

The Innovative Workplace: A Practical Guide to Partnership and Performance



An tIonad Náisiúnta Comhpháirtíochta agus Feidhmíochta
National Centre for Partnership & Performance

**The Innovative Workplace:
A Practical Guide to
Partnership and Performance**

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

1.1 About the Guide

The current economic crisis reinforces the urgency of our need to restore competitiveness in the Irish economy. Key to this will be the innovative solutions that companies must find to address the challenges they are facing in the marketplace. The principles of employee involvement have never seemed more relevant as an under-utilized key to addressing these challenges.

This Guide has been designed to assist you and others in your organisation to work together to build a more productive and innovative workplace. Its aim is to help you identify ways in which your organisation can achieve improved performance levels by developing a partnership culture based on high levels of employee involvement and engagement.

Creating a partnership-based high-performance, high quality workplace is a developmental process. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. As a result, the Guide is not designed to be read in a strictly linear fashion. Different elements will be useful at different stages in your organisation's development cycle.

The Guide is intended to be adapted and used as appropriate within your organisation.

For some, this Guide will be useful primarily in providing insights into ways of improving the quality and impact of employee involvement, participation and partnership.

For others, the Guide will serve to highlight approaches to improving organisational performance and competitiveness.

We have endeavoured to show throughout this document that these goals go hand-in-hand with each other, and that the twin objectives of partnership and performance are intrinsically linked.

Improved organisational performance is best achieved and sustained when it is built on a culture of employee involvement. Of course, the model of employee involvement will vary depending on the organisation, and can entail a reliance on direct staff engagement, or on representative partnership, or on a combination of both. Whatever the system in use, it can maximise levels of employee engagement when it combines a focus on the organisation's business needs and strategic objectives with a focus on the needs of the employees and their representatives.

1.2 The Strategic Context – Innovative Paths to Economic Recovery

This Practical Guide to Partnership and Performance is published as current economic circumstances create more demanding and complex challenges for us all. The challenge of restoring the competitiveness of the Irish economy depends on higher productivity levels across all sectors of the economy.

RELATED RESOURCES

→ The National Workplace Strategy – www.workplacestrategy.ie

Workplace innovation and organisational change are urgent necessities in this climate. Irrespective of what type of organisation you work in, whether it is a large multinational firm, a small or medium enterprise, or a public service organisation, each of us is faced with a common challenge: how can we build higher levels of organisational performance while maintaining a high quality of working life?

The answer to this question is of course multi-faceted. One thing that we can be certain of is that success will depend on finding new ways to work together in addressing the challenges that we face.

The **National Workplace Strategy** provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of workplace change and innovation in driving improved competitiveness in the private sector, and in improving efficiencies and service levels in the public sector. The ‘workplace of the future’ described by the National Workplace Strategy is one in which we all – managers, workers and union representatives – go about our daily business and interactions with a view to improving organisational performance levels and sustaining employment and maintaining a high quality of working life.

The path to achieving this type of organisation is enabled by a quality partnership approach to workplace change and innovation, where high levels of employee engagement and involvement underpin better performance outcomes.

The Business Case for Partnership

The business case for workplace partnership is well established. Research internationally and in Ireland shows the association between greater levels of employee involvement, engagement and empowerment in the day-to-day running of companies and organisations, and outcomes including significant improvements in productivity, innovation, employee retention, industrial relations, and quality of working life. Table 1 highlights the benefits of a partnership culture in the organisation:

TABLE 1 Summary of Benefits of Partnership in the Workplace

Overall performance	Improved productivity	Innovation	Worker benefits
Efficiency	Increased levels of production	Productivity growth	Financial benefits – sharing the gains
Profit increases	Faster, more efficient order processing	Formal and informal learning increases	Tax savings from employee financial involvement schemes
Higher return on assets	Improved quality	More suggestions – access to innovative ideas	More control over work
Value added increases	Better cost management	Employees and unions increasingly seen as problem solving resources	Greater responsibility, less monotony
Improved standards	Tax efficiencies from employee financial involvement	More product development	Reduced stress levels
Higher sales		Faster adaptation to market changes	Opportunity to ‘have a say’
Decreased costs			Increased opportunity for learning, training and career development
Faster pace of work			Greater match between employee needs and union activities
Improved recruitment			Less conflict and grievances
Improved staff retention			Greater possibility for flexible working arrangements

Source: ‘Partnership Works – The International Evidence’, NCPP (2002)

The Workplace of the Future

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2 The Workplace of the Future

The ‘**Workplace of the Future**’ describes what a high-performing, high quality workplace looks like.

