

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Does consultation slow down the decision making process?**

- Consultation undoubtedly takes time, but it need not take much time. Organisations with good consultative arrangements do not report problems in reaching decisions. The quality of decisions is often improved by the consultative process and is more likely to ensure that employees will work with difficult decisions rather than against them. Employees are more likely to tell managers about emerging problems before they fully surface allowing businesses to address issues early.

### **Isn't it very costly?**

- This is not necessarily the case. DTI estimates that the annual costs of holding meetings could be as little as £900 per year. Compared with benefits of attracting the best staff, retaining existing ones, better quality decision making and more effective change management, the benefits far outweigh the modest costs.

### **Do we have to give staff confidential information?**

- There's no reason why this should be the case. Employers and employees can agree what information may or may not be disclosed at the outset - allowing you to tailor the arrangement to suit your business needs.

### **Do we have to build from scratch?**

- Most employers have some arrangements in place to communicate with their employees. In order to move ahead and develop better two-way communication, employers do not usually need to tear up the good work they have already done. For the large majority of employers, progress entails building on the arrangements that are currently in place.

### **It won't work for us?**

- There is no one prescription for effective consultation. Employers and employees should develop arrangements that suit their own circumstances. The benefits are the same for businesses of all sizes and types.

### **Isn't consultation for senior staff only?**

- Employees have a great deal to contribute to the decision-making process. By consulting your staff about key decisions before they are made, they are more likely to engage in the spirit of your decisions rather than simply 'going through the motions'. You will have greater staff retention and loyalty, be able to implement changes more smoothly, together with greater productivity.

### **What about my trade union?**

- The TUC and many unions fully support the philosophy behind better consultation with staff. Some of the best arrangements have been developed with the support of union representatives. Unions realise that consultation is not exclusive to them - even in highly unionised workplaces, consultative bodies involving **both** union and non-union representatives work effectively. You can see such an arrangement in action by booking a place on our company visits scheme. See our homepage for further details.

### **Won't consultation stir up employee dissatisfaction?**

- The evidence does not support this. Organisations with good consultative arrangements find that they develop better employee relations as a result. Of course, difficult issues can arise during consultations. Usually, such issues reflect genuine concerns among employees. A failure by employers to acknowledge and discuss them is therefore likely to sour relations at work.

### **This sounds good but where do I start?**

- It's a lot easier than you think and there is a great deal of help and advice out there. Why not book on an Acas training course near you, or see the whole process in action by attending one of our company visits. See our homepage for further details.