

# RESEARCH ON UNIONIZED GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES: MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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*This paper critically reviews research on unionized grievance procedures to identify key issues for human resource/labor relations executives and to provide recommendations for dealing with these issues. The review covers psychological, sociological, economics, and industrial relations-based research. Specifically, the authors recommend that senior human resource/labor relations executives and their staffs conceptualize the grievance procedure as a high involvement human resource practice, distinguish between the presence and use of grievance procedures, use grievance data to determine whether grievants or their supervisors suffer management reprisals, assess supervisors' dominant orientation toward employees, determine employee perceptions of grievance procedure fairness, and monitor the effects of work force composition and supervisor selection on grievance activity. © 2000 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

It is a virtual truism that conflict is inherent in the employment relationship. Though usually implicit or covert, such conflict becomes explicit or overt when an employment relationship features unionized employees and management. Here, the parties seek to resolve conflict through a process of collective negotiations. From one perspective negotiations occur periodically, every three years or so in the typical labor-management relationship. From another perspective, however, labor-management negotiations are continuous, with the grievance procedure commonly found in labor agreements serving as the main mechanism through which such negotiations operate. Many scholars and practitioners consider conflict resolution through grievance procedures to be the major accomplishment of the United States system of industrial relations (for example, Peterson, 1992).

Given their long history and putative benefits, union grievance procedures have been subjected to a large amount and variety of theoretical and empirical research. What can be learned from this research in terms of key issues for and salient recommendations to senior human resource and labor relations executives? To address this question, we critically review psychological, sociological, economics, and industrial relations research on grievance procedures and synthesize the main findings from each research area. Table I presents a summary of this research. We then offer recommendations to senior human resource and labor relations executives for dealing with key grievance issues that emerge from this research synthesis.<sup>2</sup>

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## Research Review and Synthesis

### *Psychological Research*

Many early (post-World War II) and several more recent studies of grievance procedures

**TABLE 1** A Summary of Leading Research Perspectives on and Findings about Unionized Grievance Procedures.

Research Perspective	Leading Authors	Key Findings
Psychology	Eckerman (1948), Stagner (1956, 1962), Fleishman & Harris, 1962, Sulkin & Pranis (1967), Ash, (1970), Kissler (1977), Walker & Robinson (1977), Dalton & Tudor (1982), Gordon & Miller (1984), Labig & Greer (1988), Gordon & Bowlby (1989), Bemmels, Reshef & Stratton-Devine (1991), Bemmels (1994), Bemmels & Foley (1996)	Younger, male, more educated more skilled/employees most likely to file grievances; democratic supervision associated with lower grievance rates; frequency of employee complaints to shop stewards positively related to grievance filing
Sociology	Weiss (1957), Sayles (1958), Kuhn (1961), Ronan (1963) Peach & Livernash (1974), Nelson (1979), Muchinsky & Maassarani (1980, 1981), Bemmels, Reshef, & Stratton-Devine (1991)	Work groups of semi-skilled employees performing specialized work who undergo frequent changes in work methods have high grievance rates and use the grievance process to influence collective bargaining
Economics	A. Rees (1977), Freeman & Medoff (1984) Katz, Kochan, & Gobeille (1983), Katz, Kochan, & Weber (1985), Norsworthy & Zabala (1985), Ichniowski & Lewin (1987), Cappelli & Chauvin (1991), Ichniowski (1986, 1992), Kleiner, Nickelsburg & Pilarski (1995)	Presence of a grievance procedure associated with lower turnover, longer job tenure, greater human capital and higher productivity; use of the grievance procedure negatively associated with organizational performance
Industrial Relations	Slichter, Healy & Livernash (1960), Knight (1986), Clark & Gallagher (1988), Gordon (1988), Fryxell & Gordon (1989), Klass & DeNisi (1989), Delaney, Lewin, & Ichniowski (1989), Mitchell, Lewin & Lawler (1990), Klaas, Heneman & Olson (1991), D. Rees (1991), Bemmels, Reshef & Stratton-Devine (1991), Boroff (1991), Peterson (1988, 1992), Bemmels (1994), Huselid (1995), Bemmels & Foley (1996), Lewin & Boroff (1996), (Boroff & Lewin(1997), Lewin (1984, 1997, 1999, 2000), Lewin & Peterson (1988, 1999)	Perceived fairness of grievance system positively associated with use of the system and overall effectiveness ratings; grievants and their supervisors have poorer performance following grievance settlement than non-grievants and their supervisors; grievance process is one of a bundle of high involvement human resource practices positively associated with organizational performance