It identifies a workplace with the following nine characteristics:

- Agile
- Customer-centred
- Networked
- Knowledge-based
- High-Performing
- Involved and Participatory
- Continually Learning
- Responsive to Employee Needs
- Proactively Diverse

These essential characteristics of any high-performance organisation are described in more detail in Appendix 3. Meanwhile, the next section of the Guide describes pathways to building the ‘Workplace of the Future’.

Workplace
of the
Future

AGILE NETWORKED INVOLVED AND PARTICIPATORY
PROACTIVELY DIVERSE
CUSTOMER FOCUSED HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE
KNOWLEDGE INTENSIVE
RESPONSIVE TO EMPLOYEE NEEDS

Paths to Partnership

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3 Paths to Partnership

This section outlines the steps you can take towards building an innovative workplace based on a partnership culture.

The section is structured in five main parts:

- 3.1 **Getting To Go**
- 3.2 **First Steps**
- 3.3 **Next Steps**
- 4.0 **Embedding and Sustaining Partnership**
- 5.0 **Reviewing and Evaluating Partnership**

THE INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE



3.1 Getting To Go

Before you undertake to develop or enhance partnership in your workplace, be aware that a sustainable culture of organisational change and innovation through partnership can only be achieved by building relationships between key stakeholders that are based on trust, communication, transparency, mutual interest and a willingness to experiment and take risks. While these will take time to evolve, there are a number of tangible measures that can help at an early stage to shape the required attitudes and behaviours.

Clearly, these considerations apply at all stages in the evolution of a partnership culture in your organisation, and should be reviewed and renewed regularly.

- Establish and maintain a strong and visible **commitment** by the CEO and senior management team to developing a partnership culture in the organisation
- Establish and maintain a clear **commitment of support** by employees (and trade union representatives, where present) to tackling issues and challenges in a co-operative, collaborative and participative manner.

While such commitment can range from a verbal undertaking by all sides to a formalised statement of intent, the key is to ensure that each party is aware, and convinced, of the positive intentions of the other party.

- Develop an outcomes-focused **Business Case** identifying the reasons behind the development of a partnership approach to organisational change and innovation
- Develop and maintain a **shared approach to solving problems**, identifying solutions, taking responsibility for implementation and delivery, and ownership of outcomes, both positive and negative
- Identify appropriate **roles and responsibilities** for key stakeholders (see following section)
- Support the development of appropriate **skills and competencies** for managing change in a partnership manner, among all groupings and stakeholders in the organisation (see Appendix 3).

Roles and responsibilities

One of the key challenges for a partnership-based innovative organisation is to understand the evolving roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders.

Effective and sustainable workplace partnership requires the development of higher levels of employee involvement and engagement within our workplaces. In such a participatory culture, the roles and responsibilities of those involved could be characterised as follows:

TABLE 2 Stakeholder Roles and Competencies

Role	Characteristics
Employer / Manager	<p>Has a management style that is open and encouraging to participation – rather than hierarchical and rigid;</p> <p>Values the contribution of employees at all levels;</p> <p>Welcomes and rewards new ideas from employees;</p> <p>In developing a partnership culture, is prepared to take new approaches to work organisation and people management, as well as new forms of leadership and new managerial competencies.</p>
Trade Union	<p>Displays an openness to change;</p> <p>Has a clear willingness to take advantage of the opportunities and supports that a partnership culture can provide;</p> <p>Takes a proactive role in the management of change. Develops capacity and competencies for leading change.</p>
Employee	<p>Supports change and encourages workplace innovation;</p> <p>Adopts a more proactive role in working with employers;</p> <p>Is prepared to engage with employers in collaborative efforts to resolve workplace issues, enhance performance and improve the quality of working life.</p>

3.2 First Steps

Once you are satisfied that the basic conditions are in place to help support the emergence of a partnership culture, you are ready to take the first steps on your journey to building the Workplace of the Future.



