

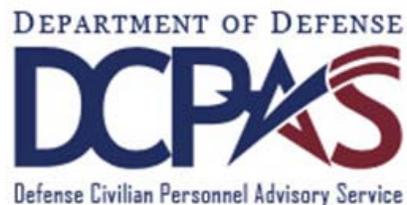
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DoD Labor-Management Relations Baseline Assessment

Findings Report

Submitted to:



FAS-LERD
Field Advisory Service -
Labor & Employee
Relations Division

The Department of Defense (DoD)
Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS)
Field Advisory Service (FAS) Labor & Employee
Relations Division (LERD)

Confidential



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September 23, 2011
Updated: October 27, 2011

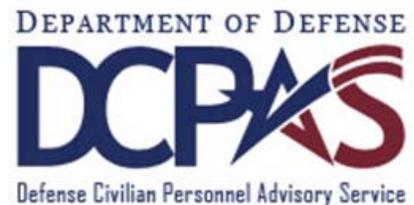
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Relations Division (LERD)

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Executive Summary

Executive Order 13522 requires that Executive Departments formulate actionable plans for assessing the baseline state of labor-management relations. This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of The Center for Organizational Excellence, Inc. (COE) flowing from the labor-management relations baseline assessment conducted for the Department of Defense (DoD), Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS), Field Advisory Services – Labor and Employee Relations Division (FAS-LERD) between June 1, 2011, and July 7, 2011. The intent of the assessment was to:

- Identify the effectiveness of and satisfaction with DoD’s labor-management forums
- Understand perceptions about cooperation between management and Union representatives
- Understand perceptions related to the speed and effectiveness of dispute resolution
- Understand perceptions regarding the level of trust between Union representatives and management
- Identify perceptions regarding training and education for effective labor relations

COE’s findings suggest that DoD’s labor relations climate has many strengths as well as several opportunities for improvement.

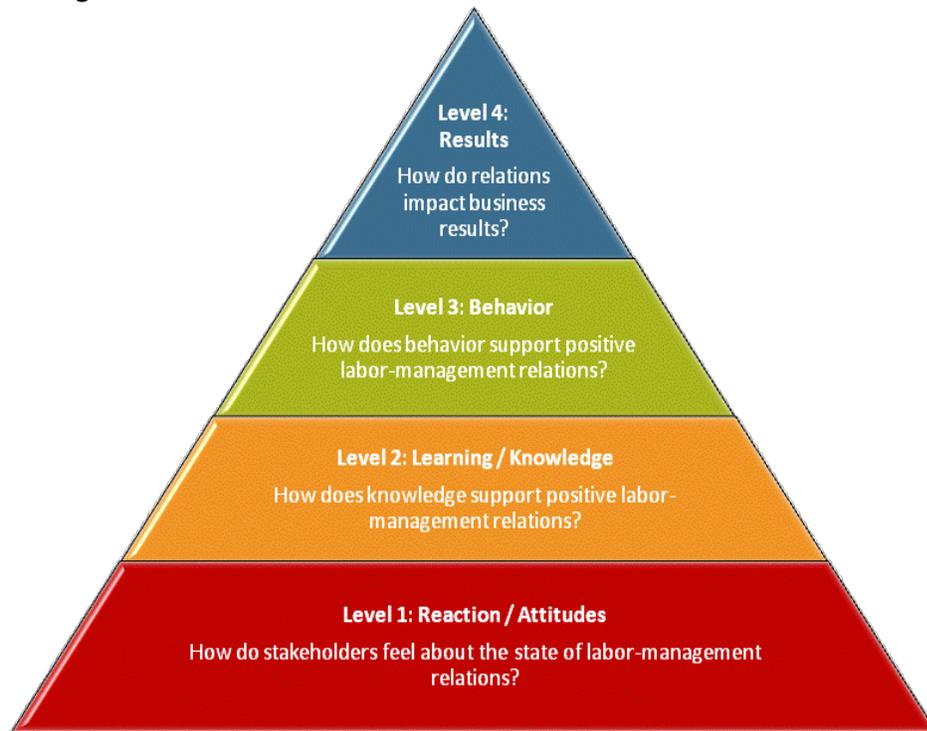
Acting as an independent evaluator, COE assisted FAS-LERD with all phases of the assessment including design, deployment, and analysis. COE guided development of the assessment and the analysis presented in this report based on the Kirkpatrick four-level model of program evaluation (See Figure 1 on the next page).

The baseline assessment was accomplished by analyzing data obtained from the administration of an online assessment tool. FAS-LERD distributed a unique survey link embedded in invitation emails to Union representatives/officers identified by DoD unions, DoD labor relations practitioners, and supervisors of bargaining unit employees.

Overall, COE’s findings suggest that DoD’s labor relations climate has many strengths as well as several opportunities for improvement. The recommendations presented in this report outline areas for consideration in investing time and resources to drive improvement.

Findings and recommendations appear on the following pages.

Figure 1. The Kirkpatrick Model of Program Evaluation Applied to Labor-Management Relations



COE developed 19 key findings regarding the baseline state of labor-management relations.

Findings

COE developed the following 19 key findings regarding the baseline state of labor-management relations at DoD, grouped according to the Kirkpatrick model's four levels of evaluation. Overall findings that cross levels are reported first.

Findings Across All Four Assessment Levels

1. Joint labor-management forums are predictive of a positive labor-management climate at DoD. When joint labor-management forums or committees exist and meet regularly, Union representatives and supervisors rate almost all aspects of the relationship significantly more positively.
2. There are differences in strengths in the labor-management relationship among the Components.
3. There are differences in strengths in the labor-management climate among the different Union relationships.

Level 1: Reaction / Attitudes

4. Union representatives believe employees have more fear of reprisal for Union activity than supervisors and labor relations practitioners do.
5. Respondents do not feel a sense of shared Union-management mission.
6. Respondents generally do not believe the labor-management climate is hostile or adversarial. However, Union representatives and management do have an “us versus them” in-group bias. When rating their own groups’ and the other groups’ positive attitudes (i.e., receptivity to change) and negative attitudes (i.e., hostility), supervisors and Union representatives rate their own groups significantly more positively than their counterparts.
7. Respondents do not feel the relationship is characterized by trust. Across all three groups, there is extremely low agreement that the labor-management relationship is characterized by trust.
8. Existing labor management forums/committees are collaborative environments. Respondents across all three groups feel that Union representatives and managers have freedom to put forth ideas.
9. Labor relations practitioners feel more involved in discussions and negotiations than others.

Level 2: Learning / Knowledge

10. Labor relations practitioners report more knowledge about ongoing labor relations activities than supervisors and Union representatives. Nonetheless, a large majority of respondents in all three groups report having at least some level of knowledge of labor- management relations topics.
11. Labor relations practitioners report more sufficient training on labor topics than supervisors and Union representatives. Fewer than half of supervisors report that they have sufficient training on all six topics in the training index.
12. Supervisors are less knowledgeable than the other groups regarding Executive Order 13522, the existence of labor-management forums/committees, and the frequency of labor-management discussions.

Level 3: Behavior

13. Regular labor-management discussions take place in DoD.
14. Union representatives and supervisors endorse their own positive behavior more than their counterparts do.

15. Supervisors are involved in grievance procedures less frequently than the other groups.

Level 4: Results

16. Respondents believe current labor-management relations in DoD achieve some important business results.
17. All three groups perceive that informal conflict resolution is faster than the formal resolution process. Union representatives perceive slower resolution than the other groups regardless of whether the process is formal or informal.
18. Current conflict resolution processes are somewhat effective. The vast majority of respondents from all three groups perceive conflict resolution to be at least somewhat effective, regardless of whether it is formal or informal. However, they view informal conflict resolution as more effective than formal resolution.
19. Union representatives believe labor-management relations yield results to a greater extent than supervisors do.

Recommendations

COE offers the following nine recommendations for improving and furthering the labor-management relations climate at DoD. There is not a one-to-one correspondence between findings and recommendations; some recommendations are a culmination of evidence and other observations regarding the assessment process. Moreover, some findings are simply observations that may not require change.

1. Increase the use of joint labor-management forums. Capitalize on the strengths of the existing forums and committees, and broaden this practice throughout DoD at the level of recognition.
2. Solicit best practices from areas that appear to have more positive labor-management climates. In addition, solicit and consolidate best practices for informal dispute resolution.
3. Seek and consolidate lessons learned from labor-management relations practices and processes periodically.
4. Keep supervisors informed. Provide regular updates for supervisors of bargaining unit employees to ensure that they are as much aware of ongoing labor relations activities as their counterparts during negotiations and discussions.

COE offers nine recommendations for improving the labor-management relations climate.

5. Continue tracking labor-management forum status and communication, with consideration of improvements that promote more local-level accountability for tracking and maintenance while allowing DoD to maintain a real-time, high-level picture of the state of labor-management forums throughout the department.
6. Encourage Union involvement in discussions and decisions when practicable at the level of recognition.
7. Encourage policies that promote mutual trust and strengthen employees' understanding of the shared Union-management responsibility for mission success. When help is requested, explore and encourage actions to ensure that supervisors, Union representatives, and labor relations practitioners are working towards a "shared mission," rather than focusing on an "us versus them" agenda.
8. Involve supervisors in discussions at the level of recognition. Develop mechanisms to ensure that supervisors feel as involved as other participants in labor relations discussions.
9. Communicate and monitor changes to the labor-management relations climate. Formally communicate the results of this baseline assessment to employees, and record all actions taken in response. Conduct an annual follow-up assessment, using the record of actions to help inform any changes in results.

Next Steps

As an initial next step, DoD should examine the findings of this report in the context of ongoing strategic initiatives and the Department's labor relations goals. Union and management representatives should work together to develop an action plan for implementing changes in the labor relations environment throughout DoD. The action plan should prioritize recommendations and define specific tasks required for implementing the recommendations. DoD should also assign and track accountability to ensure that planned actions are completed. Overall, a critical review of this report's findings and recommendations can pave the way to more effective labor-management relations at DoD.

Introduction

Background

Executive Order 13522 requires that Executive Departments formulate actionable plans for assessing the baseline state of labor-management relations. In responding for the Department of Defense (DoD), the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS), Field Advisory Services – Labor and Employee Relations Division (FAS-LERD) outlined a plan to develop and administer a baseline-labor management climate assessment.

Acting as an independent evaluator, The Center for Organizational Excellence, Inc. (COE) assisted FAS-LERD with all phases of the assessment including design, conduct, and analysis. The assessment involved surveying DoD labor relations practitioners/specialists, Union officers/representatives, and supervisors who oversee the work of bargaining unit employees. Bargaining unit employees who did not hold Union representative positions did not participate in the assessment.

Purpose. DoD's objectives for this project were as follows:

- Identify the effectiveness of and satisfaction with DoD's labor-management forums
- Understand perceptions about cooperation between management and Union representatives
- Understand perceptions related to the speed and effectiveness of dispute resolution
- Understand perceptions regarding the level of trust between Union representatives and management
- Identify perceptions regarding training and education for effective labor relations

Time Frame. The timeframe of the entire project was from August 2010 to September 2011.