have been done by psychologists who attempted to identify and explain individual differences in grievant behavior (e.g., Eckerman 1948; Fleishman & Harris 1962; Sulkin &

Pranis 1967). These researchers focused their attention on three major issues: 1) differences in demographic and job-related characteristics of grievance filers and non-filers; 2) per-

sonality characteristics of managers and union officials; and 3) different types of supervisory behavior as they influence the level of grievance activity.

The majority of this psychological research has centered on identifying demographic and job-related characteristics that differentiate employees who file grievances from those who don't (e.g., Ash, 1970; Price, Dewine, Nowark, Shenkel, & Ronan, 1976; Dalton & Tudor, 1982). As many as 40 separate independent variables have been employed in a single study. Unfortunately, psychologically based research on grievance filing uses many different variables rather than a common set of independent variables and, perhaps because of this, there are few replication-type studies in this research.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence from these studies that grievants are more likely to be younger, male, have more education, and hold more skilled jobs than non-grievants. Further, grievants are more likely to have higher absenteeism rates, dispensary visits, and insurance claim filing rates than non-grievants (Labig & Greer, 1988). Even with respect to these variables, however, one or more studies were unable to identify any significant differences between grievants and non-grievants. Further, no significant differences between grievants and non-grievants were found concerning marital status, and contradictory findings have emerged with respect to the effects of race, tenure, pay, and promotions on grievance filing in unionized settings. There has also been insufficient research on the role of personality variables in grievance filing to draw firm conclusions in this regard (Stagner, 1956, 1962; Gordon & Bowlby 1989).

Another strand of research by psychologists has centered on differences in supervisory style and the effects of these differences on levels of work place grievance activity. Fleishman and Harris (1962) found that foremen judged high on "consideration" showed a negative but curvilinear relationship with grievance filing by employees in their work groups, whereas the opposite was true of "task-oriented" foremen. Additional analysis showed that grievances occurred most frequently among work groups whose foremen were low

in consideration regardless of the amount of emphasis that foremen placed on job/task structure. Later, Walker & Robinson (1977) found that "autocratic" supervisors had fewer grievances and were better contract administrators than "democratic" supervisors. Unfortunately, the research instrument used by these researchers does not allow direct comparison with the Ohio State Leadership Questionnaire used earlier by Fleishman & Harris (1962). Studies by Bemmels (1994) and Bemmels, Reshef, & Stratton-Devine (1991), however, drew directly on Fleishman and Harris' (1962) work to construct empirical measures of supervisors' "consideration" and "structure. Consideration had a negative relationship with grievance filing rates in both of these studies, but structure was positively related to grievance filing rates only in Bemmels' (1994) study.

The research by Bemmels (1994) and Bemmels, Reshef, & Stratton-Devine (1991) is especially notable for the inclusion of shop stewards' assessment of how frequently employees approach them with complaints. The researchers propose that "employees' complaining to their steward is a precursor to grievance filing" (p. 368). Both of these studies found that work groups with employees who more frequently complained to shop stewards had higher grievance filing rates than work groups with less frequent complaints. In addition, both studies found that supervisor consideration was negatively related to the frequency of employee complaints to their stewards, supervisor structure was positively related to the frequency of employee complaints to their stewards, and the steward's assessment of the supervisor's knowledge of the collective bargaining agreement was negatively related to employee complaints. Overall, however, Bemmels & Foley (1996) conclude that "the effect of structure on grievance rates from earlier studies were . . . mixed, and the mixed results from these two recent studies do not clarify what, if any, relationship exists between structure and grievance rates" (p. 367).

