

Alert management recognizes the need for informing employees about the policies and problems of their organization and trying to keep them actively interested in its success. That concept has guided the comprehensive employee relations program developed, since 1944, by Pitney Bowes, Inc. (PB), Stamford, CT. (PB, a major manufacturer of mailing and business equipment systems with plants and offices in 14 countries, has a virtually non-unionized employee family of 18,000.) Although the program has gradually become formalized, its fundamental principle has remained unchanged. As put by Thomas F. McGarry, Vice President-Corporate Communications, this is to: "listen as well as talk and have many ways in which to do so."

Today, the overall program includes annual Jobholders Meetings, Employee Annual Reports, and Employee-Management Council, a Question-and-Request program, a Management Newsletter, and Bulletin Boards.

The Jobholders' Meetings, held each spring since 1947, are based on the theory that employees who devote their time and talents to the company are entitled to the same treatment as the stockholders who invest their money in it. Such meetings are two hours in length, staged in PB plants and field offices throughout the country, held on company time, and attended by groups of not more than 300. . . Each employee is provided in advance with copies of both the Stockholder Report (sent to his or her home) and the Jobholders' Report (delivered at work stations). . . At the meeting, a PB officer elaborates on the company's activities and discusses both problems and progress. A Q&A period follows.

This year, for the first time, a slide-film, titled "What's New at PB," has been used. It's a 12-minute, 64-slide presentation which describes new programs, products, and policies and was written and illustrated under the direction of Edith Daniell, PB's Manager of Editorial Services.

The annual Jobholders' Report was introduced five years ago and is designed to

review internal events "judged to be of greatest concern to the people of PB and their families." The 1977 issue is 24 pages long, replete with action photos of PB personnel, and informs its readers that, among other things: PB operates from "Stamford to Singapore"; its employees participate in community activities; more than \$20 million in benefits went to PB families last year; and PB-ers' pay rose an average of 7.7 in 1976.

A major role in the PB employee relations program is played by the 33-year-old Council of Personnel Relations (CPR). Its purpose is to provide both "frank and free exchange of views" and "guidance, support, and information to employees who need help on personal problems." It has councils at section, department, division, and top management levels and 1,000 employee and management representatives now participate in its work. Each council has co-chairmen who are members of the council which is next above it.

The main Council of 18 meets at headquarters. There are nine employee representatives and nine top-level executives. Among the latter are Paul T. Corvallis, Director of Corporate Employee Relations, and Theodore J. Olsen, Vice President of Employee Relations, an ex-officio member. Similar PB Councils operate in Canada, England, and Germany.

At monthly meetings, the employer and employee groups make requests of or criticize or compliment one another. Problems they can't resolve are referred to the next higher level. Examples of matters handled last year are: eligibility requirements for PB scholarships; new procedures for issuing safety shoes; parking lot security; recruitment of minority and female workers. . . As a result of a new training program for participants, the "response time to questions has improved a lot" and "credibility has been strengthened."

The Councils serve, too, as a channel for communicating PB policies and receiving reactions to them. For example, personnel procedures which are not

clearly understood are now explained periodically (by supervisors) at the sectional meetings.

A Question and Request program enables employees to ask about work-oriented problems and policies. Forms are available at conveniently placed suggestion boxes. Each question is answered promptly and fully by the employee relations department or an executive to whom it is referred. In either case, the responder's name and title are given. Workers who want anonymity simply don't sign the form; both question and answer are then published on plant bulletin boards. The latter also carry corporate fliers, releases and announcements of job openings, employee activities, etc.

To help keep middle-management informed about PB operations and plans, a six-page newsletter titled "Management Report" is released periodically by the Editorial Services Department. Issues carry messages from Allen and discussions of sales, the economy, divisional events, etc. Five hundred copies of each issue are distributed to PB's managers.

Although always seeking improvements, PB executives are quite pleased with what the program appears to be accomplishing. Board Chairman and CEO Fred T. Allen credits it with stimulating increased job satisfaction and organizational efficiency. And those developments have clearly contributed to such rewarding conditions as these: never anything resembling a strike, or even a slow-down, at any location; a low (2-4%) rate of absenteeism; help in recruitment; instances of extra efforts by workers during times of crisis; and a tendency to identify success of the company with employees' own interests.

The program has also earned valuable publicity. For example, this year there have been radio interviews by AP, UPI, CBS, and Mutual, a major feature in Nation's Business, and a New York Times News Service article; and extensive coverage by media in plant and branch-office communities.

There have been numerous invitations for PB executives to describe the program to other interested companies. A recent

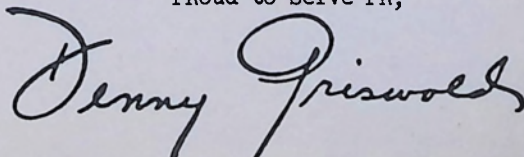
instance is an appearance by George B. Harvey, PB Group Vice President, Business Equipment, before a Borg-Warner Seminar, in Chicago, IL. He pointed out that the PB effort confirms "the potential that exists within any business for the kind of interpersonal relationships that are good for people and good for business, too." He further listed such concepts as these as contributing to a successful employee relations program: provide for two-way communication ("unless your employees and other publics can talk back to you, your most elaborate information system will fall flat"); have it run by the people it is trying to reach, such as by setting up a working committee which represents a cross-section of the employee community; involve the workers' families; keep up a constant educational campaign for both employee and management representatives; plan to devote a lot of time and money; and don't expect it to pay off quickly.

Harvey summarizes the PB concept in these words: "At last, employees understand what a corporation must do to survive; at last, management knows what it must do to earn cooperation. Like any people who live together successfully, they accommodate, flex, listen. In the process, they have digested each other's viewpoints and found common loyalties, goals, and standards."

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Editor