members and giving and receiving of feedback leading to improvement				

4.2 WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Does management:	**Evidence**
Regularly undertake staff attitude surveys?	
Widely communicate the results of staff surveys?	
Take specific actions to address any problem areas arising from the surveys?	
Track long-term trends in staff attitudes?	

Do unions and management jointly:	**Evidence**
Analyse the results?	
Take action on priority areas?	

Is there:	Evidence
A system for reflection, review, giving and receiving feedback?	
A learning, coaching and networking system to assist changing behaviours, attitudes?	
A system for proactive exploring of new ideas and challenges with staff and managers together?	
A range of methods for increasing participation (meetings, open-door policy, open space, cross department visits, clarification, exploring, and problem-solving, project work)?	
A process that encourages "whole organisation" thinking and contribution?	
A style of management and union work that encourages consensus decision-making, some levels of risktaking, teamwork, a sense of security and stability?	
Principles and values that describe healthy work practices and workplaces?	
Evidence that such principles and values are put into practice?	

Options/ideas/suggested actions

Please record below any ideas or suggestions that have occurred to you in considering these questions.

SECTION 5: WORK ORGANISATION

Management can implement various non-hierarchical forms of work organisation (flat structures, teamworking, matrix management, and so on) without this being either a result of a partnership agreement or being used to promote partnership processes. However, a highly structured, rules based, and authoritarian work organisation is typically a barrier to partnership (and productivity!), which relies on more interaction around how good processes are designed and how work is performed.

The way in which work is organised and the way in which changes are made to how work is done do, therefore, determine the potential scope of partnerships. More of a teamwork approach, and more interactive work practices are necessary (but by no means sufficient) conditions for effective partnerships.

These checklists allow an assessment of whether or not the basic foundations for partnership are sound, or whether some re-engineering needs to take place alongside partnership discussions to create the space for them to work in.

5.1 TO WHAT EXTENT CAN YOU SHOW THAT IN YOUR ORGANISATION WORK IS ORGANISED IN WAYS THAT ASSIST PEOPLE TO WORK EFFECTIVELY AND WHICH ALSO MEETS THEIR PREFERENCES?

Is effective team work:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Encouraged?				
Supported?				

Are staff:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Able to make decisions about how they do their work at the level at which that work is performed?				
Able to influence changes in the way their work is organised?				
Able and encouraged to work freely across organisational and skill boundaries?				
Able to easily share information and knowledge with their colleagues?				
Able to access other resources and authorities with a minimum of bureaucratic constraint?				
Willing to share their tacit knowledge about how the job really gets done, what works, what doesn't?				

Are management:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Able to make decisions about how they manage their area of responsibility?				
Able and encouraged to work freely across organisational and skill boundaries?				
Open to good ideas about how best to organise and improve work processes?				
Able to access other resources and authorities with a minimum of bureaucratic constraint?				
Willing to consult staff about changes in the way work is organised?				

5.2 WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Is there evidence that:	**Evidence**
Individuals and teams have authority to make decisions about how their work is carried out?	
And about their working environment?	
Teamwork is actively encouraged and supported?	
People can access necessary information when they need it?	
External customers experience benefits resulting from staff involvement?	
Staff can participate in projects about workplace changes (including support, time, skill development, relief while on project work, resources)?	
Regular union and management forums for dialogue, exploration and decision-making about work, workplace systems, workplace environment change and transition plans exist and work?	
Structures and processes are in place for participation in decision-making for staff and members at all levels of the organisation?	

Options/ideas/suggested actions

Please record below any ideas or suggestions that have occurred to you in considering these questions.

SECTION 6: CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

Partnerships are resource intensive. They not only require people to engage in partnership discussions, but they typically require both training to build capability and support services to assess, monitor, and implement new systems. Very often they will require assistance from external specialists, especially in problem-solving and dispute resolution techniques, facilitation of discussions and communications.

The quantum of extra resource needed will be influenced by the scope of the partnership exercise and the complexity of the organisation, but regardless of scale and scope, it is not a process that is easily squeezed into existing daily routines. To accommodate partnership, either existing activities have to be reprioritised, or additional resources have to be found.

There are two parts to the resourcing of partnership and neither should be underestimated. One is capability: do the parties have the skills and knowledge that allow them to engage effectively? Typically, weaknesses with capability need to be met through the provision of either training, or of external resource supports. The second is capacity: this is whether both parties have the time and the people available to participate. Capacity tends to require the parties making resources available, although if the provision of capability supports and services is effectively designed, this can reduce the need to generate additional capacity.