Survey design occurred between September 2010 and December 2010. COE worked with the FAS-LERD staff and representatives from a labor-management working group to design the DoD Labor-Management Relations Baseline Assessment and obtain DoD approval to conduct the survey. The COE Team included experts from the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations who validated the survey items and their applicability and relevance to labor-management relationships.

Review and approval of the survey occurred between January 2011 and May 2011. FAS-LERD submitted the final draft survey and proposed communications

Executive Order 13522 requires that Executive Departments formulate actionable plans for assessing the baseline state of labor-management relations.

through multiple rounds of review within DoD to ensure that all DoD policies were followed and that the survey would be deployed in full compliance with accepted DoD procedures.

Survey deployment occurred between June 1, 2011, and July 7, 2011. COE used the DCPAS secure, commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) online data collection tool, Novi-Survey, to deploy the survey. Deployment was originally scheduled to last four weeks; however, it was extended one additional week due to DoD server issues and the Novi-Survey program's difficulty in handling numerous simultaneous requests to complete the survey, which led to the premature termination of survey sessions for some respondents.

Data analysis and report writing was conducted between July 2011 and September 2011.

History of Federal Labor-Management Forums. Prior to Executive Order 13522, the last major Federal initiative on formal labor-management cooperation took place in the early 1990s, when approximately 60% of Federal employees belonged to a Union and a tight fiscal environment demanded reform. Executive Order 12871, signed on October 1, 1993, mandated that federal agencies establish formal labor-management partnerships, moving from an environment of conflict to one of cooperation in an effort to create high-performance organizations that cost less to operate.

Masters, Albright, and Eplion (2006)¹ note that the resulting partnership councils came in many forms but frequently shared these common characteristics:

- Most operated under negotiated agreements that established membership criteria and jurisdiction
- Council representation was split equally between Union and management
- Management representatives came from the both operational and line ranks, not just from labor relations/human resources
- A large proportion of the Union representatives were from elected leadership
- Partnership agreements typically gave councils considerable operational latitude, with the common objective of improving service and accomplishing the agency's mission
- Partnerships were generally structured as pyramids—local to regional to agency-wide councils
- Many management and Union representatives served at more than one level, enabling the sharing of knowledge across the organization

Reviewing data from 60 partnership councils and 38 Federal agencies, Masters, Albright, and Eplion reported the following key outcomes from labor-management partnerships:

Forums have been shown to improve: dispute resolution, cost savings, customer service, work quality, productivity, efficiency, and adoption of change.

- **Industrial Relations Outcomes:** 16 agencies reported substantial improvement; 14 reported moderate improvement. Examples:

 - DoD: unfair labor practice cases fell 40% from 1993 to 1999 (3,691 to 2,231)
 - Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): unfair labor practice cases fell 35% from 1993 to 1999

- **Cost Savings/Avoidance:** 21 agencies reported substantial savings; six reported moderate savings. Examples:

 - Social Security Administration (SSA): \$7 million - \$8 million in reduced disputes
 - Marine Corps base, Camp LeJeune: \$500,000 in reduced disputes; \$4 million in reduced EEO claims

- **Customer Service:** 10 agencies reported improvement through most of the organization; 10 reported some improvement. Examples:

 - SSA: improved customer satisfaction to 88% (study did not provide the baseline satisfaction level)
 - Defense Contract Management Command: “overwhelming improvement” (no statistic given)

- **Quality:** Nine agencies reported substantial improvement; 11 reported moderate improvement. Example:

 - VA: Tampa hospital reported reduced patient treatment waiting time

- **Productivity and Efficiency:** 16 agencies reported substantial improvement; eight reported moderate improvement. Examples:

 - U.S. Customs Service: improved drug seizures by 42%
 - Defense Distribution Depot in San Joaquin: cut overtime costs from \$9.8 million to \$1.4 million from 1995-1999

- **Quality of Work life:** 16 agencies reported substantial improvement; 10 reported moderate improvement. Examples:

 - U.S. Forest Service: 20% workforce reduction without labor-management mitigation
 - U.S. Mint: Joint formulation of bureau-wide strategy

- **Organizational Change:** Researcher site visits found that modernizing, restructuring, and introducing new technologies all contributed to improved labor-management relations climates.

Labor-Management Relations Research. Research indicates that the labor relations climate varies significantly between organizations (Dastmalchian, Blyton, & Adamson, 1989)². These variations in labor relations climate in turn affect employee commitment. Commitment to both the organization and the Union is higher where there is a more cooperative climate (Angle & Perry, 1986)³.

A more cooperative labor-management relationship has been linked to positive organizational outcomes, in particular higher productivity and improved customer service (Deery & Iverson, 2005)⁴, as well as improved employee work attendance (Deery, Erwin & Iverson, 1999)⁵. Faster, more informal and lower level resolution of grievances has been linked to transformed patterns of labor-management relations, including improved workplace problem-solving and employee participation in decision-making. These transformed patterns of labor-management relations have in turn brought about better productivity and quality performance (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1991)⁶.

Other findings about labor-management relations climate include:

- Management respondents tend to rate interest-based bargaining more positively than do Union respondents; and Union respondents tend to rate traditional bargaining more positively than do management respondents. (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Kochan, & Wells, 1998)⁷.
- Respondents with longer tenure at the organization tend to rate labor relations climate more positively. (Deery, Erwin, & Iverson, 1999)⁵.

Together, the recent history of Federal labor-management forums and the labor relations research described above informed our approach to survey item development, analysis, and interpretation of results.

Methodology

This project contained three main tasks:

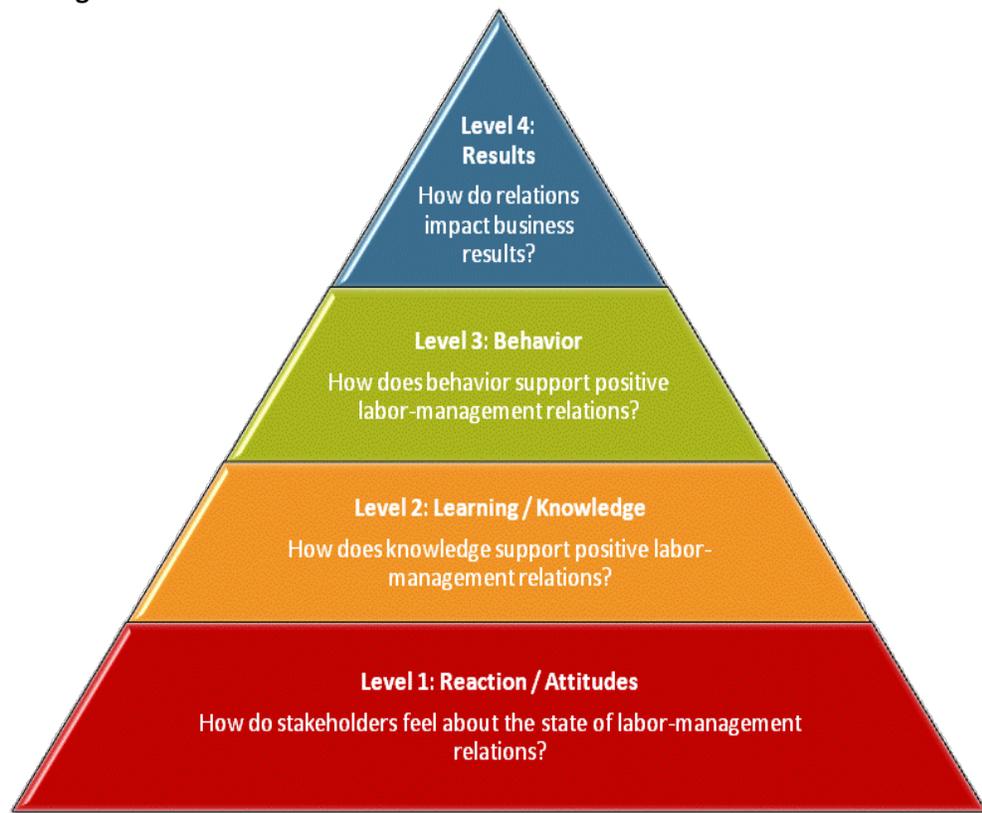
- Task 1: Develop Research Plan
- Task 2: Conduct Survey
- Task 3: Develop and Validate Findings

Task 1: Develop Research Plan. COE facilitated a working group consisting of Component management representatives, FAS-LERD representatives, and DoD Union representatives to prepare a draft survey and associated research plan that clarified objectives, issues, questions and the conceptual framework that drove the assessment. Three half-day planning sessions were held to gather and confirm input for the survey content, questions, and delivery methodologies. Final approval of the working group's proposed survey content was obtained during a regularly scheduled DoD Labor Relations Round Table meeting in November 2010.

The full list of survey questions for this research is provided in Appendix A. The email invitation-to-participate and the complete informed consent and privacy statements to which participants agreed are in Appendix B.

The research and analytical approach COE used for this labor-management relations baseline study is grounded in the best practices of program evaluation. The survey was framed around the four levels associated with Kirkpatrick program evaluations (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Kirkpatrick Model of Program Evaluation Applied to Labor-Management Relations



The survey was framed around the four levels associated with Kirkpatrick program evaluations

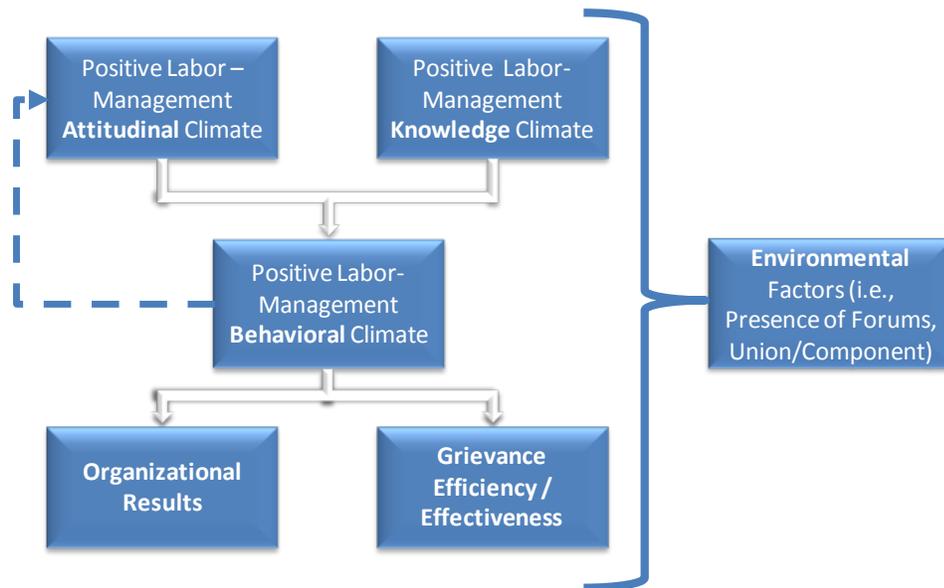
Together, the four levels of evaluation can be assembled into a chain of evidence that determines the ultimate Return on Expectation (ROE) of labor-management relations. ROE refers to whether the relationships are delivering the results that they are established to address.