For senior human resource and labor relations executives, the key findings that emerge from this psychological research pertain to the types of employees who (are likely to) use the

grievance procedure and the effects of supervisor and shop steward behavior on grievance procedure usage. From this research, it is relatively clear that younger, male, more educated, and more skilled employees are most likely to file grievances; considerate or democratic supervision is associated with lower grievance filing rates; and employee complaints to shop stewards are a harbinger of formal grievance filing.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Sociological Research*

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A second stream of research has focused on properties of work groups, organization structure, technology, and the environment associated with grievance procedure dynamics. For example, Weiss (1957) studied grievance filing as a function of the degree of centralization of organizational authority. His main hypothesis was that decentralized organizations experience a significantly lower level of grievance activity than centralized organizations; however, Weiss was unable to confirm this hypothesis in his empirical work.

The role of technology in grievance activity has been an important area of research. Sayles (1958) hypothesized that grievance rates vary from group to group depending on the social system of the group, especially as that system is influenced by technology. He examined 300 work groups across numerous plants and found grievance activity to be highest in "strategic" (semi-skilled) work groups, lowest in "apathetic" (unskilled) work groups, and moderate in "erratic" (semi-skilled) and "conservative" (skilled) work groups.

Ronan (1963) attempted to build on Sayles' findings by analyzing formal grievance activity in two plants of a single firm. He was unable to replicate Sayles' findings, but this may have been due to his having collapsed the four work groups types into two categories. In addition, one of the two plants he studied was very new, and this may well have contributed to the relatively high level of grievances filed there. In a later study, Nelson (1979) was able to corroborate Sayles' findings using a sample of 53 work groups in a single plant.

Kuhn (1961) reported the results of grievance case studies in eight large tire and electrical equipment plants. He found four

socio-technical factors that apparently influenced a work group's desire to use the grievance procedure to bargain for special benefits: frequency of changes in work methods, standards, or materials; individualized work pace; frequency of interaction with others in the work group; and job specialization. Kuhn's research underscored the political (bargaining) nature of the grievance procedure in which certain groups fight for special benefits for their own members, sometimes to the detriment of the rest of the bargaining unit employees and the union. More recent research by Lewin & Peterson (1988) found that where a particular issue is heavily grieved, labor and management are likely to negotiate language into the subsequent labor agreement to address the issue. This research supports Kuhn's (1961) conclusion that grievance processing is a form of "fractional" or continuous bargaining that impacts formal contract negotiations.

Peach & Livernash (1974) compared pairs of high and low grievance departments in several steel plants in an attempt to highlight the variables contributing to differences in grievance activity. Their sample consisted of six plants ranging in size from 2,000 to more than 13,000 employees. The authors found that a high grievance rate was associated with an unfavorable task environment, aggressive and militant union leadership, and ineffective management decision-making as indicated by leadership, organizational, and policy deficiencies. A low grievance rate was characterized by a favorable task environment, that is, one that is both relatively stable and largely free from technological disturbances, and with effective management and organization policies. Following closely on the work of Peach & Livernash (1974), Muchinsky & Maassarani (1981) studied the impact of environmental factors on employee grievances in the public sector. They reported findings similar to those obtained by Peach and Livernash in steel manufacturing settings. In a larger study (1980), Muchinsky & Maassarani also found support for Ronan's finding that the age of a manufacturing facility was negatively associated with grievance activity.