The checklists below allow you to diagnose where capacity and capability gaps exist and to think about options for filling them.

6.1 TO WHAT EXTENT CAN YOU SHOW THAT YOUR ORGANISATION HAS THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AND HAS DEPLOYED THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO ENGAGE IN PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE GREATER INVOLVEMENT?

In your organisation

Managers and unions have invested in building up understanding of the nature of the management/union relationship and how it will work with:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Managers				
Staff				
Members				

Learning needs of key participants in the partnership have been:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Identified				
Addressed by suitable learning and development programmes				

Managers and unions have developed suitable goals, protocols, and procedures to help make their partnership work. They have:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Clear and succinct statement of goals, "rules", procedures				
Clear understanding about parameters of the partnership				
Communicated these to managers, members, and staff				
Set up review processes				
Regularly review progress against stated goals and measures				

Front-line practice between managers, staff representatives, and staff is:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Regularly monitored in terms of its alignment with top-level intentions				
Addressed by the parties when practice falls short of agreed intent				

Appropriate structures have been put in place which:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Work well for both parties				
Provide the minimum necessary structural support to ensure the partnership is integrated into the mainstream of the organisation's activities				

Appropriate resources have been put in place to ensure:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Staff representatives have both the capability and the time to do justice to their responsibilities				
Communication, promotional, and review processes are adequately catered for				
Any negative "legacy" effects (e.g. cynicism) can be overcome				
Unions can effectively resource the needs of their representatives and attend key meetings				
Union officials can add value through partnership to business improvement initiatives				

6.2 WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

(Evidence arises from answering the above questions in section 6.1)

Is/are there:	Evidence
Personal development plans (objectives, resourced, mentoring, reflection, review, development)?	
Systems for input to individual and team learning and development programmes for managers, staff and their representatives?	
Learning networks and development plans for work, managers, staff, and their representatives?	
A partnership development framework and implementation plan that is part of the Business Plan?	

Options/ideas/suggested actions

Please record below any ideas or suggestions that have occurred to you in considering these questions.

SECTION 7: BENEFITS TO THE PARTIES ARISING FROM THE PARTNERSHIP

Diagnosis tends to be seen as something that happens before an intervention. In this toolkit, we adopt a wider definition of diagnosis: it is something that is done continuously because there is always room for improvement. Diagnosis, in a dynamic context, needs more than a simple reassessment of the state of workplace relationships from time to time. It needs to involve monitoring and communicating improvements to sustain and deepen partnership itself.

Diagnosis, therefore, has to identify, record, and report benefits that are emerging over time. There are two cautions. One is that tangible benefits often emerge very slowly: it is important not to disregard or downplay the value of what, in the first instance, may appear to be minor, even inconsequential, benefits. The flow of benefits gathers momentum as partnerships bed in. The second caution is that many of the benefits are intangible. Hence, diagnosis must look for the intangible, as well as the quantifiable benefits.

The checklists below are designed to allow the parties to evaluate the tangible, intangible, and relationship benefits that are emerging as a partnership is implemented.

7.1 TO WHAT EXTENT CAN YOU SHOW THAT THE PARTIES ARE BENEFITING FROM THE PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP AND GREATER STAFF INVOLVEMENT?

In your organisation

Managers are demonstrating greater commitment to:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
The partnership relationship				
Involving staff in decisions that affect them				
More flexibility				

Improved organisational performance is evident from:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Customer satisfaction				
Quality of product/service				
Work is completed in full and on time				
Improved recruitment and retention				
Increased productivity				
Increased profit				

Improved staff satisfaction and motivation is evident from:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
Lower staff turnover				
Upward trend in staff satisfaction as measured by attitude surveys				
Upward trend in satisfaction with work environment				
Upward trend in satisfaction with workplace relationships				
Greater identification with organisational purpose and goals				
Greater levels of staff involvement in a variety of forums				
Improved recruitment and retention				
Improved terms and conditions of employment				

Unions are experiencing:

	Yes a great deal	To a considerable extent	To some extent	Not at all
An increase in union membership				
Easier recruitment and retention of staff representatives				
Satisfaction with union performance as measured in staff surveys and expressed at meetings				
Regular acknowledgment of union contribution by managers at all levels				
Involvement in decision-making (within agreed parameters) becoming routine				

7.2 WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Are there:	Evidence
Staff attitude surveys?	
Organisational performance data?	
Union performance data?	
Regular reviews of progress with partnership conducted jointly by managers and unions?	
Performance assessment processes with managers and staff?	
Greater opportunities for learning, training and career development for staff representatives?	
Greater interactions between managers and staff, and with colleagues?	