RELATED RESOURCES

- Workplace Innovation Fund:
www.workplacestrategy.ie/wif
- Enterprise Ireland:
www.enterprise-ireland.com
- IDA:
www.ida.ie
- Skillnets:
www.skillnets.ie
- FÁS:
www.fas.ie
- Local Authorities:
www.lanpag.ie
- Health Sector:
www.hsnpf.ie

- **Integrate partnership in your strategic vision.** It is vital to ensure that your partnership initiative is clearly linked from the very outset to your organisation's overall business strategy and objectives. It should be embedded and integrated in every aspect of your company's vision and strategic goals.
- **Focus on Strategic Goals and Business Outcomes.** Partnership is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is a means of building a high-performance, high-quality workplace that delivers mutual gains for all: employers, managers, employees, customers, suppliers, etc. Focusing on key issues of concern to management, unions and employees will help to ensure that partnership remains a tool for achieving an objective rather than becoming the objective itself.
- **Develop a shared, evidence-based shared business case.** In building the business case, it is important to establish a shared understanding of the competitive and productivity challenges facing your organisation. This requires all stakeholders to have ready access to, and a good understanding of, critical business performance information, as well as a good understanding of employee needs and workforce issues. Consider whether new data (e.g. business intelligence, staff climate surveys, etc) are required, or whether briefing sessions are needed to make everyone aware of existing data.

- **Build a picture of your existing capacity for partnership.** Many companies in Ireland today embrace what we would describe as a partnership approach to workplace development without actually calling it ‘partnership’. For example, you might already have an effective system for informing and consulting your employees, or have developed practices that allow for high levels of employee involvement and participation in the day-to-day running of the business. In this scenario, it may be useful to consolidate these practices within a more integrated strategic framework, where the benefits of innovative work practices can be used to complement and support each other. On the other hand, there might be no history or culture of managers and employees working in partnership in your company. If this is the case, you will need to build your partnership initiative carefully and slowly from the ground up.
- **Identify partnership champions:** Identify and empower partnership ‘champions’ throughout your workforce, who will promote and drive a culture of involvement and participation across the organisation.
- **Consider establishing a working group to kick-start the process:** It may also be useful to consider setting up a ‘Workplace Innovation and Partnership Group’ to kick-start the partnership process. The group can be as formal or as informal as you wish, and can be used to review existing workplace practices, engage in staff consultation and propose new ways of promoting employee involvement in problem-solving and decision-making across the organisation.

- **Identify external resources:** Identify if there are any State financial or other supports available to assist you. There are a number of funding sources that your organisation may be able to draw on to assist your partnership and innovation activities.

3.3 Next Steps

As partnership begins to become established within the organisation, there are a number of practices and processes that can help embed this way of working into the organisational culture.

Some practices and processes that can help you achieve this are as follows:

- **Brand your activities:** It is vital to communicate the 'big picture' to stakeholders. Provide a regular 'bird's eye view' of the ways in which partnership and employee involvement is happening in the organisation, and highlight some of the achievements and benefits for management and staff.

- **Encourage responsibility:** Encourage individual and collective responsibility for the behaviours and attitudes that contribute to a culture of Partnership in the workplace. Make sure that everyone in the organisation understands their own responsibility in developing the partnership culture. Incorporate partnership behaviour into the recruitment, induction, training, and performance-management systems in the organisation.
- **Recognise and reward:** Recognise and reward behaviours and attitudes that contribute to a culture of Partnership in the workplace, particularly through the performance management system.

