

Believe it or not  
I Love  
Labor Unions



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## **BELIEVE IT OR NOT I LOVE LABOR UNIONS**

by Stan Robinson PhD PE

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **BLUE COLLAR WHITE COLLAR**

The manufacturing environment is filled with daily surprises some good some bad. However both matters require a great deal of attention. All participants must accept the challenge to ride with the good and overcome the bad. It is important to note that the manufacturing environment is made up of the blue collar and white collar. The interaction of both parties must be favorable in order to achieve the desired outcome. The fact that there are two kinds of people suggests that proper leadership is the only solution. There are those who will say that the latter statement is a complete mystery. Leadership is a complex subject that so many do not comprehend.

If you take a look at the literature you will find oversimplification as follows. There are two kinds of leaders autocrat and democrat. The autocrat leads by a philosophy that says, “do as I say (no recourse)”. The latter is the manner of leadership of necessity in the military. There is no other way to deal with that environment. In the labor management interface the only kind of leadership that will work is the democratic approach which is to lead with the acceptance of the subordinate. Of course that is an oversimplification which lies in the word acceptance. How do you achieve the evasive subject of acceptance? Until that condition of acceptance is achieved democratic leadership can be shaky.

It is my premise that both parties white collar and blue collar people utilize human codes of behavior as a basis for acceptance. The latter sounds reasonable since it is also said that in the absence of human values there can be no peace. All humanity possesses an individual code system. As you move through the path of maturity your code system hopefully improves and modifies. So that as a result of the randomized path of life, the outcome varies by person and there will be personality differences that are dependent on the individual's code system. However it is indeed logical that there are codes of behavior that are common to the majority. A few examples are honesty, courtesy, dignity.

So now we have introduced the subject of Common Codes of Behavior as a necessity for the two categories of blue and white collar people interacting. Then at this juncture what do we mean when we say two kinds of people. The subject is management and labor. In the vernacular we are talking about blue collar and white collar people a terminology that is frequent, acceptable and usual in American life. At this point let us move directly to the following diagram. There are two columns of note labeled white collar and blue collar. As previously discussed we show a listing of the differences. The center section of the diagram is labeled "Area of Commonality" with a listing of several Common Codes of behavior. All of these codes are readily acceptable to all parties.



**TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE**

COMMON CODES OF BEHAVIOR		
<b>BLUE COLLAR</b>	<b>AREA OF COMMONALITY</b>	<b>WHITE COLLAR</b>
Rank and file	Security Positive	Management
Union	Opportunity Leadership	Non union
Job seeker	Comfort Persuasive	Job maker
Trade school	Happiness Courageous	College
Saver	Love of family Courteous	Investor
Short term goals	Dignity Informative	Long Term Goals
	Togetherness Forgiving	
	Cooperation Enthusiastic	
	Friendship Honest	
	Sincerity Fairness	
	Communication Safety	
	Trust Respect	

Our primary purpose is to examine the use and effect of the Common Codes in the manufacturing activity. Consequently it involves Direct Supervision, Stewards, Presidents of Locals and Management Vice Presidents. Above all this matter applies to the combination of management and the rank and file. It is necessary for the leadership in both parties to personally demonstrate their use of the Common Codes as a mode of leadership. Supervisors when communicating to the union members should utilize the Common Codes of respect and courtesy. The latter to be the rule in all matters. So in essence the utilization of Common Codes in all interactions between labor and management will lead to an environment that is ideal to eliminate conflict and therefore provides a path to acceptance under the banner of democratic leadership.

A complaint if handled properly with Common Codes should never become a formal grievance. That should be goal number one. In so doing the probability of an arbitration is extremely low. The execution of the CBA Collective Bargaining Agreement should be utilized. When a problem arises it may be necessary to find a creative and new solution. Eventually this style becomes a matter of day to day occurrence. Once again the entire experience is facilitated by the common acceptance of both parties under a veil of compatible Common Codes of Behavior.

The issue of two kinds of people each one playing a different melody as their theme song disappears when both parties concentrate on Common Codes as solutions and a path to achieve peace and tranquility. Both titles blue and white are carried with pride and reverence. Are the two categories interchangeable? The answer is simply – Yes. For example most production supervisors have been part of the blue collar

population at one time. If a person desires to go to night school to seek personal improvement that blue collar can become white. So the pathway is one of personal desire and planning.

I am going to suggest that we expand some of the material of this diagram for the benefit of the reader. So in the following chapter we have prepared a Common Codes Listing that covers the research of the entire dictionary. We have labeled this list as a Dictionary of Common Codes of Behavior which the author has created for the continued application of the reader as a positive element of this book. Common Codes of Behavior have application thru out one's entire life regardless of the venue.