Options/ideas/suggested actions

Please record below any ideas or suggestions that have occurred to you in considering these questions.

APPENDIX 1:

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING TOGETHER AND MANAGING THE PROCESS

1.1 WHAT WE MEAN BY A "DIAGNOSTIC TOOL"

This diagnostic tool helps you to diagnose:

1. where you are now
2. where you can go (with the greatest likelihood of success) and
3. how you are going as you develop partnerships.

It is, therefore, not entirely independent of what you might do to implement a partnership process. While we do not intend this toolkit to be a "how to do a partnership" manual, as you start out, decide on direction and monitor progress, there will inevitably be some blurred lines between "diagnosis" and "recommendation for action".

In preparing to diagnose where you are and how you are going, you will need to make various decisions and set up certain structures through which the diagnoses will be carried out. These might also be the same decision sequences and structures that will be needed to implement the partnership itself.

Remember that there will be economies and learning opportunities going both ways: diagnosis informing practice and practise helping with the diagnosis. Try to use diagnostic processes as a part of the broader partnership process.

1.2 A STRUCTURE FOR DIAGNOSIS

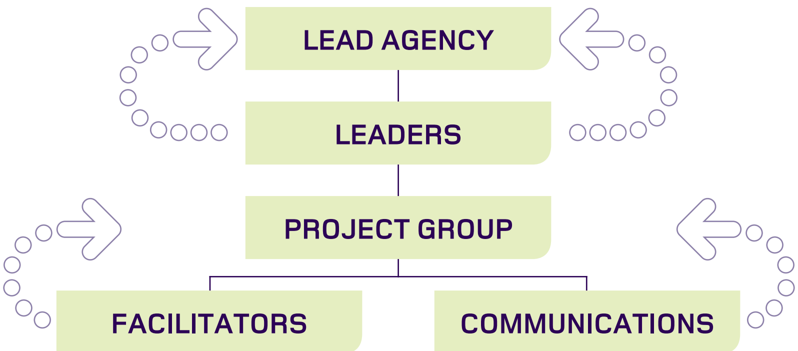
A diagnostic process requires a clear structure through which the sequence, roles and responsibilities (and feedback loops) operate.

In what follows, we describe the roles of leaders, a partnership project group, and commissioned specialist supports and how they interact.

Please read all that follows in relation to this structure.

Note that in Appendix 2 there are a series of tables that provide a useful checklist of key steps to be followed at each stage.

Diagnostic Structure



1.3 PREPARATION BY THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTIES

To prepare to work together through the diagnostic process, it is recommended that the leadership of the organisation and the union gain an understanding about the context and background of their relationship, the work they currently do together, as well as to clarify what they are hoping to achieve. It's important to take the time to discuss and gain an understanding of each others' goals, interests, needs, issues, and feelings about the past and current situation. This will help manage the process of implementing the diagnostic tool and the implementation phases.

This is important whether you are dealing with a "one-off" issue or a more complicated business planning scenario. *It is critical to recognise that every step you take is a contribution to change the ways things are done within both organisations.* Each step can help improve the relationship between the organisation and the union.

This stage of preparation can help you identify what your initial common interests are, the differences that remain, needs that are shared, and where the areas of tension/ conflict might be. It can assist you in working together during the process and dealing with decisions about the outcomes at the end of the diagnostic analysis.

Formalising what is agreed is extremely helpful for subsequent stages. It provides an overarching agreement/foundation/to a project group charged with carrying out the diagnostic process.

The leaders' meeting need not be large and time-consuming, but it is critical in defining the scope of a partnership, authorising the commissioning of a diagnostic process, and giving a stamp of approval to what happens next.

Sign-off at leadership level is important because diagnostic processes have the potential to be painful. They can expose morale and trust problems that have been covered up. They can demonstrate major capacity gaps (for example, the resources the union can bring to supporting members in workplace activities) which could have subsidiary implications for the relationship between the union and its members. Finally, they can define a commitment of time and resource that both parties might find excessive, but the diagnosis itself raises expectations that the necessary commitments will be made.