Embedding Partnership: Practices and Process

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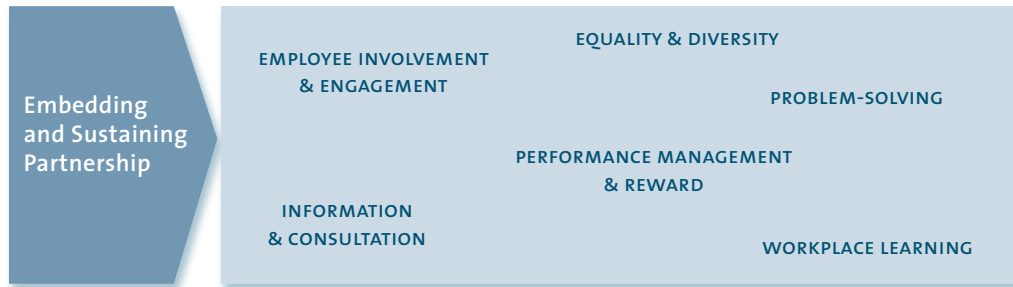
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4 Embedding Partnership: Practices and Processes

Embedding workplace Partnership in a viable and sustainable manner can be achieved through a range of workplace practices, such as:

- **Employee involvement and engagement**
- **Information and consultation**
- **Problem-solving**
- **Workplace learning**
- **Performance management and reward**
- **Equality and diversity**

Each of these is dealt with in more detail in the next section.



4.1 Employee Involvement and Engagement

High levels of employee participation are the key to workplace innovation and a recognised source of competitive advantage. Significant improvements in productivity, innovation and employee retention have all been attributed to greater levels of employee involvement, engagement and empowerment in the day-to-day running of Irish companies and organisations. Employee participation and partnership has also been shown to improve the quality of working life for all concerned, employer and employee alike.

Increased participation and involvement of employees can be achieved through a strong emphasis on teamwork and staff involvement in business and strategic planning. Higher levels of employee involvement and increased participation in problem solving not only enhance the quality of decision-making but can only underpin its effective implementation. International research shows that where employees both understand the need for change and have an opportunity to contribute to this process, there is increased potential for the delivery of more widespread and durable change as the employees proactively drive the change process. Increased employee involvement and participation can also result in improving the working relationship between management and workers.

Consider the following measures to stimulate employee involvement and participation in your workplace:

- Develop more effective information sharing and communication;
- Develop employee voice and suggestion schemes
- Develop effective problem-solving capabilities across all grades in the workforce;
- Prioritise support for workplace learning;

- Experiment with and develop the organisation's approach to continuous improvement
- Adopt innovative performance improvement systems by reconfiguring organisational structures and introducing novel reward systems

4.2 Information and Consultation

Although a high-performance workplace is characterised by a variety of partnership practices, effective information and consultation arrangements are its very cornerstone. In particular, they serve as a catalyst for developing the innovative working practices, work cultures and new forms of work organisation that are necessary to cope with the pace of change in a modern economy.

National and international research highlights the fact that employees are the key asset in a knowledge-based economy. However, if they do not receive adequate information and are not properly consulted about ongoing change within their organisation, then the potential for them to make an effective contribution to the management of this change is severely compromised. As a result, putting in place processes for information-sharing and consultation is critical to building a culture of workplace partnership across the organisation.

Developing more effective information-sharing and consultation mechanisms encourages shared ownership of organisational challenges and successes.

Practical Steps

To transform your organisation into one where information is shared and employees consulted in an atmosphere of openness and trust, the following should be considered:

- Create opportunities where people who do not normally meet can do so as equals. Try to do this without setting an agenda – what you are trying to achieve, at least initially, is the free flow of communication across departmental and job-role lines. Crucially, you need to ensure that information-sharing and consultation does not become a one-way street.
- Conduct a series of engagement sessions where your Partnership champions spread the idea of workplace partnership to the wider organisation and elicit feedback from employees. Participants in these sessions should be clear that these are not ‘more of the same’ top-down briefings where management passes on information to the workforce – the engagement sessions should be as much about gathering ideas and opinions as passing information.

- Review your current practices in the area of information-sharing and consultation. Identify the good practices you have in place and explore ways in which you can build on these. In particular, examine opportunities for collaborative problem-solving (see checklist below)
- Ensure that any new initiatives in relation to information and consultation are aligned with the objectives of your organisation's approach to employee relations and industrial relations (see checklist on page 30 overleaf).
- Identify past initiatives or actions where the associated change process benefited from effective engagement and dialogue with employees.
- Understand that information and consultation arrangements evolve as trust grows, and allow room for experimentation, innovation and review.
- Invest in building the capacity of staff to effectively engage in information and consultation activities.