The four levels, when examined together, can answer the following questions:

1. What are the key drivers of positive labor-management relations?
2. What are the key inhibitors of positive labor-management relations?

Applying the Kirkpatrick model and past labor relations research findings to the current Labor-Management Relations assessment, COE developed the BAKE model to guide the construction of the survey and interpretation of results. The BAKE model illustrates the relationship between **B**ehaviors, **A**ttitudes, **K**nowledge, and **E**nvironment, and how they interact to influence organizational results and grievance efficiency/effectiveness. (See Figure 3.) As the BAKE model indicates, attitudes and knowledge are filtered to behavior (with a feedback loop from behavior to attitudes), and the relationship can be modified by different environmental factors.

Figure 3. COE’s BAKE Model of Labor-Management Relations Climate



The BAKE model illustrates the relationship between Behaviors, Attitudes, Knowledge, and Environment.

Task 2: Conduct Survey. The DoD Labor-Management Relations Baseline Assessment was conducted entirely online using DCPAS’s secure, commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) data collection tool, Novi-Survey.

Participation of three stakeholder groups was sought in this survey:

- Labor relations specialists / practitioners
- Local Union representatives identified by DoD unions
- DoD supervisors (civilian and military) who oversee bargaining unit employees

Table 1 outlines the effective sample and population sizes, sampling strategy, and effective survey response rates for each group. It also includes a column referring to “Qualified Respondents.” These numbers represent the respondents completing at least 50% of the survey who were able to be associated with the group from which their contact information was drawn. Some respondents were excluded because they could not accurately be assigned to a role (i.e., a respondent from the Union representative contact database identified herself as a supervisor or a respondent from the supervisor database chose to “write-in” a role that was

non-supervisory). This is the number that is used to generate the margin of error rates used to judge the accuracy of percent scores in this report.

Table 1. Sample Design and Response Rates

Group Surveyed	Sample Contact Information Source	Effective Sample Size* (Total Sample Frame)	Total Respondents Completing at Least Half	Effective Response Rate** (Initiation Rate)***	Qualified Respondents^ (Qualification Rate)^^
Labor-employee relations specialists	Total sample of labor-employee relations employees in DoD gathered from DCPDS database and data call to Components/agencies	743 (827)	284	38% (48%)	273 (37%)
Local Union representatives identified by DoD unions	Total sample of all contacts provided by unions with national consultation rights	1092 (1,241)	439	40% (46%)	416 (38%)
DoD managers who supervise bargaining unit employees	Random sample of supervisors who work with unions from 44,282 civilians identified from DCPDS and 3,377 identified from Air Force, Navy, DISA, DFAS, and USUHS****	9,425 (47,659)	2,033	22% (32%)	2,000 (21%)

Notes:

- *“Effective Sample Size” refers to the initial sample size minus those with missing or undeliverable email addresses.
- **“Effective Response Rate” refers to the percentage of participants who responded to at least 50% of survey items.
- ***“Initiation Rate” refers to the percentage of each sample who at least clicked on the link to begin the survey.
- ****Army military supervisors were not included because we were provided a file containing all military supervisors, not just those who supervised bargaining unit employees.
- ^ Number of participants completing at least 50% of the survey whose roles could be identified.
- ^^Effective response rate based on qualified respondents.

Based on the qualification rates reported in Table 1, the following represent the margin of error rates for percentages reported for each sample (margin of error rates will be higher for analyses involving fewer respondents or subsets of respondent groups):

- Supervisors: +/- 2.2%
- Union representatives: +/- 4.4%
- Labor relations specialists: +/- 4.9%

The complete population of civilian supervisors of Union employees was identified using the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS). FAS-LERD used DCPDS to identify and generate a list of all payroll organization codes where the Bargaining Unit Status (BUS) codes were not 6666, 7777, 8888, or 9999. From the resulting list, all employees whose corresponding payroll organization codes indicated supervisory status were identified and used as the civilian supervisor population for the survey.

To obtain the sample population for military supervisors of Union employees, FAS-LERD requested that each Component and agency submit the names and contact information for military personnel identified as being first or second level supervisors of bargaining unit employees. The Army provided the names of all military supervisors, not just those supervising bargaining unit employees, and these individuals could not be included in the frame from which the final sample was drawn. The Navy provided only 12 military supervisor names, far fewer than the 3,000-plus provided by the Air Force. As a result of the issues with Army and Navy, we do not report separate results for military supervisors. The sample of military and civilian supervisors is simply combined.

Over 60% of the 47,659 identified supervisors had email contact information available. From this group, a sample of 10,000 was drawn. The sample was stratified to ensure proportional representation of supervisors from each region and military supervisors. The stratification targets were based on the total number of names per region, not just the names with contact information available.

Labor Relations Specialists and Labor Relations Officers throughout the Department were identified by Human Resource Officers (HROs) within each Component and organization. To supplement the list of labor relations practitioners provided by Components, DCPDS was used to generate a list of all employees in occupational series 201 (human resources). Using this list, FAS-LERD identified employees whose titles indicated labor relations responsibilities—such as the words Labor Relations or Labor and Employee Relations. This final list did not include employees who were listed merely as ER or Employee Relations.

Task 3: Develop and Validate Findings. COE took the following steps to analyze the survey data and evaluate DoD's labor-management relations climate:

- Conducted factor analyses to determine and validate indices combining items with similar response patterns
- Calculated percentages of different responses (i.e., Agree/Disagree) for each survey item

- Calculated the mean response for most questions and corresponding indices
- Compared means between groups using independent sample t-tests (for two-group comparisons) and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with post hoc Tukey tests (for comparisons involving more than two groups)
- Conducted regression analyses to determine significant predictors of organizational results
- Examined data spliced by various demographic categories (i.e., agency, presence of a labor management forum, Union involved with)
- Analyzed the survey preparation and deployment process for opportunities to improve efficiency in future surveys

For each subset of assessment items associated with the BAKE model, COE conducted factor analyses to corroborate the existence of indices that summarize the relationships for similar items. For example, the 10 items pertaining to results achieved from labor-management relations at DoD yielded a single factor, and COE created a Results Index from the average of these items. For some analyses, COE examined multiple potential factor solutions (justifiable by visible breaks in Scree plots) before deciding on the solutions with the most meaningful practical interpretation.

The factor analyses led to the creation of the indices listed in Table 2. We have sorted them by Kirkpatrick evaluation level.

Table 2. Labor-Management Relations Climate Indices

Level	Index	Description
Level 1: Reaction/Attitudes	Shared Mission	The extent to which management and the Union are working toward the same shared mission
	Reprisal Fear	The extent to which respondents perceived Union representatives and bargaining unit employees fear retributive action from management for Union activity
	Involvement	Perceptions of one's ability to offer ideas and be listened to during labor-management discussions and negotiations
	Union Hostility	The Union's open hostility toward management
	Management Hostility	Management's open hostility toward the Union
	Mutual trust	The extent to which management and the Union trust each other

COE developed indices that summarize the relationships between similar survey items.

Level	Index	Description
Level 2: Learning/ Knowledge	Training	The sufficiency of training received on labor-related topics
	Knowledge	The degree of knowledge possessed regarding labor-relations topics
Level 3: Behavior	Cooperative Management Behavior	The frequency of management's display of positive and cooperative behavior
	Cooperative Union Behavior	The frequency of the Union's display of positive and cooperative behavior
	Management Compliance	Management's compliance with agreements
	Union Compliance	Union compliance with agreements
Level 4: Results	Results	Perception of organizational outcomes achieved from labor-management relations

For many findings, COE uses the means of indices rather than individual items to frame the evidence. In most cases, findings are reported only if there is a general trend across an entire index. Differences between groups in responses to individual items or in indices can be found in the appendices. Data are presented using the demographic breakdowns shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Breakdown Appendices

Appendix	Contents
C	Survey Responses by Role. Indices and responses to survey items organized by labor-relations role (Union rep, supervisor, or labor relations practitioner)
D	Survey Responses by Role and Component. Indices and responses to survey items organized by labor-relations role and DoD Component (Air Force, Army, Navy, 4 th Estate)
E	Survey Responses by Role and Forum Status. Indices and responses to survey items organized by labor-relations role and whether or not the respondent's organization has a labor-management forum
F	Survey Responses by Union. Indices and responses to survey items organized by Union for Union representatives only
G	Survey Responses by Union Supervised. Indices and responses to survey items organized by Union for supervisors only

Limitations

Although the DoD Labor-Management Relations Baseline Assessment is a defensible study, there are some limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis. Below are descriptions of this study's key limitations:

- Data were collected during a single point in time, and therefore reflect the state of the labor-management relationship in June 2011. Effects of any initiatives to increase the health of the relationship (or any actions that erode it) since that time are not reflected in the report. Findings regarding associations between variables do not imply causality.
- This assessment did not include the perspectives of bargaining unit employees who are not Union officers. This group was not surveyed and the results cannot be construed to reflect their opinions.
- Only unions with national consultation rights were invited to participate. Other unions may have a different profile/response pattern in their relationship with DoD management. Unions invited to participate in this assessment included:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Association of Civilian Technicians (ACT) 2. American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) 3. Federal Education Association (FEA) 4. International Association of Machinists (IAMAW) 5. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. International Federal of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE) 7. Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) 8. National Association of Government Employees (NAGE) 9. National Association of Independent Labor (NAIL) 10. National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)
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- Lack of a single database for all participant data forced reliance on various sources, so data and associated participant information are not uniform. Examples of non-uniformity include:
 - Labor relations employees and supervisor contact information was retrieved from a combination of Component records and those kept by DCPAS.
 - The dataset for the supervisors only had 68% of necessary contact information (email addresses). Within the dataset, some regions were

This assessment did NOT include the perspectives of bargaining unit employees who are not Union officers.

further under-represented (only 52%-54% of supervisor email addresses were available).

- The sample of military supervisors was not representative. The Army provided names of all military supervisors (not just the ones who supervise bargaining unit employees); the Navy provided only 12 contacts, and the Air Force provided a list of more than 3,000 (thought to be the correct target—military supervisors who supervise bargaining unit employees).
- Supervisor data relied on the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) database. The NSPS program was discontinued in 2010, and data from 2010 to 2011 has not been tracked consistently across agencies. As a result, supervisors with short tenure at DoD may have been missed.
- Technical problems reduced response rates. For example:
 - DoD houses its COTS survey instrument, Novi-Survey, on a server that was taken down several times without notice throughout the survey deployment period due to migration of other programs on the server in line with Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) transition. This resulted in the several periods during which participants were unable to access the survey, sometimes immediately after reminder emails were sent—a time window that typically shows a temporary increase in response rate
 - Novi-Survey had volume restrictions which prematurely terminated survey sessions for some respondents. This resulted in respondent frustration and possibly in partially completed surveys. Seventy-five percent of respondents who did not receive an error completed at least half the survey. However, only 58% of respondents whose session was prematurely terminated completed at least half the survey.
 - Novi-Survey is a DoD-approved survey system on a DoD-hosted secure website. However, some DoD sites blocked access to the survey system.
- The demographic variables (i.e., tenure, Component/agency) were reported by survey subjects and could not be independently verified (other than whether the respondent was a Union representative, labor relations practitioner, or supervisor).
- The survey focused on DoD. No findings can be drawn regarding populations outside of DoD.