Issues that leaders need to consider and which potentially form an agenda for the first leaders' meeting are:

- The goals and interests of each partner, as well as identifying common interests
- Possible areas of tension/conflict
- Some positive experiences of working together, as well as some of the barriers
- The primary focus for the diagnostic exercise
- The nature and composition of any sponsorship, steering and/or project group (see below for more detailed guidance)
- The parameters and givens within which the project group needs to work
- Principal agreements needed: mandates, accountabilities, decision-making
- Likely resource commitment needed in terms of people, cost, and time
- Potential outcomes to be achieved for the organisation and the union
- Links to the strategic plan and mainstream activities of the organisation and the union
- How diagnostic results will be treated, including commitments to act and achieve any necessary improvements

The parties need to be clear about the purpose and outcomes that both parties are hoping to achieve at this time. Both parties may need to independently develop their own views on these matters first. This analysis will guide the focus and scale of the diagnostic process once it has been referred to a project group.

1.4 DESIGN OF AND PARTICIPATION IN THE DIAGNOSTIC PROJECT

Both parties need to decide who needs to be part of the diagnostic process and how they can participate either directly or indirectly. It requires mapping the current structures and people within both the organisation and the union to set the foundation for people's participation in the process. The idea is to ensure that a representative and credible sample of people who touch all parts of the organisation participate. This stage provides information for participation, development of a communication plan, decisions about best methods to use during the diagnostic process, and selecting a representative project team/committee to manage the diagnostic project.

Transparent structures for inclusion and participation throughout the organisation help build trust for both parties. The leaders need to decide who should form a project team or group. A checklist in making that decision follows.

Questions to consider about who to involve and how

- What is the structure of the organisation and the union/s?
- Who does what and with whom within the organisation? What are the links between the work and the people?
- Nature of union membership, delegate representation?
- Who is affected by the focus of the diagnostic process and how will their interests be represented?
- Does there need to be a separate group of senior manager and union sponsors or an overall steering group to guide a working project team?
- Who needs to be involved in the project team (experience shows small, focused and capable is best)?
- What processes are needed to make this selection (criteria, nominations, etc)?
- What timeframes are realistic?
- How will the project be managed?
- What about employees who are not union members?
- Who will convene the first meeting and set time, place, and agenda?

Choosing an appropriate time

If you are going to carry out the diagnostic process predominately in-house, if possible choose a time that will not conflict with:

- Peak workloads for people who need to gather relevant information or be on the project group/team/committee
- The planning or implementation of major structural changes in your organisation, unless the diagnostic process will be relevant and add value to the change.

How much time is the diagnostic process likely to take?

Both organisations need to consider all stages of the diagnostic process. This includes preparation, gathering information, analysis of information, reality check, writing up the results, making decisions, and reviewing the overall process.

Realistic timeframes need to take account of people's availability and the organisation's likely attention span, plus achievable targets in terms of each stage of the process and any resulting work programme.

An effective partnership needs to be built on effective diagnostic processes, but they should not be so complicated and time-consuming that endless analysis uses up energy and goodwill and dissipates enthusiasm. It is important, therefore, that diagnostic structures and processes be businesslike and time-bound. The key is to move through the process methodically and make sure that diagnosis does not overwhelm and derail the partnership itself. This requires careful planning of meetings, defining expectations at the outset, and communicating the expected amount of time needed to work through the tasks.

Holding two or three well organised project group meetings, delegating tasks to those involved, analysing, and communicating the information, and receiving report backs from them, should be enough.

As time goes on, diagnoses that monitor progress will simply become a part of the partnership dynamic and will blend into it.

Setting up a joint project group

This stage will depend on how you have decided to manage the process. It is recommended that you have at least a joint project group to either oversee or carry out the actual diagnostic process. In other cases, it may be appropriate for the CEO and union leadership to set up a senior steering group that can either manage the diagnostic, or support a special project team set up for the purpose. It can be the same team that will carry the results through into actions and monitor progress. This is desirable if there is to be an interaction between diagnosis and implementation as the partnership progresses. However, the earliest stages, defining starting points and defining the gap between what is and what is desired can be carried out by a time-limited, "fit-for-purpose" team.

