

## **Senior Workers' Benefits and Longevity Rewards – Roundtable discussion**

**Democracy at Work conference June 2008, New Orleans LA**

**Facilitator/Presenter: Shanta Sacharoff**

**Builders Construction** – since 1979 9 members  
Ages 46-67

**Isthmus Engineering** – 27 members, 50 employees, ages 30's-64

- Lots of assets/capital
- Equity account
- “last man standing”
- more equitable distribution
- need young blood, nobody wants to leave
- what's my share of the pile of money
- CPA said when member leaves gets % of profits distributed over several years after you leave
- Been in co-op for 15 years, eligible for “pension”

**Union Cab Co-Op** – ages 18-70's – high turnover

- Shift equity charge, every shift charge \$2.50
- 9 years after it will go back to you
- every 2500 hours of work you get a percentage bump on the meter – get back by longevity
- do they put a cap on it? Because then “could” be 100% of the meter
- profit dividends they keep in equity – then distribute after 9 years

**Design Action** – since 2004, 6 members ages 25-43

- Researching longevity benefits now, instituting accrued paid vacations for longevity
- Union offers pension plan
- Flat pay rate

**Cheeseboard** – 40 years – median age 50's

- Changed bylaws to accommodate founder in her 80's to work 15 hours and still get benefits
- Figuring out a way to keep paying her
- “Moldy Oldy” fund
- make same hourly wage

**Ecology Action** – nonprofit collectively-run – ages 23-56 – 8 members

- Union organizing drive and fired the boss
- Working towards equalized pay structure
- Senior bonus – accrue vacation time at a different rate for 9 years of work or more
- Had to let go of 63 year old worker because couldn't sustain their health problems

### **Other Avenues – 37 years**

- Used to be same pay rate – wasn't fair with turnover because always training
- More fair: salary difference reward for staying but too little to mean much
- All get annual raises depending on the year
- Respectful of seniors physical limitations
- Gave time and space

### **Community Builders**

- Don't have a succession plan
- Own their building – a separate coop
- No pension
- Will divide up bldg sale equally when sold
- Bldg is pension plan for the 7 owners of the building
- No biz plan for new bldg (and for remaining workers)

### **Isthmus**

- Different wage scale
- Equity plan: money paid in by worker
- Vesting period then pay for some years
- No benefits (out of pocket)
- Pay employees' insurance
- Employed for 2 years then can buy in at \$10k, go thru process to become member
- Someone who leaves gets reasonable share of what biz is worth – one formula is to pay a salary for a few years
- Equity: everything the coop has
- Personal equity account: initial \$10k + patronage
- Incentive to leave biz in good condition

### **Cheeseboard**

- Culturally ingrained to make equal wage – some folks don't produce as much but still honor the culture
- Switches jobs roles around
- Pays good wages for that kind of work

### **Ecology Action**

- Hard time giving themselves a raise

### **Other Avenues**

- Buy membership \$150

### **Design Action**

- No membership buy-in
- Patronage distributed on amount of hours worked
- Only now able to institute paid vacations/holidays, and give raise

Unions and Coops – get into union’s pension plan, or USFWC – we pay out of our own pockets

**Woodshanti**

- Succession plan
- Flat pay
- \$5k buy in + interest
- comp match to putting money aside
- longevity – 10 years some kind of compensation to benefit longevity
- took them 5 years to start taking care of themselves
- plan and set goals for future and for generations behind you
- did a business plan and managed to get 11% raise