RELATED RESOURCES

- NCPP (2004) *'EU Information and Consultation Directive: Everything You Need to Know'*
- NCPP (2004) *'A Case Study Review of Current Practice'*
- NCPP (2005) *'Disseminating Best Practice: Proceedings of the NCPP's Regional Seminar Series'*
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2007) – Explanatory Booklet on Information and Consultation
- IBEC – Code of Practice, Explanatory Booklets, Case Studies
- ICTU (2008) – Information and Consultation Guide

Checklist on Information and Consultation

Direct consultation

Individual consultation

Performance Reviews

Training & Development Reviews

Employee appraisal/ 360 degree systems

One-to-one meetings

Employee surveys/ attitude surveys

Suggestion boxes

Group consultation

Temporary Groups – time limited and issue specific
i.e. project groups, task forces or focus groups

Permanent groups – e.g. Quality Circles, or others that discuss work
related issues on an on-going basis

Indirect Consultation

Industrial Relations Structures and Agreements

Partnership-style arrangements

European Works Councils

Occupational Health and Safety

Collective Redundancies

Mergers and Acquisitions

Pension Trustees

4.3 Problem solving

Improve your organisation's problem-solving capacity by focusing on the generation of creative and credible solutions, leveraging the talents of everyone in your workplace.

- Anticipate and solve problems using a consensus-based approach.
- Acknowledge the importance of building shared understanding and objectives.
- Identify and implement creative solutions in a group setting and engage in consultative decision making.
- A collaborative approach to problem-solving builds:
 - A shared understanding of issues under discussion
 - Team commitment to achieving goals through joint problem-solving
 - Awareness of formal and informal joint problem-solving techniques

It also encourages team members to:

- Maintain an objective viewpoint when engaged in problem-solving
- Take account of the perspectives of a range of stakeholders before deciding on a solution

RELATED RESOURCES

- NCPP (2006)
*Building Learning Organisations
Through Networking*
- www.fas.ie
- www.skillsireland.ie

- Weigh up the costs and benefits of specific solutions
- Search for a win-win solution for the team
- Implement group decisions effectively
- Monitor and evaluate outcomes
- Remain focused on the main problem without getting side-tracked on minor issues

4.4 Workplace Learning

Within individual companies and organisations, learning, knowledge sharing, reskilling and upskilling are essential to maintaining competitiveness and performance levels. If learning is to be valued and to be effective in organizations, then clearly learning must be shared. It has to be something more than information/knowledge that is stored in individuals' heads and more than simply sending employees on a two or three day training course.

Learning at work must be a valued activity - employees and managers must view learning as a valuable and valued organizational activity if they are going to engage in it. This means that learning at work must have a demonstrable value. For some employees this might involve promotion or other awards, for others it might be altered working practices or opportunities to engage outside of their roles, for others still a chance to build their qualifications or skills portfolio.

From an organisation's perspective learning must have value in that it is seen to contribute to some type of efficiency improvement, greater ability to attract and retain high-calibre employees or greater ability to weather change and restructuring.

Practical Steps

Here are some steps you might take to encourage learning in your organisation:

- Adopt a systematic approach to learning. This will enable your organization to create a tangible link between strategy and the design and delivery of training and development activities.
- Your organization can support learning by fostering a more communicative and collaborative environment in which individuals learn from each other. Open communication is closely associated with strong teamwork and a willingness to share good practice or relevant information.
- Establish strong links with skill formation systems or validation bodies such as the FÁS 'Excellence Through People' standard or links with various accreditation bodies. These close linkages are seen both as a testament to the quality of learning efforts and will provide useful benchmarks of standards within your company.

- It is also highly important to integrate learning within complementary HR systems e.g. policies and procedures governing recruitment, selection and induction, HR planning, performance management and reward, career development and indeed job and work design.
- Encourage the establishment of debriefing sessions after formal training/learning events to facilitate and enhance shared learning opportunities for example, weekly and monthly meeting arrangements across different functional areas
- Promote learning within your organization as a business investment that pays dividends for the organisation, the workforce and customers.

4.5 Performance management and reward

Performance management is a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to an organisation by improving the performance of the people who work in it and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors.

