

Program Helps Employees Resolve Workplace Issues

Just over a year ago, SCE introduced *Focus on Resolution -- Problem Solving for a New Era*, a new conflict-resolution program for nonrepresented employees. Any new program is a work in progress, and the one-year mark seems an appropriate time to assess whether it has lived up to its name thus far.

“It worked for me,” reported SCE employee **Diane Harris-Matsuda**. “Thanks to the process, I am able to go on with my career.”

“I was very happy with the process,” said **Linda McCullough**, another SCE employee. “In my case, it was highly successful.”

Still, a third employee said, “My settlement wasn't 100% of what I wanted, but I guess we really can't expect to get 100% of what we want all the time anyway.”

Charla Spence, SCE's Manager of Business Resources, thinks the program improves on its predecessor, Request for Review. “It was largely paper-based and a lot of the decisions were made off of the person's ability to put their words down in a way that got some attention.”

“The previous process put more responsibility on the employee to cause things to happen,” said **Russ Krieger**, Vice President of Nuclear Generation at San Onofre. “With Focus on Resolution, there is a lot more facilitation, it is a lot easier to get concerns and issues raised and reviewed.”

But McCullough offered this caveat on facilitation: “The facilitator I used throughout the process was very fair and didn't act as an advocate for one or the other. But I think the company needs to be very careful who they assign as facilitators. The person should be trained. And if it is a biased person, and the employee feels that they're for the

company, then it is not going to resolve anything.”

Case in point, that of another employee. “I was in a meeting with two supervisors and the Focus on Resolution facilitator. And it seemed to me that regardless of what point I made in my case, the facilitator looked towards the supervisors. I felt like I was rocking the boat, I should just let sleeping dogs lie.”

“I think the process could be better,” this employee added. “Probably the best-case scenario would be bringing in one of your peers as a co-facilitator.”

Focus on Resolution emphasizes resolving issues within the work unit whenever possible. At the other end of the process is the Review Panel, the highest level of review available within the utility. Very few employees have taken their cases this far. “This indicates that the Business Units are taking the program seriously and working to reach resolution with employees as early as possible and move on with the business at hand,” said **Kathy Rodriguez**, Program Manager for Focus on Resolution. “In fact, 65 percent of the closed cases were resolved at the business unit level. In addition to most cases being resolved early in the process, they are being resolved more expediently. Over all steps in the process, cases are closing within an average of 39.7 days. This is excellent, considering that in the previous program, some cases remained open for over a year.”

Rodriguez said she is pleased with how seriously Review Panel members have taken their roles. “They were very thorough and really attempted to get at the truth. They didn't ‘go easy’ on anyone. Some might have thought that the panel would be a ‘rubber stamp’ for management but that hasn't been the case.” So far, 42 percent of the closed cases have either had the management action

overturned or modified in a way that satisfied the employee.

“They didn't take sides,” Harris-Matsuda said of the Review Panel that heard her case. “They listened to me as an employee and I felt really good about that.”

“It is a very intensive process,” said **Mike Pinter**, General Manager of Computing Services in SCE's Information Technology Department. Pinter served as company spokesman before a review panel. “In preparing to review it with the panel, I probably spent a good three to four days.” As for the actual review panel process, said Pinter, “It almost turned out to be an entire day. This gave me confidence that the issue was treated thoroughly and fairly.”

“If the process is going to be thorough, it can be time consuming,” concludes **Mike Mendez**, SCE's VP of Labor Relations, who served on a review panel. “I think the trade-off for the employee and the company is a process that, hopefully, the employees will view as impartial and a good opportunity to present their issues.”

Sometimes it's just a question of being heard, as Kathy Rodriguez observes. “There have been those who, after talking through their problem with someone, feel they prefer to move on now that someone has acknowledged their concerns. There have been a number of issues resolved in this manner without being formally filed. But if this isn't possible, the program is available to facilitate the resolution process.”

To learn more about the program, SCE employees can contact their Business Unit Human Resources representative or call Employee Relations at PAX 25476 or 626/302-5476.