While these studies appear to conclude that technology significantly influences em-

*Research on Unionized Grievance Procedures: Management Issues and Recommendations*

ployee grievance filing behavior, a more recent study (1991) by Bemmels, Sheref, & Stratton-Devine concluded otherwise. Using survey data on 231 work groups obtained from numerous locals of one Canadian union, these researchers found little empirical support for the hypothesis that differences in technology explain variation in grievance filing rates. Only one measure of technology ("requires following strict rules and procedures") was significantly related to grievance filing rates in this study, and the negative sign on this variable contradicted the results of earlier studies.

For senior human resource and labor relations executives, the key findings that derive from sociological research on grievance procedures concern the characteristics of organizations, work groups and technology. In particular, work groups composed of semi-skilled employees who perform specialized work, experience frequent change in work methods/standards, and interact frequently with other work groups are more likely to generate high grievance filing rates than ~~are~~ other work groups. These "grievance active" work groups use the grievance process to negotiate certain benefits for themselves. By contrast, neither technology nor centralized (or decentralized) organizational decision-making appears to be significantly related to formal grievance filing.<sup>1</sup>

*Economics Research*

While economists have long studied the effects of unions on pay and other bargaining outcomes (see, for example, Rees, 1977), economists' focus on grievance procedures developed relatively recently and is largely guided by Hirschman's (1970) model of exit, voice, and loyalty. Hirschman addressed the question of why some customers who are dissatisfied with a firm's products do not switch to other firms as microeconomic theory would predict but, instead, express their dissatisfaction to the "original" firm with the objective of having the sources of their dissatisfaction (such as product price, quality, or availability) corrected. In this model, switching is exit behavior, expressing dissatisfaction is voice behavior, and loyalty is posited to be negatively related to exit and positively related to voice.

Labor economists have applied Hirschman's framework to the employment relationship, specifically to unionized employment relationships; the best-known work is that of Freeman & Medoff (1984). These researchers modeled unionism as the voice mechanism in the employment relationship and hypothesized that union exercise of voice on behalf of employees reduces their exit or quit rates compared to those of non-union employees. Using secondary data from a wide range of manufacturing industries and workers, Freeman & Medoff (1984) consistently found significantly lower quit rates among unionized than non-union workers even after controlling for differences in wages and other factors. Such lower quit rates translate into longer average job tenure for unionized than for non-union workers, which provides an incentive for unionized firms to make greater investments in employee training than non-union firms. Such training, in turn, increases the quality of unionized firms' human capital and hence employee productivity relative to non-union firms. This productivity gain is offset by the increased labor costs to unionized firms resulting from negotiated pay increases, but since unit labor costs are unchanged the unionized firm can co-exist and compete with the non-union firm—or so say Freeman & Medoff (1984).

Other researchers reach conclusions different from those of Freeman and Medoff (1984) in so far as the effects of grievance procedures on productivity are concerned. For example, Ichniowski (1992, 1986) found a strong negative relationship between grievance rates and monthly tons of paper produced in nine unionized paper mills over the 1976-82 period. Katz, Kochan, & Weber (1985) and Katz, Kochan, & Gobeille (1983) found strong negative relationships between grievance rates and plant performance (including productivity and product quality) in two sets of General Motors assembly plants during the 1970s. Norsworthy & Zabala (1985) found the grievance rate to be significantly negatively related to total factor productivity and significantly positively related to unit production costs in the United States' automobile industry between 1959 and 1976.

Some of these authors (e.g., Katz, Kochan, & Gobeille 1983) propose that their findings

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151

...the presence or availability of a grievance procedure is associated with lower involuntary employee turnover, longer job tenure, greater human capital, and increased productivity. Actual use of the grievance procedure, however, is associated with poorer organizational performance, specifically, lower productivity, lower product quality, and higher labor costs.

can be explained by a "displacement effect" in that time normally devoted to production is instead devoted to grievance filing and settlement. The size of the productivity and cost effects reported in the aforementioned studies, however, seem too large to be fully accounted for by such a displacement effect. Moreover, a study by Kleiner, Nickelsburg, & Pilarski (1995) of grievance procedures and firm performance in a large unionized aerospace company found that the lowest levels of unit labor costs were associated with a "moderate" level of grievance activity.