Assumptions

- Individuals from the labor relations (LR) practitioner sample who identified themselves as supervisors are LR supervisors and still qualify to be included in the analysis of LR respondents.
- Other than LR respondents identifying as supervisors, respondents identifying themselves as something other than the sample from which they were drawn were eliminated due to assumption of respondent corruption or negligence, or incorrect records.
- The link to the online assessment was distributed via email to current DoD employees. COE assumes that only employees to whom the email was addressed responded to the survey.
- Respondents were representative of DoD labor-management relations populations (with the exception of military supervisors). Limitations in access to the survey were not predetermined, and contact information for respondent groups was not purposefully withheld or tampered with.
- Respondents were truthful in providing information about their demographic information (i.e., labor relations role, agency, and forum status).
- Respondents not identifying their role on the survey were coded as the role pertaining to the sample from which their contact information was drawn.

Organization of this Report

This report is organized around the four levels of analysis described in the Methodology section. For each level, we:

- Note key findings
- Outline the evidence to support each finding
- Note implications of each finding
- Propose recommendations for improvement

Findings and Implications

This section highlights the major findings and supporting evidence derived from COE's research. COE also outlines potential implications of the findings. Consistent with the Kirkpatrick levels of evaluation, COE organized this section according to Levels 1 through 4, beginning with findings that cross all levels. Below, we present the major findings to be described in more detail throughout this section.

Findings Across All Four Assessment Levels

1. Joint labor-management forums are predictive of a positive labor-management climate at DoD. When joint labor-management forums or committees exist and meet regularly, Union representatives and supervisors rate almost all aspects of the relationship significantly more positively.
2. There are differences in strengths in the labor-management relationship among the Components.
3. There are differences in strengths in the labor-management climate among the different Union relationships.

Level 1: Reaction / Attitudes

4. Union representatives believe employees have more fear of reprisal for Union activity than supervisors and labor relations practitioners do.
5. Respondents do not feel a sense of shared Union-management mission.
6. Respondents generally do not believe the labor-management climate is hostile or adversarial. However, Union representatives and management do have an "us versus them" in-group bias. When rating their own groups' and the other groups' positive attitudes (i.e., receptivity to change) and negative attitudes (i.e., hostility), supervisors and Union representatives rate their own groups significantly more positively than their counterparts.
7. Respondents do not feel the relationship is characterized by trust. Across all three groups, there is extremely low agreement that the labor-management relationship is characterized by trust.
8. Existing labor management forums/committees are collaborative environments. Respondents across all three groups feel that Union representatives and managers have freedom to put forth ideas.

COE developed 19 findings based on assessment results.

9. Labor relations practitioners feel more involved in discussions and negotiations than others.

Level 2: Learning / Knowledge

10. Labor relations practitioners report more knowledge about ongoing labor relations activities than supervisors and Union representatives. Nonetheless, a large majority of respondents in all three groups report having at least some level of knowledge of labor- management relations topics.
11. Labor relations practitioners report more sufficient training on labor topics than supervisors and Union representatives. Fewer than half of supervisors report that they have sufficient training on all six topics in the training index.
12. Supervisors are less knowledgeable than the other groups regarding Executive Order 13522, the existence of labor-management forums/committees, and the frequency of labor-management discussions.

Level 3: Behavior

13. Regular labor-management discussions take place in DoD.
14. Union representatives and supervisors endorse their own positive behavior more than their counterparts do.
15. Supervisors are involved in grievance procedures less frequently than the other groups.

Level 4: Results

16. Respondents believe current labor-management relations in DoD achieve some important business results.
17. All three groups perceive that informal conflict resolution is faster than the formal resolution process. Union representatives perceive slower resolution than the other groups regardless of whether the process is formal or informal.
18. Current conflict resolution processes are somewhat effective. The vast majority of respondents from all three groups perceive conflict resolution to be at least somewhat effective, regardless of whether it is formal or informal. However, they view informal conflict resolution as more effective than formal resolution.
19. Union representatives believe labor-management relations yield results to a greater extent than supervisors do.

Below, we present each finding in the context of the survey data that we analyzed to support it.

Findings Across All Four Assessment Levels

Finding 1

Joint labor-management forums are predictive of a positive labor-management climate at DoD. When joint labor-management forums or committees exist and meet regularly, Union representatives and supervisors rate almost all aspects of the relationship significantly more positively.

Supporting Evidence:

- 1.1 Union representatives and supervisors rated nearly all aspects of the labor-management relationship significantly more positively when they indicated their organization had a labor-management forum or committee that meets on a regular basis. See Appendix E for detailed comparisons.

Implications:

Not only are labor-management forums required by Executive Order 13522, but the evidence suggests that the forums work in achieving their intended result. They are associated with reduced bias and joint work by unions and management to find mutually beneficial solutions. Agencies reluctant to adopt forums because the forums require too much time, or because the employees don't know how to get started, should seriously investigate the logistics required for establishing a labor-management forum.

Finding 2

There are differences in strengths in the labor-management relationship among the Components.

Supporting Evidence:

- 2.1 See Appendix D for significant differences between Components across the entire survey.

Implications:

Differences observed between Components are not necessarily an indication that one Component is better than another. Rather, it may be an indication of systemic cultural differences. Nonetheless, DoD can potentially learn key lessons from areas where particular Components exhibit strengths.

Labor-management forums are predictive of a positive labor-management climate at DoD.

Finding 3

There are differences in strengths in the labor-management climate among the different Union relationships.

Supporting Evidence:

- 3.1 See Appendices F and G for differences between Union environments from Union representative and supervisor perspectives.

Implications:

Differences observed between Union environments can be extremely informative. In areas where a particular Union has a strong positive relationship, as indicated by responses from Union representatives, supervisors, or both groups, DoD may benefit from delving deeper into the practices that may promote improved business results.

Level 1 Findings: Reaction / Attitudes

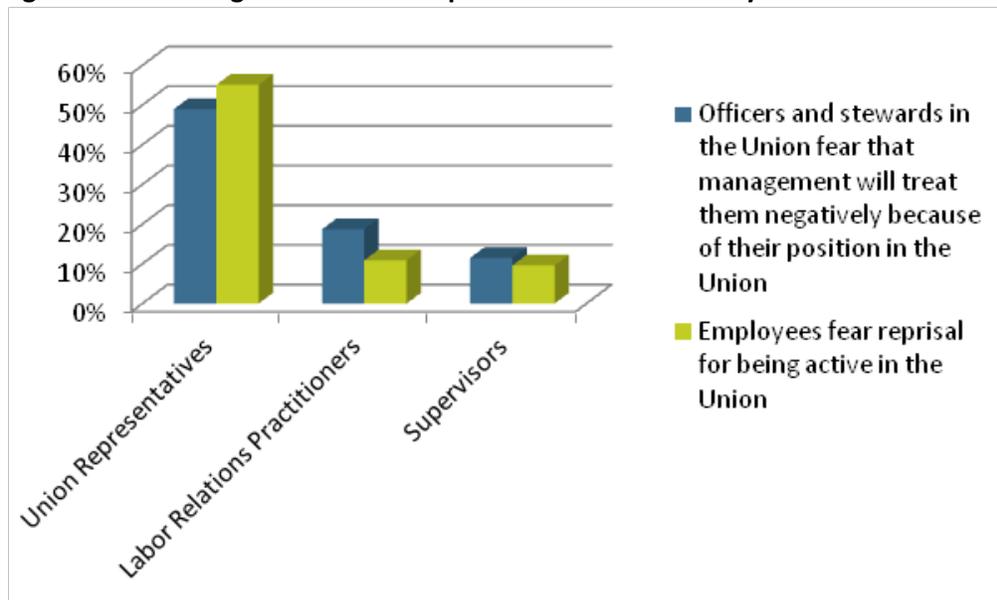
Finding 4

Union representatives believe employees have more fear of reprisal for Union activity than supervisors and labor relations practitioners do.

Supporting Evidence:

- 4.1 On a five-point scale, Union representatives have significantly higher average agreement (3.39) than labor relations practitioners and supervisors (2.49 and 2.54, respectively) on Reprisal Fear Index items.
- 4.2 Fewer than 20% of labor relations practitioners and supervisors agree that employees and Union officers fear reprisal for their Union role (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percent Agreement with Reprisal Fear Index Items By Role



Implications:

When one group fears another, and the feared group doesn't realize it, both sides may act and speak in ways that unintentionally cause harm. People who consider themselves honest and well-intentioned probably won't believe that others attribute a malevolent intention to their actions. However, the labor climate in the country is very tense right now. Supervisors and labor relations practitioners may ignore this reality and believe that their situation is unique. But ignoring the context of a nationwide scrutiny of unions can lead to a number of miscommunications and unintended consequences.

Finding 5

Respondents do not feel a sense of shared Union-management mission.

Supporting Evidence:

- 5.1 All three groups had average Shared Mission Index scores below the midpoint on the five-point scale (2.75 for Union representatives; 2.88 for labor relations practitioners; 2.96 for supervisors).
- 5.2 Fewer than 40% of the respondents across all three groups agree with statements suggesting that a shared mission exists between DoD management and the Union.

Implications:

Without a shared mission, each party is more likely to respect and value its own goals rather than respecting the goals of the organization as a whole. As an organization whose responsibility is to support the warfighter, DoD cannot afford to have factions of employees focusing on their own tactical missions at the expense of national security.

DoD is a mission-centric organization. However, only a third of the respondents across all three groups agree with statements suggesting that a shared mission exists between DoD management and the Unions. When this mission serves as the backdrop for interactions between separate groups, it allows those groups to focus and work toward a common goal.

Employees do not feel a sense of shared Union-management mission.

Finding 6

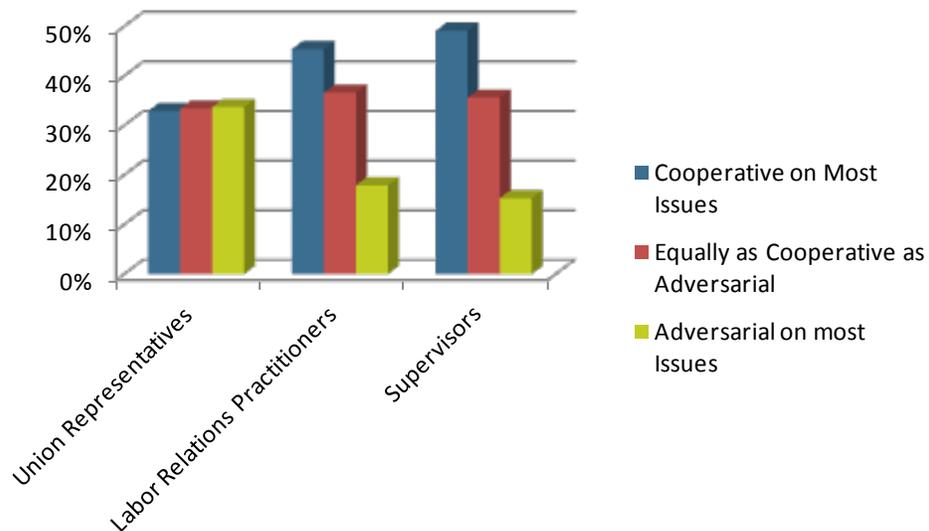
Respondents generally do not believe the labor-management climate is hostile or adversarial. However, Union representatives and management do have an “us versus them” in-group bias. When rating their own groups’ and the other groups’ positive attitudes (i.e., receptivity to change) and negative attitudes (i.e., hostility), supervisors and Union representatives rate their own groups significantly more positively than their counterparts.

