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Business Productivity Expert Pat Lynch Provides Tips to Prevent Employees from Becoming Collateral Damage in the Labor-Management Battle

Long Beach, Calif., July 8, 2009 – Whatever the outcome of the current desperate tug-of-war between unions and management, exemplified by the battle over passage of the proposed Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), one thing seems clear: employees will become [collateral damage](#). According to [Pat Lynch, business productivity expert](#) and president of Business Alignment Solutions, here's why: the on-going workplace warfare is not about making employees a priority; it's about the relative power of labor and management in the United States.

By giving most employees the right to form and join unions, Congress added a third party to the labor relations process whose role is to help achieve a balance of power between employers and workers. More than 70 years later, that balance remains elusive for two primary reasons: (1) self-survival is the number one priority for unions and management, and (2) there is no shared vision of the workplace. Without a common goal, it is impossible for labor and management to work as a team.

Clearly the U.S. labor-management process is broken. The National Labor Relations Act is in need of substantive reform. However, the Employee Free Choice Act and piecemeal mechanisms, such as reversible Executive Orders and National Labor Relations Board rulings, and provisions like “employer neutrality” clauses inserted into prospective legislation, are **not** the way to ensure balance.

According to Lynch, Congress has an opportunity to *improve* the law rather than merely fix it – i.e., to take it to a new, higher level at which the participants work collaboratively toward a common goal rather than retain existing dysfunctions.

Lynch provides customized programs for clients that help create an *employee-centered workplace*, which she defines as a work environment in which every individual, process, system, and program is focused on helping employees become fully successful. Her [Employer Performance Scorecard](#) provides a tool for management to assess its performance. It is Lynch's experience that a common vision dramatically decreases the frequency of dysfunctional behavior and substantially increases the likelihood of reaching the goal.

Creating an employee-centered workplace requires commitment and collaboration from all parties and from politicians. Employers must make a conscious decision about how high a priority they place on their employees, and ensure their [actions support their choice](#). Workers must make an *informed* choice about the need for third party intervention by answering the question, "How well does my employer treat me on a day-to-day basis?" Unions must provide the necessary balance in workplaces where workers are a low priority. And politicians must take an *employee-centered* approach to legislation.

Here are a few concrete examples of the above suggestions:

Management:

1. Assess the four areas that influence employees' perceptions about how they are treated on a daily basis and take immediate action on areas that need improvement.
2. Train all managers to act only in ways that are legal and ethical.
3. Provide employees with [factual information](#) about their rights under existing labor laws.

Employees:

1. Ask questions of employers and of union organizers. Get the facts about what each party *realistically* can and cannot do.
2. Learn employee rights under existing labor laws.
3. Be clear about the consequences of each alternative before making a choice - i.e., how will the workplace change, if at all, with and without union representation?

Unions:

1. Provide employees with realistic expectations about what can be done to improve their workplace - i.e., what their return on union dues may be.
2. Set and enforce high standards for organizers' behavior.
3. Avoid setting unachievable expectations. Disillusioned workers make dissatisfied union members.

Politicians:

1. Make *employees* the priority instead of pay-back to management or unions for political contributions or other support.

2. Improve the labor relations process by making it truly balanced.
3. Pass legislation that is *employee*-centered – i.e., ensures procedural fairness and due process for all parties.

To achieve the goal of employee-centered workplaces, all parties must commit to making workers fully successful. An environment in which employees are a high priority serves everyone well. Without a holistic, employee-centered approach to the workplace, the very people the law purports to protect instead will become collateral damage.

About Pat Lynch and [Business Alignment Strategies, Inc.](http://www.BusinessAlignmentStrategies.com)

Pat Lynch, Ph.D. is president of Business Alignment Strategies, Inc., a firm that helps clients optimize business results by aligning people, programs, and processes with clear organizational goals. A [consultant](#), [executive coach](#), and [speaker](#), Lynch's specialties include strategy formulation and implementation, measurement, and communication. After receiving her doctorate in Personnel and Employment Relations (i.e., human resources, labor relations, organizational behavior), she taught university-level labor relations and collective bargaining classes. Additional information is available at www.BusinessAlignmentStrategies.com.