

Levels of Participation

There is no hard and fast rule as to which level of management, workers participation in management should be introduced. In fact participation is possible at all levels of management. The only difference is that of degree and nature of application. For example, it may be light or not so vigorous at the top level and may be very strong and vigorous at a lower level. A lot depends upon the nature of work, nature of functions, quality of manpower, strength of workers, attitude of trade unions, attitude of management and the organizational culture. There are other factors which are also responsible for the application of workers participation in management like the government policy on labor. Industrial Acts, phases of trade cycle, economic and political stability and situation. Workers participation is more of a balancing situation. When there is more use of authority in decision making participation in management will be negligible but when the use of authority is in small proportion, participation will be maximum. In between the two elements more use of authority and less use of authority the nature of participation will also depend upon the type of issues, attitude of employees, management culture and the past experience of management.

Broadly speaking there are five levels of workers participation in management.

1. INFORMATION PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Information participation ensures that the employees are in a position to receive information and express their views pertaining to the matters of general and economic importance. The management depends upon the joint committee for informing the workers about the business conditions and also informs them about the various changes put into effect in the working of the organization.

2. ASSOCIATIVE PARTICIPATION LEVEL

In this level of participation members have the right to receive information discuss and give suggestions on the general and economic conditions of the organization like production, markets, finance and technology affecting the position of the organization or organizations profit and loss account. The workers have the right to receive information and discuss important matters like change in the methods of production, expansion of business or closing of a particular unit. The workers not only receive information and discuss the issues but when suggestions are made it is binding on the management.

3. CONSULTATIVE PARTICIPATION LEVEL

In such level of participation workers are consulted on the matters of employee welfare such as work, safety, health and training. It involves a higher degree of sharing of views of the workers and giving them an opportunity to express their feelings and opinions. In this level of participation it is the management's right to accept the suggestions of the workers given at the participative forum. Workers suggestions are only of advisory nature.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Administrative participation gives a greater degree of sharing of authority and responsibility of management functions. The issues taken at this level are welfare, safety, training, preparing work schedules, working hours, incentives, holidays and rewards for valuable suggestions. In this level of participation alternatives are given by the management and the workers select the best from those decided for smooth implementation and efficient administration.

5. DECISIVE PARTICIPATION LEVEL

This is the highest form of participation where decisions are taken jointly on the matters relating to production, welfare, economic, financial and administrative policies. Delegation of authority and responsibility of managerial functions to the workers are huge at this level of participation. When participation is done at this level it speaks of democracy and the democratic style of management. It also shows the faith and trust between management and the employees.