Matters to consider in deciding upon representation and participation

Mapping the workplace

Develop a good understanding of the make-up of the workplace. This might include creating a matrix of representation – national, regional, local, including and taking account of:

- senior managers/union leadership
- managers from a range of services and different levels
- union members/employees from different occupations and/or levels
- employees not represented by the union (need to consider how this might be fairly achieved)
- gender
- culture/diversity: Maori, Pacific nations, other if appropriate, disability
- age

When preparing a communication/notification aimed at recruiting members of different parties:

- target specific delegates and managers based on skills and knowledge
- ask for expressions of interest
- request expressions of interest with attached criteria asking for relevant knowledge and skills and reasons for participating.

Who else needs to be involved?

You need to jointly decide whether you will resource and manage this process internally or use external help or both. Generally, the greater the level of internal ownership of the process, the more likely you are to achieve a successful and sustainable outcome.

Options

External help

This could be in the form of:

1. Seeking advice from the Partnership Resource Centre
2. Facilitating preparation, setting up and coaching the project team
3. Deciding on and allocating the roles of project manager, coach, facilitator of focus groups
4. Managing and implementing the whole process from beginning to end with the support of the joint project team
5. Evaluation and analysis of data
6. Presentation of end product and assistance with facilitating next planned stages for change

Internal with external support

This might involve a small project group doing all the work with some externally sourced coaching.

A project-based approach with objectives, milestones, clear timeframes for budget and people resource needs, helps the work get done while also demonstrating the organisation is serious about the initiative.

Depending on the size of the task, consideration needs to be given to providing back-up support for project group members (union delegates, in particular) to relieve pressure on their and their supervisor's workload. Other people resources to consider include assistance with accessing existing information, as well as with data analysis.

1.5 PREPARING YOUR ORGANISATION FOR THE DIAGNOSTIC TOOL ROLL-OUT

To increase the likelihood of getting key people to cooperate in both the diagnostic process and in any subsequent work programme, it is recommended that they be carefully briefed in advance of the tool being used.

In particular, it is important to brief senior management, national and regional organisers and delegates, as well as people who may need to help with providing relevant information to:

- ensure they understand the purpose and scope of the process
- seek their input on what they believe to be currently working, and what some of their potential concerns are
- seek their cooperation in providing information and support in a timely and accessible way.

Understanding of the framework

If the project team is different from any other joint union/management steering group, it is important to revisit, check, and clarify the understanding of the respective parties' interests, goals, expected outcomes, and benefits within the context of any existing agreements. Clarifying expectations at the beginning can help avoid disappointment or misunderstandings later on.

Agreements on roles and working together

Once the project group has been set up, there are a number of matters relating to working well together that need to be considered. They include:

- What roles are needed within the group?
- Who will facilitate/project manage the group and the overall process and how (consider alternate facilitation)?
- What skills and experience does the group have, what are the gaps, and do they need to be closed in some way (e.g. by co-option)?
- What agreements/understandings are needed to work together?

Understandings/agreements are helpful in getting a group of people to work well together. Take time to set these at the outset. Examples include: respecting each others' needs, interests, and views, staying focused, agreed decision-making process? (e.g. consensus), managing conflicts.

Project plan and managing the work

As with any project plan, early discussion and agreement on objectives, milestones, methods, timeframes, resources, and costs will be necessary. In addition, it is important to set agreed reporting, recording, and review methods.

It is helpful to set boundaries around what the diagnostic analysis does and does not include, as well as being clear on lines of accountability.

Developing and implementing a communication strategy

It is critical to develop an appropriate communication strategy about the purpose, levels, and method of participation, ways to report results, and actions to be taken. Effective communication is key to the diagnostic process and action plan. The more people are involved, understand the purpose and the diagnostic process, the more successful your implementation plan for change will be.

If your organisation employs people to assist with communication, it would be good to involve them at an early stage.

To determine what will be appropriate for your organisation, it would be useful to consider:

- What profile do you want this exercise to have?
- Who are the key people who need to be kept informed?
- What are their likely expectations of the diagnostic process?
- What do they need to know and when?
- To keep people informed and involved, what range of education/communication processes would be most useful? and
- At each stage of the process, who are the most appropriate people to provide this information?

Communication during the stages of the Diagnostic Process

Remember that, all through the diagnostic process, it is an opportunity to build relationships and increase participation and involvement between the parties and throughout the organisation.