Supporting Evidence:

- 6.1 Fewer than 50% of respondents across all three groups agree to items indicating that the Union or management openly display hostility toward each other.

6.2 On a three-point scale ranging from “Cooperative on Most Issues” to “Adversarial on Most Issues” fewer than 34% of respondents in all groups rated the relationship as adversarial, though Union representatives rated the relationship as significantly more adversarial than the other groups (2.01 on the three-point scale, compared to 1.73 and 1.66 for labor relations practitioners and supervisors, respectively; see Figure 5).

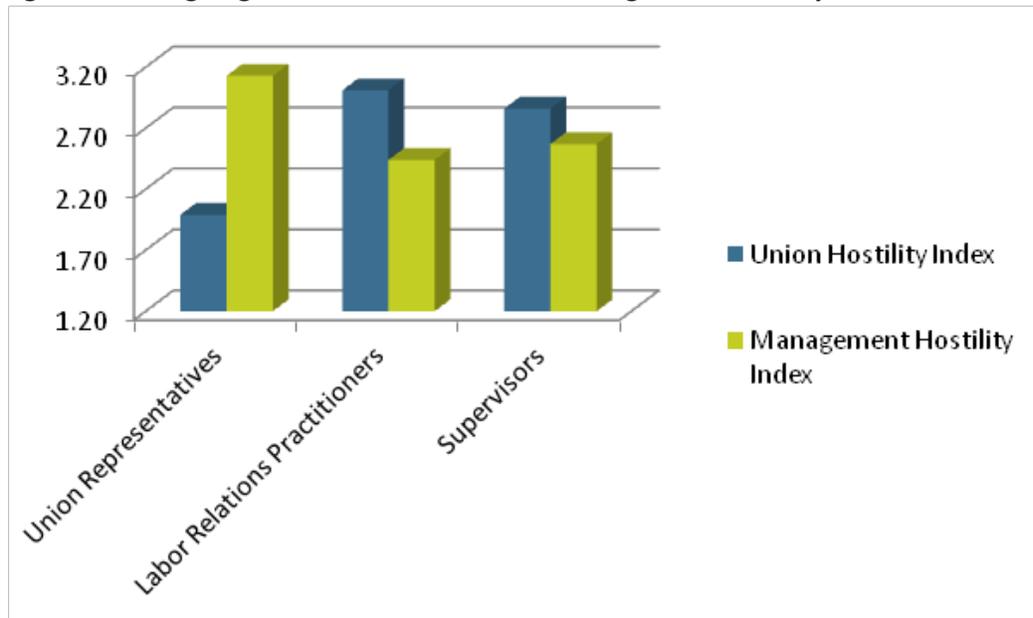
Figure 5. Ratings of Cooperative Versus Adversarial Relationship By Role



6.3 On a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” Union representatives have significantly lower average agreement (1.99) than labor relations practitioners and supervisors (3.01 and 2.86, respectively) on Union Hostility Index items (see Figure 6).

6.4 On a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” Union representatives have significantly higher average agreement (3.13) than labor relations practitioners and supervisors (2.44 and 2.57, respectively) on Management Hostility Index items (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Average Agreement with Union and Management Hostility Index Items



6.5 On items pertaining to Union and management respect for each other’s goals and receptivity to change, Union representatives and supervisors both rate their own groups significantly more positive than the other group does.

Implications:

Union representatives and supervisors at DoD have an “us versus them” mentality, and labor relations practitioners align themselves with the “them” of management. It is not wholly surprising for employees to tout the positives and reject the negatives of their identified in-group. However, it is somewhat surprising that labor relations practitioners sometimes defend management more staunchly than supervisors do. This suggests that some labor relations practitioners cannot play the role of “impartial” middle person in negotiations because they have a clear identification with management.

Employees do not feel the relationship is characterized by trust.

Finding 7

Respondents do not feel the relationship is characterized by trust. Across all three groups, there is extremely low agreement that the labor-management relationship is characterized by trust.

Supporting Evidence:

7.1 All three groups had average Mutual Trust Index scores below the midpoint on the five-point scale (2.66 for Union representatives; 2.64 for labor relations practitioners; 2.93 for supervisors).

7.2 Across all three groups, there is extremely low agreement (lower than 27% across groups and items) that Unions and management trust each other.

Implications:

Trust is the hallmark of a cooperative, results-oriented relationship. Without trust as a foundation, it is difficult for two sides to agree and work towards mutual goals.

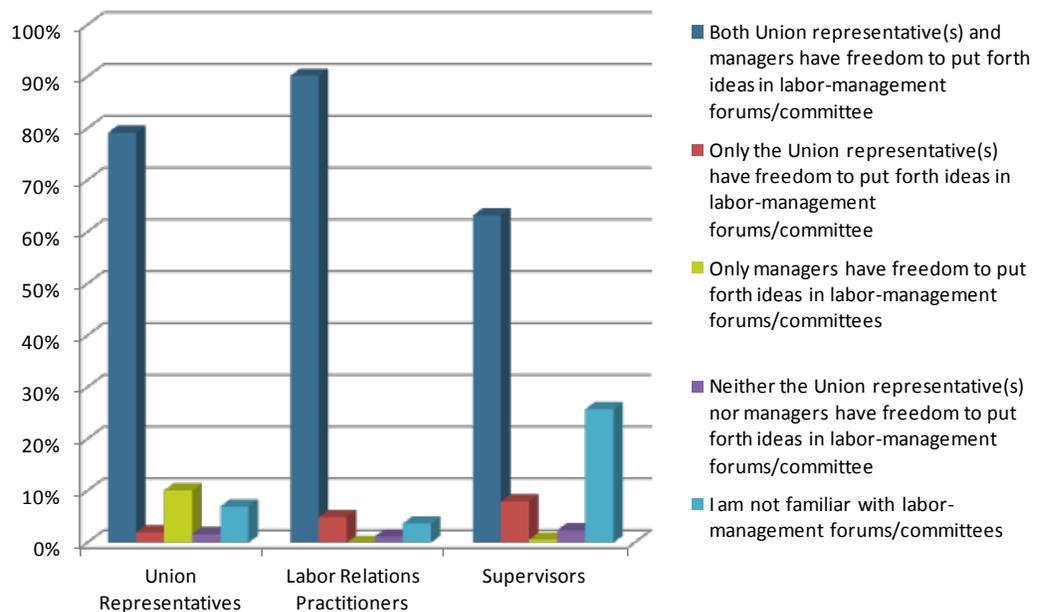
Finding 8

Existing labor management forums/committees are collaborative environments. Respondents across all three groups feel that Union representatives and managers have freedom to put forth ideas.

Supporting Evidence:

- 8.1 79.2% of Union representatives agree that joint forums provide an opportunity for Union and managers to freely present ideas (see Figure 7).
- 8.2 90.2% of labor relations practitioners agree that joint forums provide an opportunity for Union and managers to freely present ideas
- 8.3 63.2% of supervisors agree that joint forums provide an opportunity for Union and managers to freely present ideas

Figure 7. Perceptions of Union and Management Participation in Forums



Implications:

Respondents indicate a significant positive aspect of joint labor forums that likely informs the results with which forums were shown to be associated in Finding 1. This finding illustrates that forums are not just symbolic events where participants sit around listening to one person talk. The forums' intended purpose of creating a dialogue is being fulfilled.

Finding 9

Labor relations practitioners feel more involved in discussions and negotiations than others.

Supporting Evidence:

- 9.1 On a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” labor relations practitioners have significantly higher average agreement (3.99) than Union representatives and supervisors (3.40 and 3.27, respectively) on Involvement in Discussions Index items.
- 9.2 Over two-thirds of labor relations practitioners agree with every item in the Involvement in Discussions Index.

Implications:

Not surprisingly, labor relations practitioners play a strong role in labor discussions. After all, as later findings show, they have the most knowledge and training about labor-management relations.

Supervisors' lower level of involvement may be a by-product of their lower level of knowledge about labor-management relations. For supervisors, labor relations may feel like an “other duty as assigned.” They attend meetings when they have to, but they don't have the background or same level of topic-related information as the other parties in the room, which may relegate them to more of a “wallflower” role. It's hard to feel as committed as others to a process about which one doesn't know much and during which one doesn't have the same opportunity to provide input.

Perceptions of involvement are also important for Union representatives. If discussions have the appearance of being run and controlled by management's representatives, Union representatives may view the goings-on as either hostile or uninformed.

Level 2 Findings: Learning/Knowledge

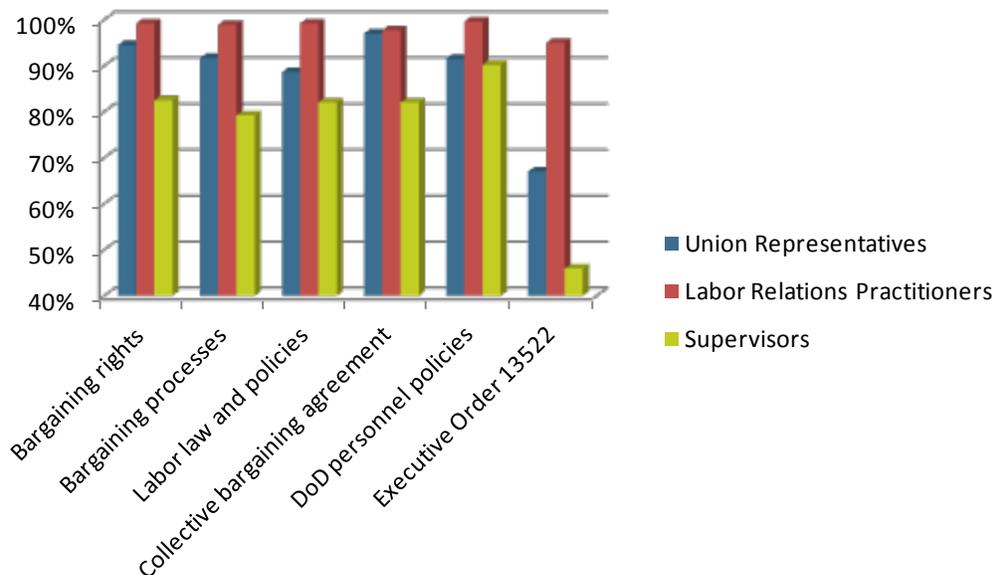
Finding 10

Labor relations practitioners report more knowledge about ongoing labor relations activities than supervisors and Union representatives. Nonetheless, a large majority of respondents in all three groups report having at least some level of knowledge of labor-management relations topics.