The idea, drawn from economic theory, that choices (made by consumers, producers, employees, and other economic actors) are guided by relative costs and benefits has been used to generate additional theorizing about and empirical research on grievance procedures. For example, Ichniowski and Lewin (1987) developed a compensating differentials framework of analysis in which union and management decisions to adopt or not adopt grievance procedures can be viewed as one alternative among a range of bargaining choices and human resource practices. In other words, grievance procedures may be traded off for wages, benefits, work rule changes, or other conditions of employment. Similarly, such a cost-benefit framework can be usefully applied to the behavior of workers in deciding whether or not to file grievances. Cappelli & Chauvin (1991) tested an efficiency model of grievances in which employees compare the cost and benefits (or effectiveness) of grievance filing with such other options as exiting (quitting) the firm or remaining silent. These authors proposed that the costs of exit and thus grievance filing rates depend on labor market conditions. Specifically, both wage premiums in a plant (compared with rates prevailing in the local labor market) and unemployment in the local labor market were hypothesized to increase the costs of exit and lead to more frequent grievance filing. Cappelli & Chauvin's (1991) findings from a study of 86 plants in a large manufacturing firm supported these hypotheses.

Using an agency theory framework, Kleiner, Nickelsburg, & Pilarski (1995) hypothesized that management monitoring of employees would be positively related to grievance

filing. The researchers were unable to develop a direct quantitative measure of such monitoring. They did find, however, that the planned monthly production rate and the change in the time span required for the completion of one unit of output (in the aforementioned large unionized aerospace firm) were, respectively, negatively and positively related to grievance filing rates. This study, when set alongside other labor economists' research on grievance procedures, raises an important question about the possible causal relationships among production requirements, grievance behavior, and productivity (as well as other organizational outcomes).

In sum, there are some key findings for senior human resource and labor relations executives from economics-based research on grievance procedures. Perhaps most important, the presence or availability of a grievance procedure is associated with lower involuntary employee turnover, longer job tenure, greater human capital, and increased productivity. Actual use of the grievance procedure, however, is associated with poorer organizational performance, specifically, lower productivity, lower product quality, and higher labor costs. Grievance filing is also positively associated with in-plant pay premiums (over which management exercises some control) and negatively associated with local area unemployment (over which management exercises little or no control).

### *Industrial Relations Research*

Industrial relations scholars have been interested in the union grievance procedure for decades. For example, Slichter, Healy, & Livernash (1960) provided important insights into the functioning of the union grievance procedure in the 1950s. These and other early researchers, however, made little or no attempt to collect grievance data for the purpose of testing explicit hypotheses about grievance procedure dynamics. More rigorous industrial relations research on the grievance process began to emerge in the 1980s, and some leading examples of this research are briefly reviewed here.

Lewin (1984), Peterson (1988), and Lewin & Peterson (1988) used systems theory to de-

velop a six-dimension model of grievance procedure effectiveness and then tested the model using data from steel manufacturing firms, retail department stores, nonprofit hospitals, and local public schools. Among other things, they found that employee perceptions of grievance procedure effectiveness were significantly positively related to employee use of the grievance process. Fryxell & Gordon (1989) tested relationships between beliefs in procedural justice, distributive justice, moral order, and unionists' overall evaluation of the grievance system as well as union members' satisfaction with their unions and employers. They found that procedural due process was positively associated with union members' assessment of the grievance system as a whole, while both procedural and distributive justice were positively related to members' satisfaction with their union. Satisfaction with management, by contrast, was positively related to union members' belief in a moral order. In a study of the mail carriers' union, Clark & Gallagher (1988) found that union members who filed grievances had more favorable attitudes toward and assessments of the grievance procedure than union members who didn't file grievances. In a Canadian study, Knight (1986) found that union and management learning from prior grievance cases had a positive effect on the resolution of subsequent grievance cases.