At the beginning, you will need to inform people within the organisation that this is happening and how.

Depending on the size of the process, you will need to determine how often you need to give progress reports and will need an agreed approach to report the final results.

After the diagnostic process has been completed, it is important that the communication continues throughout the planning of the changes to be made.

Validation/reality check

The validation process is a key communication opportunity. You may decide to do this by intranet, talking to individuals or particular groups, briefing sessions or focus groups.

The key messages need to include:

- This is what we have found.
- Does it make sense?
- Have we missed anything?

1.6 METHODOLOGY FOR GATHERING INFORMATION AND GETTING OTHERS' INVOLVEMENT

There is a mix of approaches to gathering the necessary information, which may be used singly, but are best in combination. They include:

- Questionnaire completed by individuals: on paper or by intranet
- Gathering of supportive evidence
- Focus groups
- Interviewing individuals

Diagnostic tool

Having decided how wide the survey will be extended, the diagnostic questionnaire needs to be distributed accordingly. Sections of the questionnaire can be cut and pasted to suit the focus of the project.

People who are asked to complete the questionnaire also need to receive an accompanying explanatory note from the project group. This needs to briefly outline the purpose of the exercise and the process to be followed.

A definite (and relatively short) time period, within which the questionnaire needs to be completed and returned, also needs to be clearly indicated.

Gathering evidence

The diagnostic tool also sets out to gather evidence that reflects the formal policies and symbols of partnership within the organisation. The feedback that comes from asking people to complete the survey part of the diagnostic needs to be supported by evidence (e.g. written policies and statements, minutes, and memoranda and, even more importantly, tangible actions such as who attends meetings, follow-through, training, resource allocation, etc.). Such evidence can be looked at alongside people's comments and impressions to gain a more complete picture of the actual state of partnership relations.

Focus groups

If you decide to use focus groups as a way of getting information and building participation, you will need to decide:

- The make-up of each group (and why) e.g. all staff, all union, mixed or combinations of all of these options
- The numbers of groups you need to assemble
- As noted above, decisions will need about the focus of the questions to be discussed within the group (each group also needs to be asked the same set of questions stemming from the diagnostic)
- Who will run the focus groups
- What facilitation skills are needed
- How participants will be invited
- Where they will be held and for how long.

Structure of the session

The facilitators will need to have plan for the focus group session that includes:

An introduction

- Introduce yourselves
- Some introductory comments to outline the purpose and context of the session, including what will happen to the information
- Setting some ground rules (see some suggestions below)
- How long the session will be (usually about one to one and a half hours)
- A prompt sheet that helps you keep track of areas to be covered and to keep to time
- A method for recording responses.

Working with the group

Building rapport

The first opening statements are critical for building rapport with the group and ensuring quality interaction between the participants. The group can be chaired by one of the parties, or helped by a neutral independent.

Whoever does lead/chair/facilitate will need to:

- Think about how to build a positive environment, how to welcome people as they arrive, what is needed in the room and how the room will be set up
- Consider a brief "connecting activity" that will help get people focused on the task at hand
- Be aware of who is coming and what their different learning/participation needs are – for example different cultural needs, disability issues.

Clarifying the purpose and what is needed from the group

Participants need to understand what is needed from them and why. The facilitator needs to explain the purpose of the whole session, and that it is not expected that people's views will always be in agreement. There is no requirement to come to any consensus.

Ideas about ground rules

- cover confidentiality
- no right or wrong answer
- all views are valid
- listening to hear and not contradict
- ask questions for clarification of perceptions and further understanding.

Providing opportunities for contributions

The facilitator needs to have a range of methods for allowing everyone to participate in some way. Asking open questions, inviting short "in pairs" discussion about set question/s prior to all up group discussion, etc help to generate an openness that facilitates a free flow of views.

It is also useful to accept responses from one person and check with others what their views are – this helps to avoids one person dominating. It is important to allow differences to emerge within the group.

Recording during the session

The information generated by the group needs to be recorded as accurately as possible. This can be done by:

- using flip chart paper
- one facilitator, one recorder
- audio tape – but only if participants feel okay with this
- a prepared sheet for recording under each section.

Facilitators need to be conscious of not just recording filtered comments that support a previously held view but taking down exact quotes – the aim is get the whole picture of views held within the group.