Supporting Evidence:

- 10.1 On a three-point scale ranging from “No Knowledge” to “A Lot of Knowledge,” labor relations practitioners indicate having significantly more knowledge of topics in the Knowledge Index (2.66) than Union representatives and supervisors (2.21 and 1.90, respectively).
- 10.2 More than 90% of labor relations practitioners identify having at least some knowledge of all six Knowledge Index topics (see Figure 8).
- 10.3 More than 79% of Union representatives and supervisors identify having at least some knowledge of all six Knowledge Index topics, except Executive Order 13522 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Percent of Respondents with at Least Some Knowledge of Labor Relations Topics By Role



Implications:

It is a relief to know that those individuals whose job description involves labor relations have the most knowledge about related topics. Labor relations practitioners have more opportunity to engage in labor relations activities than supervisors, thus they have an opportunity to apply learning and to remain aware of ongoing labor relations activities.

It is also a positive sign that most people around the negotiation table, regardless of role, feel they have at least some knowledge regarding the topics about which they are negotiating.

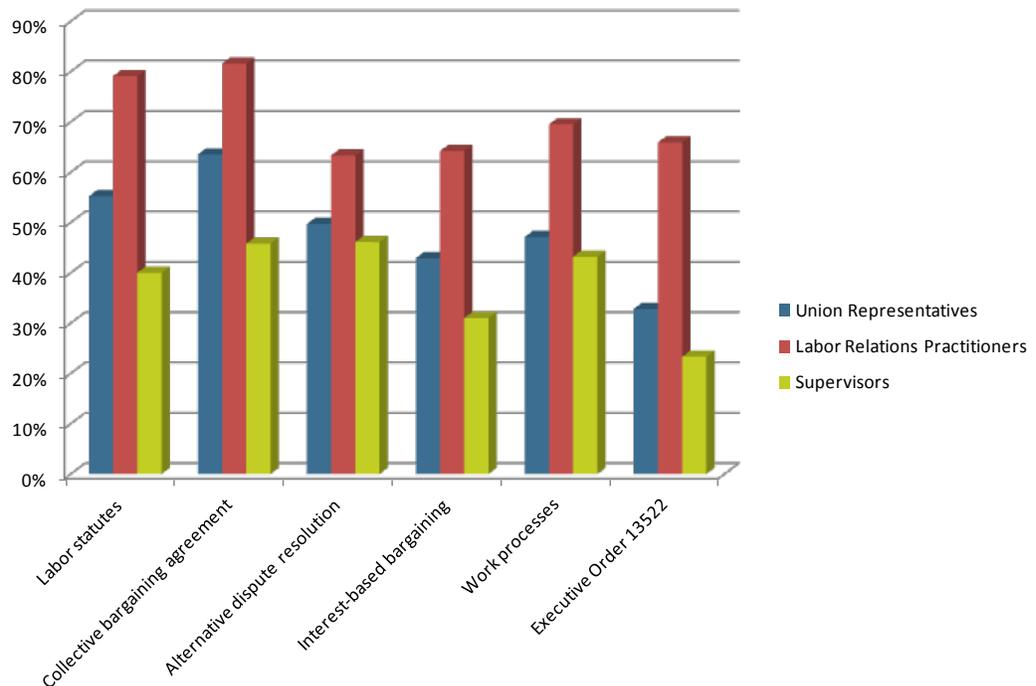
Finding 11

Labor relations practitioners report more sufficient training on labor topics than supervisors and Union representatives. Fewer than half of supervisors report that they have sufficient training on all six topics in the training index.

Supporting Evidence:

- 11.1 On a three-point scale ranging from “Insufficient” to “More than Sufficient,” labor relations practitioners indicate having significantly more sufficient training on topics in the Training Index (2.02) than Union representatives and supervisors (1.66 and 1.62, respectively).
- 11.2 Across all six training topics, more than 60% of labor relations practitioners indicate having sufficient training (see Figure 9).
- 11.3 Across all six training topics, fewer than 50% of supervisors indicate having sufficient training (see Figure 9). More than a quarter of supervisors for each item selected the “I don’t know” option.

Figure 9. Percent of Respondents Indicating Sufficiency of Training By Role



Implications:

Again, it is not surprising that labor relations practitioners receive the most training. What is surprising is the number of managers who indicate that they “don’t know” if they have had sufficient training across the topic areas. If you don’t know whether your training is sufficient, you likely haven’t received the training needed to feel confident in the topic.

Supervisors are less knowledgeable than others regarding labor-management relations.

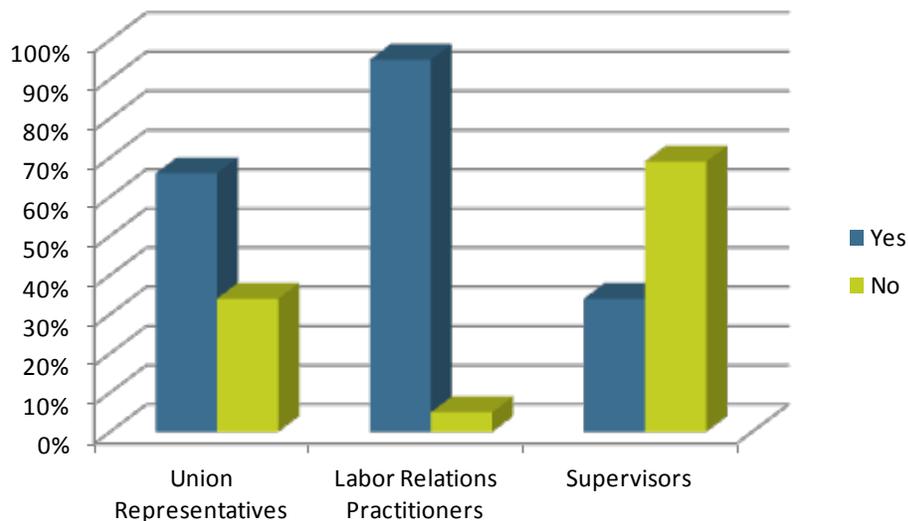
Finding 12

Supervisors are less knowledgeable than the other groups regarding Executive Order 13522, the existence of labor-management forums/committees, and the frequency of labor-management discussions.

Supporting Evidence:

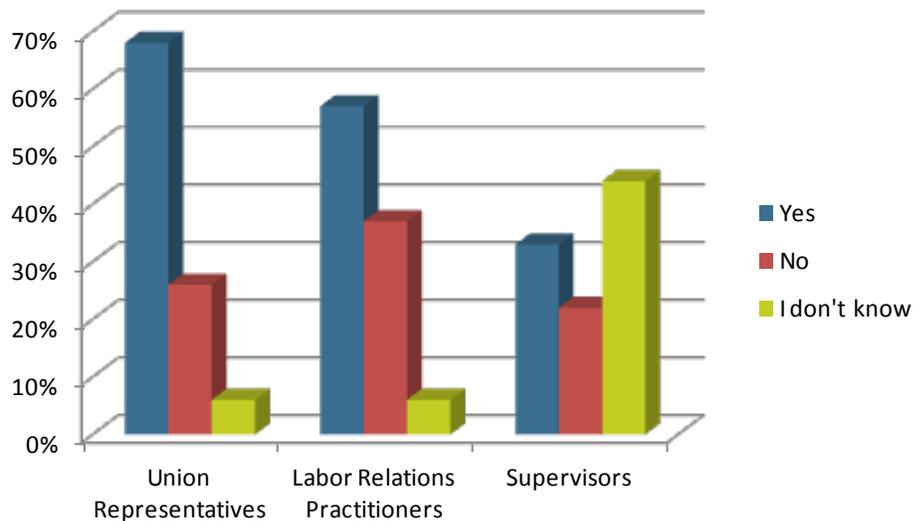
12.1 More than half of supervisors indicate no knowledge of Executive Order 13522 and only 31% of supervisors indicate awareness of the labor-management forums created by Executive Order 13522, compared to 66% and 95% for Union representatives and labor relations practitioners, respectively (see Figure 10). When supervisors do not have a forum or committee that meets on a regular basis, only 23% indicate awareness of the forums created by the Executive Order.

Figure 10. Awareness of Forums Created by Executive Order 13522 by Role



12.2 44% of supervisors indicate that they “Don’t Know” whether their organization currently has a labor-management forum or structure that meets on a regular basis (compared to only 6% of Union representatives and labor relations practitioners who “Don’t Know”; see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Existence of Current Labor Management Forum or Other Structure By Role



12.3 Two-thirds of supervisors don’t know how often Union and management representatives meet to discuss issues.

Implications:

Executive Order 13522 impacts people at all levels of DoD. The labor-management forums at the local level should involve Union representatives and supervisors. DoD should be concerned that so many supervisors are unaware of the Executive Order's instructions, unsure about the existence of forums, and unknowledgeable regarding ongoing labor discussions. Even if supervisors do not participate directly in a local forum, it should still be imperative that they know the forums exist and understand the key information discussed during the forums that could impact their relationships with bargaining unit employees.

Level 3 Findings: Behavior

Finding 13

Regular labor-management discussions take place in DoD.

Supporting Evidence:

- 13.1 As shown previously in Figure 11, more than half of labor relations practitioners and two-thirds of Union representatives report having a formal labor-management partnership, council, committee, forum, or other collaborative labor relations structure that meets on a regular basis.
- 13.2 More than 70% of Union representatives and labor relations practitioners indicate that Union and management representatives meet at least quarterly to discuss issues.

Implications:

Although Finding 12 raises concern over supervisors’ lack of knowledge regarding forums, this finding suggests that several DoD locations have established committees or forums. The establishment and maintenance of a forum is an important behavioral step toward achieving organizational results through effective labor-management relations.

Finding 14

Union representatives and supervisors endorse their own positive behavior more than their counterparts do.