Lewin & Peterson (1999, 1988) and Lewin (1997) also studied post-grievance settlement personnel outcomes for grievants compared to non-grievants, using data from four organizations over multi-year periods. They found that grievants had lower job performance ratings, promotion rates, and work attendance rates and higher voluntary and involuntary turnover rates than did non-grievants in the periods following grievance filing and settlement, whereas no significant differences along these personnel dimensions existed between these two employee groups prior to or during the grievance filing period. Of particular importance, similar findings emerged with respect to supervisors of grievants compared to supervisors of non-grievants.<sup>5</sup> Klaas & Denisi (1989) also found that grievance activity was negatively associated with grievants' job performance following grievance settlement. In

a related study, Klaas, Heneman, & Olson (1991) analyzed relationships between grievance activity and employee absenteeism over an eight-year period among 450 employees of a unionized public sector organization. They found a significant positive relationship between the filing of grievances over management policies and subsequent employee absenteeism from their work units, but a significant negative relationship between the filing of grievances over disciplinary matters and subsequent employee absenteeism from their work units.

Recent studies by Lewin & Boroff (1996) and Boroff & Lewin (1997) of grievance procedure dynamics in a large unionized telecommunications firm appear to be the first to have focused exclusively on employees who believed that they have been unfairly treated at work, as distinct from all employees of a bargaining unit or all employees who are otherwise eligible to file grievances. Among the sample of employees who said that they had been unfairly treated at work, the authors found that employee loyalty was significantly negatively related to both grievance filing (i.e., the use of voice) and intent to leave (i.e., exit) the firm. They also found that employee fear of reprisal for filing grievances was significantly negatively associated with actual grievance filing in this large firm despite the protection ostensibly afforded these employees by their union, the collective bargaining agreement, and provisions of the National Labor Relations Act. Lewin & Boroff (1996) and Boroff & Lewin (1997) therefore conclude that their evidence provides strong support for the proposition that loyal employees largely "suffer in silence" in response to unfair work place treatment. This conclusion, in turn, provides some support for an organizational punishment/industrial discipline theory of the grievance process (Lewin & Peterson, 1999; Lewin, 1997; Peterson, 1992).

Grievance procedures are also being considered by industrial relations researchers who study "high performance" work places and practices (Levine, 1995; Pil & MacDuffie, 1996; Delaney, Lewin, & Ichniowski, 1989). This research is primarily oriented toward modeling and assessing the effects of high involvement or high participation work practices

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on firms' economic performance as measured, for example, by return on assets, return on capital employed, and revenue per employee. Although the samples used in these studies include both unionized and non-union firms (or business units), the presence of a formal grievance procedure has typically been included in indexes or bundles of high performance work practices. This was the approach taken by Mitchell, Lewin, & Lawler (1990), who included the presence of a formal grievance procedure in their index of the formality of human resource practices (FHR), and by Huselid (1995), who included the percentage of employees covered by a formal grievance procedure in one of his two main indexes of high performance work practices (HPWP). In both studies, these indexes were found to be significantly positively related to measures of firms' economic performance. More broadly, this type of research indicates that grievance procedures can be studied at the organizational level of analysis, not just at the individual level that has been especially popular in grievance procedure research.

For senior human resource and labor relations executives, the key findings from industrial relations research on grievance procedures pertain to grievance procedure effectiveness, post-grievance settlement outcomes, and organizational outcomes. A grievance system that is perceived by employees to be procedurally just or fair is likely to be used and to be regarded as effective. Employees who file grievances, however, appear to fare poorly after grievance settlement compared to employees who do not file grievances in terms of subsequent job performance, promotion, work attendance and turnover/retention. Alternatively, a grievance procedure appears to be one among a bundle of high involvement human resource practices that are positively associated with overall organizational performance.