Good performance management systems have been shown to be one of the key ways of driving organisational behaviour, not just in terms of managing individual performance levels, but also in reinforcing the emergence of a changing organisational culture.

In terms of embedding and sustaining partnership in your organisation, partnership-based behaviours and activities should be fully integrated into your performance-management and reward systems.

The training and development system in the organisation should be responsive to training needs in relation to partnership competencies.

Try to ensure that the initiatives you take are co-ordinated and mutually reinforcing, so that they can be framed within a context of continuous improvement in workplace practices.

4.6 Equality and Diversity

The National Workplace Strategy emphasises the importance of proactively embracing and championing diversity in the workplace. Recent research commissioned by the NCPP and the Equality Authority demonstrates the strong business benefits accruing to organisations from having pro-active and integrated equality and diversity strategies, including:

- Employee outcomes: commitment, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, work-life balance, reduced stress, etc.
- Workplace performance outcomes: reductions in absenteeism and staff turnover, improved employee relations, workplace innovation and creativity, etc.

RELATED RESOURCES

- Monks (2007)
'The Business Impact of Equality and Diversity'
- NCPP / Equality Authority
(2008) *New Models of High Performance Work Systems: The Business Case for Strategic HRM, Partnership and Diversity & Equality Systems'*

- Business performance outcomes: improved recruitment and retention, product/service innovation levels, labour productivity levels, increased market opportunities, enhancement of organisational reputation to suppliers, customers and prospective and existing employees, and changes to organisational culture, such as improved working relations, and reductions in litigation.

Critical Success Factors

Diversity in and of itself is not guaranteed to improve business performance. Instead, it must be managed and its potential leveraged if improvements in performance are to be realised. Monks (2007) identifies a number of critical success factors, including:

- **Leadership:** Top management support and committed high profile leaders who will demonstrate the importance of equality and diversity.
- **Vision and values:** Incorporation of equality and diversity into the organisational vision and values, thereby ensuring that it becomes a core activity
- **Integration of equality and diversity objectives into business objectives:** Include equality and diversity issues in the setting of group and individual objectives, and in performance management and reward and recognition systems.
- **Customisation of equality and diversity to fit with organisational strategy.** Assessment of specific needs of the organisation and the tailoring of the management of diversity to those needs

- **Ownership for equality and diversity must be spread throughout the organisation.** Adding diversity to the HR portfolio may isolate it, remove it from business planning, and lead to others not taking responsibility. A separate diversity function has been identified as a powerful element in some organisations, while others have found structures such as diversity councils valuable in spreading ownership. Those involved in the implementation of diversity must have the power and authority to initiate and influence organisational change.
- **Organisational support.** Training is required for a number of reasons:
 - I. To raise awareness and to develop competence and skills in relation to equality and diversity
 - II. To gain staff understanding and support for such initiatives
 - III. To support diverse teams
 - IV. For line managers engaged in the delivery of equality and diversity initiatives.
- **Measurement.** Reliable and robust measures are needed in order to indicate the impact of equality and diversity.
- **Integration.** Equality and diversity policies are integrated within and complementary to the other HR policies and practices within the HR system, and embedded into organisational change programmes.

Measurement, Evaluation and Review

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5 Measurement, Evaluation and Review

The development of an effective culture of employee involvement is an interactive and evolutionary process. At all stages of its development, it requires monitoring and evaluation. While it is important to keep a focus on improving the mechanics of the processes that have been developed to support the culture, **the most important issue for employees, unions and management to focus on is how effectively the arrangements are addressing key outcomes – both business performance outcomes and outcomes of concern to staff.**

Different organisations will identify the most appropriate ways to support outcome-focussed dialogue. There is a wide range of tools available to support organisations in reviewing their organisational culture, and helping to align any partnership initiatives with performance indicators. The NCPP has developed a number of tools for supporting the review and evaluation of partnership.

- The NCPP's '**Learning by Monitoring**' tool has been designed specifically to support formal partnership groups to review their impact and objectives (www.ncpp.ie)
- The **Online Organisational Innovation Evaluation** is an online questionnaire to enable organisations conduct a staff climate survey of change and innovation (www.ncpp.ie)

In addition, agencies including FÁS (Excellence Through People), the Health Services National Partnership Forum, the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group, and other, have developed benchmarks and indicators of innovation in organisations. The EU Commission has developed an online facility, IMPROVE, to enable SMEs to measure their innovation management capabilities.