Supporting Evidence:

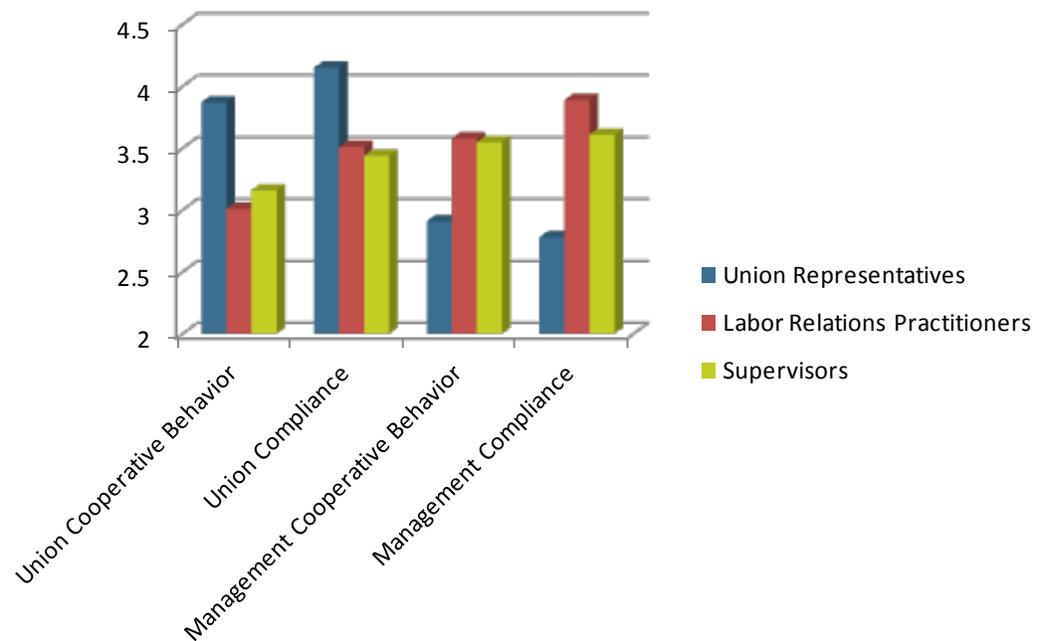
- 14.1 On all 15 items in the Cooperative Management Behavior Index, supervisors and labor relations practitioners indicate a significantly higher frequency of cooperative behavior than Union representatives.
- 14.2 On 11 out of 12 items in the Cooperative Union Behavior Index, Union representatives indicate a significantly higher frequency of cooperative Union behavior than the other groups.
- 14.3 On a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” Union representatives have significantly lower average agreement

Supervisors and Union representatives have an “us vs. them” mentality.

(2.78) than labor relations practitioners and supervisors (3.89 and 3.61, respectively) on Management Compliance Index items (see Figure 12).

- 14.4 On a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” Union representatives have significantly higher average agreement (4.15) than labor relations practitioners and supervisors (3.51 and 3.44, respectively) on Union Compliance Index items (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Management and Union Behavior Index Scores By Role



Implications:

As with Finding 6, the different perceptions of one’s in-group and out-group are likely indicators of an “us versus them” atmosphere in the labor-management relationship. Failure to view the faults of one’s in-group and the strengths of one’s out-group in labor relations puts the warfighter in jeopardy. Left unaddressed, these gaps in perception may further erode the trust and respect that the parties have for one another, and result in negative outcomes for DoD.

Finding 15

Supervisors are involved in grievance procedures less frequently than the other groups.

Supporting Evidence:

- 15.1 Fewer than 25% of supervisory respondents deal with grievances at least annually, compared to over 80% of Union representatives and labor relations practitioners.
- 15.2 Across all nine types of grievances examined, more than 80% of supervisor respondents selected either the “Not Applicable” option or indicated they dealt with the particular type of grievance “Less than Annually.”

Implications:

This finding is another indication that supervisors may feel like outsiders in DoD labor-management relations. Other findings suggest that supervisors feel less knowledgeable of issues and less involved in discussions. As outsiders to the process, it is important that they have quick access to easily understandable reference documents so that when they are called upon to participate, they fully understand the role that is expected of them.

Level 4 Findings: Results

Finding 16

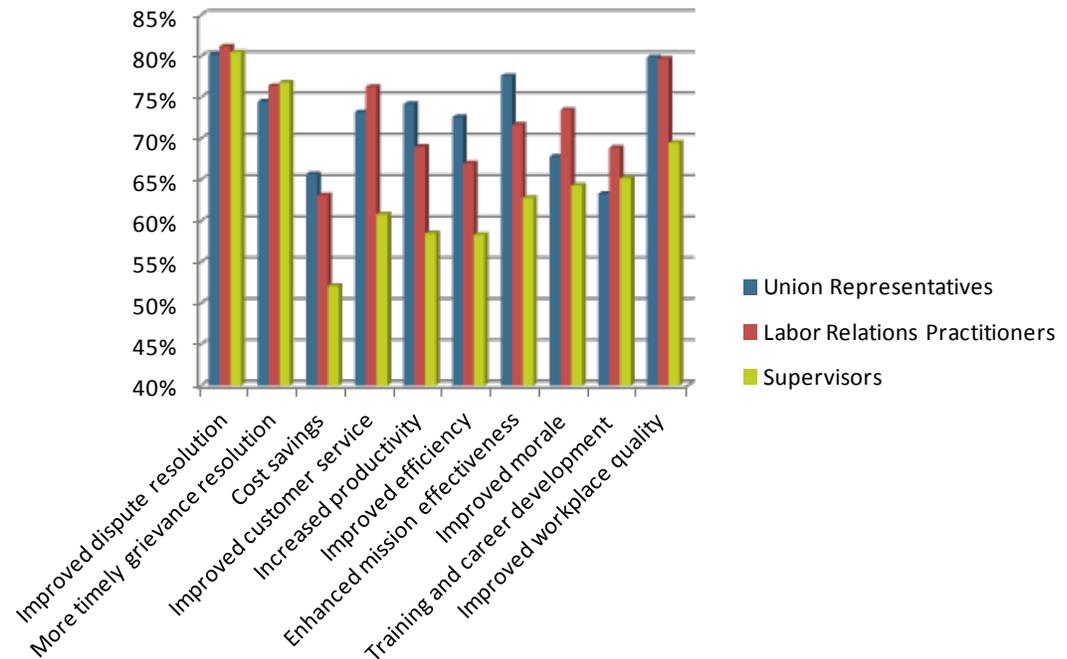
Respondents believe current labor-management relations in DoD achieve some important business results.

Supporting Evidence:

- 16.1 The majority of respondents in all three groups believe that positive labor-management relations at least “somewhat” result in positive organizational outcomes in their workplace across all ten items in the Results Index.
- 16.2 Across all ten items in the Results Index, more than 60% of Union representatives and labor relations practitioners believe that the labor management relationship at least somewhat leads to results. For seven of the ten items more than 70% report the relationship to at least somewhat lead to results (see Figure 13).

Labor-management relations have some impact on business results.

Figure 13. Percent of Respondents Indicating That Labor Management Relations At Least “Somewhat” Lead to Business Results By Role



Implications:

Positive results yield commitment to the labor-management relationship. In addition, belief that good labor-management relations have a positive impact on

DoD's outcomes is important in gaining support for initiatives to strengthen that relationship. Accordingly, it is beneficial that there is a general perception that some results are being achieved across the board.

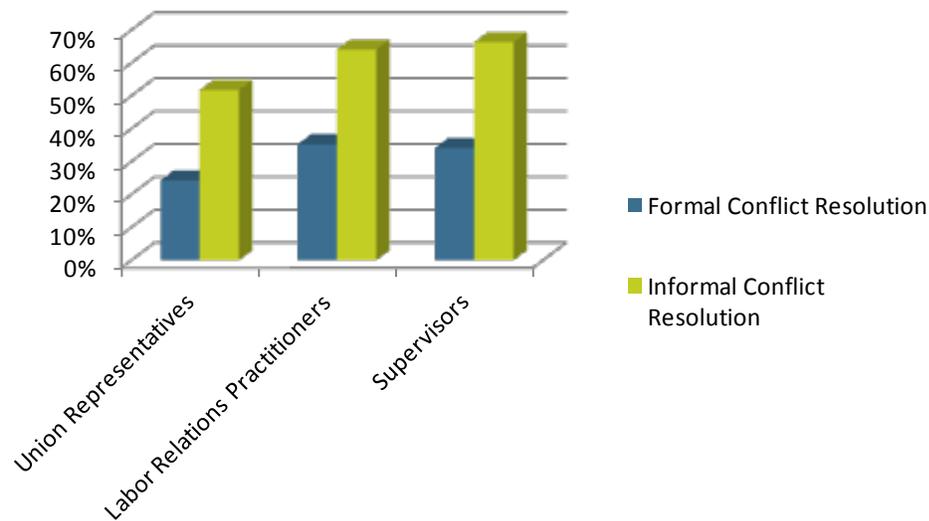
Finding 17

All three groups perceive that informal conflict resolution is faster than the formal resolution process. Union representatives perceive slower resolution than the other groups regardless of whether the process is formal or informal.

Supporting Evidence:

- 17.1 Fewer than 36% of respondents in all three groups believed that formal conflict resolution is "Quick" or "Happens Immediately." More than 50% of respondents in all groups believe informal conflict resolution is "Quick" or "Happens Immediately." See Figure 14.
- 17.2 On a four-point scale ranging from "Extremely Slow" to "Happens Immediately," Union representatives rate average speed of formal conflict resolution significantly slower (1.98) than labor relations practitioners and supervisors (2.30 and 2.17, respectively).
- 17.3 On a four-point scale ranging from "Extremely Slow" to "Happens Immediately," Union representatives rate average speed of informal conflict resolution significantly slower (2.42) than labor relations practitioners and supervisors (2.64 and 2.68, respectively).

Figure 14. Percent of Respondents Indicating Conflict Resolution is “Quick” or “Happens Immediately” By Role



Implications:

“Speed” is in the eye of the beholder. When management views speed as satisfactory, it lacks an incentive to work toward improving the situation. Because informal resolution is viewed as speedier across the board, it may behoove DoD to identify and take advantage of opportunities to use an informal conflict resolution process and save all parties the time required by a formal process. Faster resolution may also result in higher satisfaction with overall conflict resolution.

Current conflict resolution processes are somewhat effective.

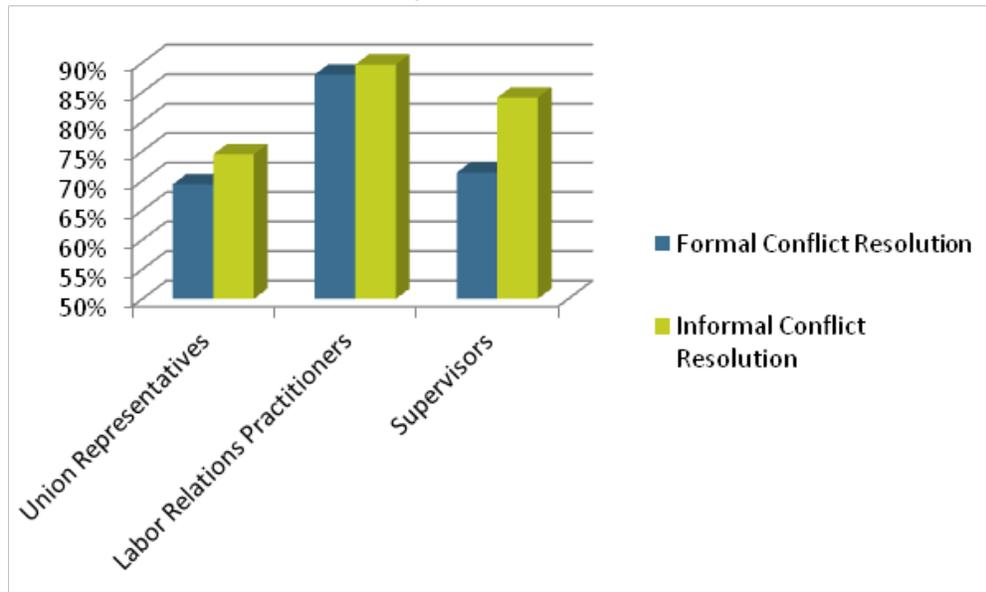
Finding 18

Current conflict resolution processes are somewhat effective. The vast majority of respondents from all three groups perceive conflict resolution to be at least somewhat effective, regardless of whether it is formal or informal. However, they view informal conflict resolution as more effective than formal resolution.