After the focus group

Analysing and interpreting the data and views from each focus group and determining what other information/data might be needed is a critical step. Writing a summary of key points and impressions soon after the focus group meeting is helpful in retaining the essence of what took place.

Individual interviews

The techniques for engaging with people at an individual interview level are similar to those for focus groups. Engaging with and putting people at ease before asking open-ended questions, as well as assuring people their views will be treated confidentially, are critical to successful interviewing. Likewise, a common approach to each interview needs to be adopted to ensure responses can be compared.

1.7 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF INFORMATION

Sorting data and themes

Results from focus group and individual interviews need to be summarised (while also preserving direct quotations) by those who led the interviews. We suggest that there should be a number of discussions amongst the project group and those who facilitated the sessions to identify recurring patterns and common themes emerging from the evidence.

In the case of the questionnaire, again the focus is on identifying recurring patterns of answers within and between individual questionnaires. For example, the links between answers to do with workplace relationships, leadership, participation and morale should be explored within each response, as well as in aggregate.

Once key themes have been identified, it is helpful to assemble supporting evidence for each one. Note that it is also important to consider the relative significance of "outlier" views that are considerably different from other perspectives. Such views can often throw up interesting insights.

What does it mean?

The project group needs to spend time discussing the evidence and emerging themes and coming to a consensus about what they mean. Achieving a common understanding around the interpretation of survey results will help to lay the foundation for an agreed programme of action to address any apparent shortfalls between what is desired and the actual state. *The key here are the discussions that take place and the insights that can be gained from them, rather than trying to achieve precision in the results.*

Moving forward

It is not the purpose of this diagnostic to delve too far into the next steps for improving any apparent deficiencies identified by the diagnostic process. However, it is worth observing that gaining agreement around next steps is of paramount importance.

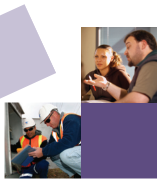
Furthermore, in selecting areas to focus on, it is worth considering both what is important and what is reasonably achievable within quite a short timeframe. Decisions also need to be made about what areas are of greatest priority so that the parties don't over commit themselves. Early wins help build confidence all round.

It is also important to integrate any activity into the mainstream of the organisation's activities. This is helpful in ensuring those involved aren't pulled in too many directions and can see the connections between their own priorities and any programme to improve workplace relationships.

We suggest that a project-based approach be taken to any work programme emerging from the diagnostic process so that clear goals, measures, resources, timeframes, review processes, etc. are part and parcel of the process.

1.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that your project team commission an independent third party to carry out the diagnostic survey. Independence provides both greater safety to those participating (especially in focus groups and individual interviews), as well as greater credibility for the results. If this isn't feasible due to cost considerations, then we suggest any face-to-face work be jointly undertaken by management and staff representatives who would share responsibility for asking questions with a clear up-front statement that no-one will be disadvantaged in any way for expressing their honest opinion. The Partnership Resource Centre can also recommend experienced practitioners from their group of associates.
2. In every case, it is important to ensure that a representative sample of managers, supervisors, and staff and union representatives that touch all parts of the organisation participate in the survey. The objective here is to get a range of different perspectives to consider.
3. The project group should be given responsibility for analysing and interpreting the results and making recommendations about the next steps.



APPENDIX 2:

MANAGING A DIAGNOSTIC PROJECT/PROCESS

The following tables set out a series of steps that need to be followed to prepare your organisation, carry out the diagnostic process, analyse the outcomes, and develop a plan of action.

You may find this a useful starting point for project planning. Use the third column to plan your timetable of events. Use the fifth for commenting on what you did or did not do and why. This will help you keep a record of the process and it will help at the evaluation stage.

Leadership preparation

Task	Responsibility	Time	OK	Comment
Set up planning meeting: leadership of both organisations	CEO and union leader			
Define scope/parameters/time	CEO and union leader			
Brief senior managers/national delegates	CEO and union leader			
Decide on project sponsors of joint steering group (drawn from senior leadership team and national (or appropriate) union representatives)	CEO and union leader			
Selection process for project leader/group (develop criteria for selection)	Sponsors or Joint steering group for strategy and reporting			
Develop overarching agreements	Joint steering group			
Identify common interests and potential outcomes	Joint steering group			
Determine resourcing requirements, including budget	Joint steering group			
Identify key milestones and reporting process	Joint steering group			
Agree on participation approaches	Joint steering group			
Identify external/internal support needed	Joint steering group			
Contract external facilitators if needed	Joint steering group			