RELATED RESOURCES

- NCPP
www.ncpp.ie
- FÁS
www.fas.ie/etp
- Innovation Benchmarking
for SMEs
www.improve-innovation.eu
- www.hsnpf.ie
- www.lanpag.ie

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Appendix 1

About the National Centre for Partnership and Performance

The National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP) is charged with supporting the development of high-performing, high-quality places of work, contributing to enhanced competitiveness in the economy, better public services and a better quality of working life. The NCPP works at a national level with relevant Government Departments and Agencies, and with the Social Partners, to promote change and innovation in Ireland's workplaces through increased levels of employee involvement and engagement. It also works to support sectoral-level initiatives in the public and private sectors.

The NCPP was first established in 2001, and in January 2007 was placed on a statutory footing as part of the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO). NESDO's other constituent bodies are the National Economic and Social Council (NECS) and the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF).

The NCPP provides information, research, advice and guidance materials to Irish public and private-sector organisations interested in exploring or implementing programmes of workplace change and innovation through partnership.

Appendix 2

Competency Development

The NCPP has developed a Competency Framework to support organisations undertaking a partnership approach to change. The competency definitions and behavioural indicators contained in the competency framework are drawn from the experience and knowledge of individuals in private and public sector organisations. The framework comprises a comprehensive set of skills and behaviours exhibited by employees and management when organisations achieve high performance through partnership. This framework is one of a series of tools for organisations dealing with change issues, and is specifically targeted at organisations that wish to improve performance using a participative approach to change. The framework is a common or core competency framework i.e., it is made up of the competencies that are appropriate to all roles and responsibilities across an entire organisation e.g., employees, managers, staff representatives, team members and team leaders.

RELATED RESOURCES

- NCPP Partnership Competency Framework: User Guidelines
- NCPP Partnership Competency Framework: Competency Cards

TABLE 2 Competency Framework for Building a Partnership Culture

1. Leadership
2. Organisational & Business Awareness
3. Communication
4. Building & Maintaining Relationships
5. Influencing
6. Problem Solving & Decision making
7. Innovative Thinking
8. Achievement Orientation
9. Championing Change through Partnership
10. Overcoming Barriers to Change

Appendix 3

Characteristics of the Workplace of the Future

Agile

The Agile workplace is one where all parts of the organisation and all employees are committed to the need for change and new ideas. Change is embraced willingly and all employees are constantly alert to opportunities for improvement and innovation. There a clear vision for where the organisation is going, with commitment to this vision at every level in the organisation. Everyone in the organisation clearly understands the looming challenges, and, from top down and from bottom up, all are committed to and ready for change. Channels of communication between managers, unions and employees are open and free-flowing, and management and unions have the right skills to manage change effectively.

Workers have the skills and support to adapt to change effectively.

Knowledge Intensive

This is where management and employees recognise that the knowledge content of all jobs is important to the organisation's performance, and that the knowledge required for all jobs will change and adapt regardless of the nature of the work. There a knowledge-management approach to the decision-making process. The skills, knowledge and creativity of every member of the workforce are properly recognised and taken advantage of. The organisation adequately harnesses the skills, knowledge and creativity of all its employees, and provides management and staff with adequate opportunity to input into how

it develops its products and/or services. The decision-makers at the top of the organisation understand the issues on the ground.

Customer Centred

The customer-centred workplace is one where all decisions are informed primarily by a customer, client or citizen viewpoint, and all employees understand the impact of their work on the end-user of their organisation's product or service. The needs of customers are central rather than peripheral to the decisions that are taken, and employees are empowered to bring the customer's perspective to the planning and decision-making process. There is a clear customer service policy in the organisation. People at every level understand their personal role in improving customer satisfaction levels. Customer satisfaction is regularly

measured and everyone understands the challenges.