Supporting Evidence:

18.1 More than 69% of respondents in all three groups believed that formal conflict resolution is “Somewhat Effective” or “Very Effective.” More than 74% of respondents in all groups believe informal conflict resolution is “Somewhat Effective” or “Very Effective.” See Figure 15.

Figure 15. Percent of Respondents Indicating Conflict Resolution is at Least “Somewhat Effective” By Role



18.2 On a four-point scale ranging from “Not Effective” to “Very Effective,” across all groups, average effectiveness ratings are higher for informal vs. formal conflict resolution (2.96 vs. 2.76 for Union representatives; 3.23 vs. 3.04 for labor relations practitioners; and 3.14 vs. 2.77 for supervisors).

Implications:

This finding is an indication that the conflict resolution process isn’t “broken,” but it still can be improved. Employees may reflect a preference for conflict resolution in a more informal setting. Formal settings, by their very nature, set up an adversarial structure with each party trying to attack and defend. Because most people prefer to avoid conflicts, an informal setting may lessen anxiety and lead to a more positive perception of effectiveness.

Finding 19

Union representatives believe labor-management relations yield results to a greater extent than supervisors do.

Supporting Evidence:

19.1 On a three-point scale ranging from “Not at All” to “A Great Amount,” Union representatives have significantly higher endorsement (2.00) than supervisors (1.82) on Results Index items.

- 19.2 Union representatives rate six out of ten outcomes in the Results Index significantly higher than supervisors.
- 19.3 On a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” among respondents who indicate that their organization has a labor-management forum or committee, Union representatives agree significantly more than supervisors that the forum achieves results that impact the mission (3.81 vs. 3.49).

Implications:

People tend to be more committed to causes when they perceive those causes to yield results. However, commitment by both parties is needed to move the relationship forward. If Union representatives view the relationship as producing more results, and therefore as more valuable, they may also experience a higher level of frustration when supervisors do not mirror their level of commitment to the relationship.

Since Union representatives more strongly endorse the effectiveness of labor-management forums, they will continue to turn to the forums as avenues for achieving outcomes. Supervisors and labor relations practitioners may need a little more convincing. The current report could be used as part of an effort to convince them of forum success; the forums are associated with a more positive labor-management relations climate across a variety of areas.

Recommendations

COE presents nine recommendations for improving and furthering the labor-management relations climate at DoD. There is not a one-to-one correspondence between findings and recommendations as some findings are observations that may not require change. In addition, some recommendations result from the culmination of multiple pieces of evidence as well as other observations regarding the assessment process.

Increase the use of joint labor-management forums.

Recommendation 1

Increase the use of joint labor-management forums. Capitalize on the strengths of the existing forums and committees, and broaden this practice throughout DoD at the level of recognition.

Executive Order 13522 calls for the establishment of labor-management forums. Evidence from this assessment indicates that establishing joint forums may have an appreciable impact on positive labor-management relations. DoD should strive beyond simple compliance and invest in fully implementing the spirit of the Executive Order to increase the partnership among parties and to provide widespread exposure to the positive benefits reported in this assessment.

Establishment of the forums is not enough in and of itself. Forum participants must fully understand the reasons for the forums and leverage best practices to gain optimal benefit from the forums. To this end, DoD should establish a central repository of forum updates and information so that even supervisors or Union members who don't directly attend meetings understand key decisions and feel as though they are being kept in the loop.

Recommendation 2

Solicit best practices from areas that appear to have more positive labor-management climates. In addition, solicit and consolidate best practices for informal dispute resolution.

Several locations throughout DoD likely have success stories regarding practices that promote a positive relationship and informal conflict resolution strategies that improve efficiency. DoD should solicit these success stories and use them to educate others on how to adopt similar successful practices.

Recommendation 3

Seek and consolidate lessons learned from labor-management relations practices and processes periodically.

Labor-management relations can fully improve only when all participants are continuously knowledgeable regarding the hiccups and obstacles. As such, any solicitations for best practices should not be one-time events. Rather, DoD should establish formal mechanisms for continuous receipt and dissemination of best practice information.

Keep supervisors informed.

Recommendation 4

Keep supervisors informed. Provide regular updates for supervisors of bargaining unit employees to ensure that they are as much aware of ongoing labor relations activities as their counterparts during negotiations and discussions.

Supervisors performing a labor relations role as an “other duty as assigned” may not be as well versed as other key players participating in labor discussions. In addition, they may not be aware of new priorities, such as labor management forums, that need to be addressed. By establishing a repository of up-to-date labor-relations news and information, DoD can ensure that supervisors can quickly access and get up to speed on the information they need.

This type of information source requires that any information is available in a quickly understood format. Even if DoD is given guidance on issues that is 50 pages long, it should make an effort to ensure that supervisors have 1-2 page “cheat sheets” that are quick to read and easily digestible, making these more likely to be read and utilized.

Recommendation 5

Continue tracking labor-management forum status and communication, with consideration of improvements that promote more local-level accountability for tracking and maintenance while allowing DoD to maintain a real-time, high-level picture of the state of labor-management forums throughout the department.

One of the biggest challenges for DoD is managing the needed information associated with labor-management forums and labor relations assessments. This information does not exist in a centralized repository and labor relations experts must rely on time-consuming data calls to attain what they need. In addition, the data attained through data calls is often incomplete, leaving many holes in management's understanding of the true state of labor-management relations.

As an example, DoD currently does not have a central listing of supervisors and managers who regularly interact with unions. Intimately knowing and being able to access this group of people is essential to the successful implementation of Executive Order 13522 and the continuation of efforts associated with it.

How to Strengthen the Tracking Mechanism

COE recommends that the current tracking system be converted to a Bargaining Unit Data and Descriptive Information (BUDDI) Platform. The Platform would serve as a central repository completely modified and monitored by local labor-management forums – and BUDDI could capitalize on the DoD SharePoint infrastructure already in existence. BUDDI would consist of the following:

- The ability to store bargaining unit information if desired (e.g., collective bargaining agreements, contact information for managers and supervisors who work with local unions, and an up-to-date repository of best practices)
- A way to coherently monitor labor-management forums across DoD (e.g., those implemented as a result of Executive Order 13522) without burdening DCPAS FAS-LERD with additional staffing demands. Tools to accomplish this would include the availability of active pages for all labor-management forums, message boards for sharing ideas, and the capability for real-time monitoring of the status of labor-management forums by assessing the forums with active forum SharePoint pages

Benefits of Strengthening the Tracking Mechanism

The minimal effort and cost to convert the current system to a true BUDDI Platform would provide the following benefits to DoD:

- Serve as a one-stop shop for up-to-date labor-management forum related information throughout DoD
- Streamline the many time-consuming data calls to employees associated with local bargaining units
- Allow DoD to maintain a real-time, high-level picture of the state of labor-management forums throughout the department.
- Assign local accountability for maintenance while allowing a centralized view of forum status

Recommendation 6

Encourage Union involvement in discussions and decisions when practicable at the level of recognition.

Transparency and involvement lead to greater trust and a sense of shared mission. As a major tenet of Executive Order 13522, pre-decisional involvement ensures that employees don't have to rely on intuition or guesses to determine why particular changes or programs are being implemented. When employees are left to guess why important decisions are being made, they are more likely to perceive management as hostile and as behaving in a distrustful, negative way.

Encourage policies that promote mutual trust.

Recommendation 7

Encourage policies that promote mutual trust and strengthen employees' understanding of the shared Union-management responsibility for mission success. When help is requested, explore and encourage actions to ensure that supervisors, Union representatives, and labor relations practitioners are working towards a "shared mission," rather than focusing on an "us versus them" agenda.

The DoD mission does not involve competition among different factions. The Department is one enterprise with a mission to support the warfighter. Aside from further formalizing labor-management forums, DoD can take the following actions to ensure a sense of shared mission and mutual trust:

- Establish collaborative online communities for supervisors, labor relations practitioners, and Union representatives (perhaps through a system like that described in Recommendation 5)
- Use labor-management forums as an opportunity to establish joint working groups with subsets of supervisors and Union representatives working together to suggest ways to address pressing issues

- Encourage appreciative inquiry (AI) activities at locations where help is sought to reduce a contentious environment. AI encourages individuals to focus on the positive aspects of their relationship so that strengths may be expanded upon and opportunities for improvement addressed
- Encourage joint celebration when solutions generated through joint labor-management forums yield positive results.

Actions like these may already be occurring at different locations to different degrees. However, the key will be ensuring that any best practices are adopted systemically.

Recommendation 8

Involve supervisors in discussions at the level of recognition. Develop mechanisms to ensure that supervisors feel as involved as other participants in labor relations discussions.

Supervisors' responses to the assessment suggest that they may feel like the "odd ones out" during labor relations discussions and negotiations. When possible, formal discussions should ensure that supervisors have the opportunity to articulate and explain their perspectives.

Here are a few suggestions for ensuring that supervisors feel included in labor relations discussions:

- Establish clear participatory roles for supervisors as participants in forum-based working groups
- Tailor web content specifically geared to supervisors who have more infrequent involvement in labor relations activities, but who may need quick references when invited to meetings
- Hold informational meetings between labor relations specialists and supervisors prior to discussions and negotiations to ensure that the supervisors fully understand the issues and the intent of the meetings
- Encourage labor relations specialists to seek input from supervisors prior to key meetings to ensure that supervisors' questions and concerns are voiced

Many of these actions may already be occurring at different locations. DoD should capitalize on any opportunities to formalize these mechanisms.

Recommendation 9

Communicate and monitor changes to the labor-management relations climate. Formally communicate the results of this baseline assessment to employees, and record all actions taken in response. Conduct an annual follow-up assessment, using the record of actions to help inform any changes in results.

Communicate and monitor changes to the labor-management relations climate.

Communication is key to ensuring that all participants of this effort understand how their opinions have helped shape the DoD environment. This understanding helps participants see the importance of sharing their opinions through future surveys and demonstrates that management values their input. It contributes to a climate of ownership and empowerment. In addition, any changes should be documented so that future assessments can consider how strategic changes may have informed any corresponding changes in survey results.

Next Steps

In summary, COE's findings, based on the four-level labor-management relations assessment, suggest that the DoD's labor relations climate has many strengths—as well as several opportunities to improve and yield organizational results. The recommendations presented in this report outline areas for consideration in investing time and resources to drive improvement.

As an initial next step, following review of this report, DoD should examine the findings in the context of ongoing strategic initiatives and the Department's labor relations goals. Union and management representatives should work together to develop an action plan for implementing changes in the labor relations environment throughout DoD. The action plan should prioritize recommendations and define specific tasks required for implementing the recommendations. DoD should also assign and track accountability to ensure that planned actions are completed. Overall, a critical review of this report's findings and recommendations can pave the way to more effective labor-management relations at DoD.

Union and management representatives should work together to develop an action plan for implementing changes in the labor relations environment.

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