Project team

Task	Responsibility	Time	OK	Comment
Select project team (if different from team above) • use mapping exercise if needed for selection	Project leader, joint steering group. Leadership group sign-off			
Assess project team training needs and give coaching or development as needed	Project manager/steering group			
Develop a communication plan • during and as follow-up • use mapping exercise	Project group			
Decide methodology for gathering information and getting involvement • use mapping exercise to ensure target for diagnostic is representative	Project group			
Regular and concise updates to senior leadership/union steering group	Project leader			

Questionnaire

Task	Responsibility	Time	OK	Comment
Decide method for using questionnaire • Individual interviews • Surveys • Focus groups (see next table) • Combination of different methods	Project leader/group			
Decide whether part or all of questionnaire is to be used (depends on focus)	Project group			
Interviews • Appoint independent person • Nominate suitably skilled representatives from each party	Project group (with approval joint steering group)			
Surveys				
Decide how wide to circulate				
Agree on time period for completion – keep it relatively short	Project group			
Write accompanying note to go with survey. Include purpose, need for evidence, follow-up process, return date	Project leader			
Report to senior leadership/union steering group	Project leader			

Focus groups

Task	Responsibility	Time	OK	Comment
Decide criteria for inviting each group and numbers Decide how many focus groups you need	Project group – with senior leadership/union sign-off where needed			
Organise dates, venues, materials	Project leader – with administration support			
Write explanation note and invite key information: venue, times, who else is attending focus group – no surprises!	Project leader (or delegate to group member)			
Agree on focus group questions – need to be in format for recording responses/evidence	Project group			
Agree on facilitators • either external with project team members • project team and co-opted others	Project group with approval from joint senior management/union steering group			
Train/coach facilitators, if needed, as part of preparation of the focus group sessions – both content and process	Project leader/facilitator			
Each facilitator write a summary of key points and impressions – use recording guide	Facilitators/project leader			

Information analysis

Task	Responsibility	Time	OK	Comment
Gather outcomes from all groups	Project leader			
Analyse and interpret information from questionnaire and focus groups, looking for recurring patterns, contradictions etc. Set alongside other sources of evidence – may also use resource person for this	Project leader and group			
Determine what other information is needed	Project leader/team			
Report outcomes to CEO/senior leaders/ union steering group	Project leader/group			

Communication and developing a plan

Task	Responsibility	Time	OK	Comment
Develop a communication plan including: • Outline of purpose and process of diagnostic • Presentation of outcomes for staff, union members, HR, managers • Actions that will be taken in response to outcomes	Project leader/group			
• Strategic planning meeting • Short-term no fail actions • Medium and long-term development and milestones	CEO/senior leadership/union leadership (secretary, organiser and delegates)			
Develop an implementation plan	Senior management/union steering group			

APPENDIX 3:

EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS

About three to four months after the diagnostic process has been completed and improvement programmes are being initiated, it is important to review the overall effectiveness of what has been taking place. Set out below are a number of questions for the project group (and/or any steering group) to reflect on. (This may involve talking to some of the people who participated, as well as those who sponsored the activity.) These questions are designed to help evaluate the tool itself and the way in which it was used by the organisation.

1. Was (and how was) the commitment of both parties to the process evident throughout?
2. What worked well and what didn't within the project group (establishment, working together, settling on methodology etc)?
3. How clear and useful were the guidelines? Anything missing?
4. Were the questions to be answered in focus group, interviews, and in the questionnaire clear and relevant for your purposes? If not, identify areas of weakness.
5. How satisfied are you with the information you were able to gather: both formal evidence and information from interviews and questionnaires?
6. Are you satisfied with the quality of analysis undertaken by your project group? Do you feel confident that you have identified the really important issues as they relate to the state of partnership inside your organisation?
7. Did the project group work effectively in bringing together all the evidence, analysing and agreeing on a course of action?
8. Do you see evidence of any changes in attitude resulting from carrying out this diagnostic process?
9. How have people perceived the value (or otherwise) of this process?
10. How well are initiatives to improve partnership relations arising from the use of the diagnostic being integrated into the mainstream activities and strategies of your organisation?

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For more information on how the Partnership Resource Centre can help develop a positive environment in your workplace, contact:

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