Responsive to Employee needs

This workplace is one where management is alert to the needs and concerns of employees, and understands the importance of quality of working life for employees as individuals as well as for the overall well-being of the organisation. There is a good industrial relations and employee relations culture. Employees (and their representatives) have adequate opportunity to articulate their needs and concerns, and management are aware of and proactively responsive to the needs and concerns of employees. There a good health and safety culture. There a good work-life balance culture, with low levels of absenteeism, staff turnover, stress and burnout.

Networked

The Networked workplace that is one where the organisation and its people appreciate the need for external collaboration with business partners and suppliers, customers and research and educational institutions, and internal collaboration between different functions and grades. The organisation is constantly alert to the possibilities associated with collaboration, networking and clustering of activities.

Highly Productive

The highly productive workplace that is one where the organisation is structured around a high performance ethos. High performance is actively encouraged and rewarded at all levels. There is a constant focus on opportunities for improvement and a bias towards implementation. There is a productive industrial relations climate, with a culture of partnership between management, unions and staff.

There is a culture of high performance and continuous improvement supported by systems for employee information and consultation, where workers at every level have a clear understanding of the level to which they are expected to perform, receive clear feedback on how they are performing, are rewarded appropriately for their contributions, and are trained appropriately and sufficiently.

Involved and Participatory

The involved and participatory workplace is one where the organisation values and actively seeks involvement and participation by all employees. The culture, management systems and work processes are all designed to enable employees to become deeply involved in the search for sources of higher performance and innovation. Workers at every level feel informed about and aware of what is happening, and motivated and empowered to participate in the decision-making

processes. The organisational culture promotes the involvement of staff at all levels in the decision-making processes, where all voices are listened to, there is a climate of trust between management, workers and their representatives, and a culture of partnership at every level and in every part of the organisation.

Continually Learning

The continually learning workplace that is one where learning and experimentation are encouraged and there is an ongoing focus on training, skills and learning to increase the skill content in all work. All staff are expected to learn and develop new professional skills, and are supported in doing so. Likewise, all staff are supported in developing their personal skills. There are sufficient opportunities for all staff to access training and development opportunities, and that training and development is useful and

relevant for their current jobs, while also enhancing their future employability.

Proactively Diverse

The proactively diverse workplace is one where the organisation understands the value of diversity in terms of business benefits and employee well-being. Diversity is approached as an integral part of the organisation's culture and management. The workforce profile and customer profile is becoming more diverse, there is a culture of tolerance for diversity in the workplace, supported by proactive strategies and policies for managing diversity. Staff at all levels are aware of the policies for diversity management in the organisation, and are provided training on diversity and equality issues. Diversity and equality strategies are incorporated into overall corporate strategy, and data in recruitment, selection and promotion are monitored regularly.

Appendix 4

List of Resources

For a complete listing of resources, visit www.ncpp.ie

- NCPP Partnership Competency Framework: User Guidelines
- NCPP Partnership Competency Framework: Competency Cards
- The National Workplace Strategy – www.workplacestrategy.ie
- Workplace Innovation Fund – www.workplacestrategy.ie/wif
- Health Services National Partnership Forum – www.hsnpf.ie
- Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group – www.lanpag.ie
- FÁS – www.fas.ie
- SkillNets – www.skillnets.ie
- NCPP/Equality Authority (2008: New Models of High-Performance Work Systems: The Business Case for Strategic HRM, Partnership and Diversity and Equality Systems’ – www.ncpp.ie

- NCPP(2004): Achieving High Performance: Partnership Works – The International Evidence – www.ncpp.ie
- NCPP(2004) 'EU Information and Consultation Directive: Everything You Need to Know'
- NCPP(2004) ' A Case Study Review of Current Practice''
- NCPP(2005) 'Disseminating Best Practice: Proceedings of the NCPP's Regional Seminar Series' – www.ncpp.ie
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (2007) Explanatory Booklet on Information and Consultation – www.entemp.ie
- IBEC– Code of Practice, Explanatory Booklets, Case Studies – www.ibec.ie
- Monks(2007) 'The Business Impact of Equality and Diversity' – www.ncpp.ie
- NCPP(2006) Building Learning Organisations Through Networking – www.ncpp.ie
- EUSME Innovation Management Benchmarking – www.improve-innovation.eu

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