



**Call for Presentations
Proposal Outline
The 14th National Labor-Management Conference
June 9-11, 2008**

Title of Presentation: Emerging Trends: Strategic Relationships Between Labor and Management: An Assessment of 25 Years Experience with Labor-Management Partnerships

Summary of Presentation: Please submit a 2-3 page summary of your proposed presentation. If accepted, the summary may be published. Please include the following in your summary:

1. Provide the background and/or history for your topic
2. Describe the nature of the challenge to labor and management
3. Explain the key elements of the problem-solving effort (including any unique or innovative aspects)
4. Discuss any obstacles and/or issues that were encountered
5. Detail the results and benefits, including key success factors and lessons learned from a real-world application
6. Indicate whether you currently are working with an FMCS mediator

With the growth of the new economy (primarily driven by globalization, technological advance and deregulation), unionized organizations have found traditional labor-management relationships to be unsatisfactory and unproductive. Organizational change and performance improvement are not discretionary in the current marketplace. The standard Post World War II traditional labor management relationship has finally reached the end of its productive life. Organizations are routinely transforming themselves by using force (including changing owners and bankruptcy courts) or fleeing (or sometimes simply threatening to flee to force change). On the other hand, organizations unable to flee or without dominate power are increasingly looking at developing strategic alliances with their unions in order to address performance challenges and to achieve a competitive advantage.

Over the last 25 years numerous companies and unions have come together to form strategic alliances or create labor management partnerships. In many cases they have been notable, for example, among others, LTV Steel and the USWA, Harley Davidson and the IAM and now USWA, Levi Strauss and what was UNITE, Kaiser Permanente and the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU), Southwest Airlines and its unions, Allina (Healthcare) and the SEIU, Yale University and UNITE HERE, Harvard University and HUCTW, Catholic Healthcare West and the United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU), and Detroit Edison and the Utility Workers. Some of these partnerships have endured and thrived, others worked for a while, then died, others struggled. Most have delivered substantial performance results, at least for some time; some have

provided critical competitive advantages for the organizations.

In the face of the tremendous market pressures for performance, the challenge for labor and management is to find a new way to work together successfully to deliver benefits to both parties, and to avoid the alternative paths of forcing, fleeing or failing. The experiences of others clearly demonstrate that creating a strategic relationship or a labor management partnership is challenging, but these other experiences also prove the value of working together and provide guidance as to how to succeed and how to fail.

A detailed critical assessment of the different labor management partnerships provides clear guidance for organizations considering the collaborative approach. The presentation will examine in detail critical factors affecting success and failure, illustrating the points with specific reference to cases mentioned above, and the results they achieved.

Major points to be examined will include the following:

- Making the effort part of the operating strategy rather than an IR strategy;
- Focusing the effort on performance improvement and key business drivers;
- Embracing and integrating the unions and their objectives;
- Building a strong foundation of interest based problem-solving, IBN, and business education;
- Having well articulated and shared objectives;
- Developing clear and measurable objectives, and having metrics that are constantly monitored;
- Actively engaging employees across the organization at the work unit level;
- Training management and union leadership with the skills to operate in a collaborative problem solving culture;
- Institutionalizing performance improvement, problem solving and process and work redesign;
- Providing sufficient resources to support the change process and the new relationship.

Finally the presentation will describe the principle lessons learned in the different cases about the process and pathway of change, looking at the issues and challenges in transforming traditional relationships into partnerships or strategic relationships. This will include discussion drawing on specific examples about how the change in relationship fits with collective bargaining, the use of third parties, the resource requirements, dealing with current business challenges during the change process, operating in the old way while trying to create a new way, timetables, and typical landmines along the way.

Because this presentation draws on numerous cases, no specific FMCS mediator is involved, although FMCS mediators have been engaged in some capacity in many of the cases discussed and described in the presentation.