### Recommendations

Several recommendations for senior human resource and labor relations executives emerge from this review and synthesis of research on unionized grievance procedures. First, it is important for senior executives to conceptu-

alize the grievance procedure as one among several high-involvement-type human resource practices. This is because such practices have been empirically shown to positively affect organizational performance, and because a grievance procedure serves as a due process mechanism for employees which theoretically has been shown to be a critical element in a high performance work system.

Second, senior human resource and labor relations executives should understand the distinction between the presence and use of a grievance procedure. Such a procedure provides a formal avenue for employee voice and is thus available for resolving work place and organizational conflicts. If the grievance procedure is used too much, however—if grievance filing rates are very high—it suggests the absence of effective informal conflict resolution and also displaces management and employee work time, thereby detracting from organizational performance. Hence, management must carefully monitor the grievance procedure to determine if the procedure is being under- or over-used.

Third, senior human resource and labor relations executives should analyze grievance procedure usage data to determine if grievants and their supervisors have lower job performance, promotions, work attendance, and higher turnover than non-grievants and their supervisors after grievance settlement. If this is occurring, then management must determine if management reprisal is taking place or, instead, if grievants and their supervisors are in fact poorer performers than non-grievants and their supervisors, as revealed through grievance activity. Where management reprisal for filing grievances is found to exist, management must take corrective action to ensure that the organizational performance and due process objectives of the grievance procedure are achieved rather than undermined.

Fourth, because supervisor behavior and attitudes are important determinants of grievance activity, senior human resource and labor relations executives should periodically assess the extent to which supervisors deal with employees democratically (in research terminology, exercise "consideration") as well as the extent to which supervisors emphasize getting the job done (in research terminology,

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Research on Unionized Grievance Procedures: Management Issues and Recommendations

“initiating structure”). Where necessary, such assessments can be used to train and re-balance supervisors' orientation to work and employees. It further behooves senior management to periodically assess supervisors' knowledge of collective bargaining agreements, given that such knowledge affects shop stewards in dealing with employee complaints and advising employees whether or not to file grievances.

Fifth, in order to determine how employees perceive the grievance process, senior human resource and labor relations executives should periodically survey employees concerning their perceived fairness of grievance handling processes and grievance decision outcomes—perhaps as part of regular organizational climate surveys. It appears that the perceived fairness of grievance handling is of principal importance to employees and shapes their assessment of the overall effectiveness of grievance procedures. When a grievance

system is perceived as procedurally fair and effective, employees are likely to perceive grievance outcomes as fair even when they lose their grievance cases.

Sixth, senior human resource and labor relations executives should consider the potential effects of work force composition and the organization of work on grievance activity. Specifically, grievance filing is most likely to occur among younger, male, more educated, relatively skilled employees who are members of work groups that perform highly specialized work, experience frequent changes in work standards/methods, and interact frequently with other work groups; therefore, when employees with these characteristics belong to dynamic work groups, senior management must be especially vigilant in selecting those who supervise such work groups and in monitoring and resolving workplace conflict.

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## ENDNOTES

1. We acknowledge the helpful comments on and suggested revisions of an earlier version of this paper made by reviewers and editors of *Human Resource Management*.
2. For other recent reviews and assessments of research on unionized grievance procedures, see Lewin (1999), Bemmels & Foley (1996), Labig & Greer (1988), Gordon & Miller (1984), and Lewin & Peterson (1988, Chp. 2). For reviews and assessments of research on non-union grievance procedures, see Lewin (2000, 1997) and Peterson & Lewin (1992). Also, Peterson (1992) reviews both the unionized and non-union grievance literature.
3. Another way to think of grievance filing is as grievance "initiation" which is influenced by various grievable "events". See, for example, Bemmels & Foley (1996).
4. These "non-significant" findings are nevertheless important because they imply that management decisions to adopt new technology or to decentralize organizational decision-making will not lead to increased grievance activity.
5. Lewin & Peterson (1999) found that grievants and especially their supervisors were significantly more likely to be terminated following grievance settlement than ~~were~~ employees and supervisors who were not involved in grievance activity.

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