



Potential Solutions

Problematic Practice

Managers sometimes make major decisions having gotten zero input from affected staff;

or managers have no alternative to seeking out informal input from employees one by one.

Sustainable Practice

Every nonprofit needs built-in channels for communication from employees to decision-makers. In non-union workplaces, there are several ways to structure this:

- Non-management staff can elect representatives to slots on the board and/or management team;
- Regular confidential surveys by all staff on job satisfaction;
- 360 evaluations of managers by all supervisees and team members.

Strategic planning processes should include input from all ongoing staff and contractors, placing extra value on input from the organizers with the most contact with the constituency.

In management or board meetings, when a topic comes up that affects certain jobs, invite the relevant staff to join the discussion or give input before making decisions, as well as later at the implementation and evaluation stages.

Aspirational Practice

Consider reconfiguring job responsibilities so that longer-term employees have some project-management or organization-wide responsibilities, with commensurate pay increases, as in [this example](#) or [this one](#).

Consider exploring more horizontal [organizational structures](#).

Employee complaints and conflicts with management are ignored—or worse, retaliated against.

Establish a conflict mediation process, whistleblower protection, a staff ombudsperson and/or a grievance process in personnel policies, including conditions for outside mediation.

Normalize internal conflict not as failure, but as a critical opportunity to learn, lead and build trust. Welcome differences of perspective and principled debate over opinions and ideas (as long as there is no berating or harassment of individuals).

Use external, paid professional mediators when internal conflicts become too emotionally heated to resolve internally.

Consider outsourcing employee relations in general to a specialist (such as [this one](#)), a more affordable option than an HR position.