THE TITLE OF THE AREA OF COMMONALITY IS THE CRITICAL PORTION OF THE WHITE COLLAR – BLUE COLLAR PHENOMENOM. THESE SPECIFIC CODES OF BEHAVIOR ARE THE PRIME ELEMENTS THAT RESULT IN THE UNIFICATION OF BOTH PARTIES ENGAGED IN THE UNION MANAGEMEMNT INTERACTION.

This diagram titled The Common Codes of Behavior portrays a critical message. One that has served me extremely well while on the front lines with both the white collar and blue collar individuals. Allow me to offer a few additional comments regarding the meaning of this diagram presentation. On each side of diagram there is a listing of white collar and blue collar characteristics. There are some descriptive nomenclature showing how there is a difference of two characterizations. Of course in the center are The Common Codes of Behavior which promote a role of collaboration and maximum team work. I sincerely believe that this diagram represents the formula for both white and blue collar folks. I

have promoted this proposition thru out my 43 year career and I know that it works. In fact this thesis is the basis for this entire book and is why I can truthfully say I Love Labor Unions. Consequently they have opened up their arms with a welcome and invitation to constantly behave within our mutual interest. At this juncture I will create a commentary regarding each of the listed Common Codes demonstrated in the diagram as follows.

**SECURITY** – the quality of being safe. Both blue and white collar people can achieve safety on the job if all is going well. The Common Codes are critical to a happy life. Under this type of common acceptance the factory continuously produces saleable and quality products that lead to success, profitability and security.

**OPPORTUNITY** – comes about as a result of success and growth within the business for all parties. It is well known that production supervisors have started in the blue collar ranks.

**COMFORT** – In order to achieve this value it can only come about if the state of comfort and no worry exists. If the employer is not profitable or having quality problems it is difficult for both parties blue and white collar to find a state of daily relaxation and comfort. Profitability will most likely suffer.

**HAPPINESS** – simultaneous with security, comfort and growth there is an unchallenged reward which is normally referred to as happiness. The job and family are the recipients who gain.

**LOVE OF FAMILY** – this characteristic brings about a very special condition within the family which is called love

and bliss. The latter under severe conflict cannot exist. It is cherished as a critical part of life and maturity.

**DIGNITY** – is truly the result of self worth and is achieved by righteous living and worthy accomplishment. If self worth is unavailable many other values are extinguished. A critically important value with tremendous influence on your behavior. In its absence the resulting condition is substandard. Self esteem is synonymous with dignity.

**TOGETHERNESS** – this code plays an important part between interactions among people. It brings about a wonderful relationship with individual worth and a desire to participate. This value must be cherished. Positive action along with other values is the answer to teamwork.

**COOPERATION** – without cooperation there can be no success. In its absence there is an undesirable state of negativisms with sadness. If this value is not in full force you are on the wrong path of life.

**FRIENDSHIP** – as opposed to conflict is the only acceptable way of life. A peaceful and friendly visit on earth is a singular objective that cannot be replaced. Belonging and enjoying the job can only come about with true friendship.

**SINCERITY** – friendship, trust and comfort which can only occur in a state of rationality and concern for others. The opposite will destroy any possibility of good relationships with others. Sincerity is highly visible and is easily observed by others.

**COMMUNICATION** – to reject this value you bypass the opportunity of learning, companionship and understanding that

it is the only path that avoids unhappiness and lonesomeness. This value is one of the 8 function of management.

TRUST – a very sensitive element that must exist between two people. Otherwise there will be a complete breakdown of any desire to enjoy one's company. In the work scene this characteristic is a must and shall be demonstrated by all participants with self esteem.

RESPECT – this characteristic comes about only when you have an admirable interest in others while carrying this element within oneself. To respect others you must respect oneself.

SAFETY – You can only feel safety at work or in society if you are part of a circle of trusting friends. When all other Common Codes are in play safety will always emerge.

FAIRNESS – along with a requisite to respect and with friendship when the characteristic is available in both directions. Fairness to yourself is equally important.

POSITIVE – is a manner of behavior whereby the attitude is always in terms of the recognition of reality.

LEADERSHIP – is an opposite of being a follower. The objective of leadership is to keep moving the situation towards achievement of the objective.

PERSUASION – is a characteristic of changing people's positions on matters.

CORAGEOUS – in spite of the obstacles you keep moving forward.

COURTIOUS – a manner of behavior that always considers the effect on others.

INFORMATIVE – a desire to provide information for others, frequently leading to better comprehension.

FORGIVING – do not hold grudges.

ENTHUSIASTIC – a trait whereby there is a constant interest and intent to influence a successful outcome.

HONEST – a person who maintains a constant profile of integrity.

We have now completed a brief commentary of typical codes of behavior which appear in the diagram. We use the word common to particularly emphasize the acceptance for both parties blue and white collar to participate in achieving unison. As already stated I take the time to emphasize the importance of the commonality approach since it applies to all matters in the manufacturing process and the individuals involved. The latter is always a resultant of a quality manufactured product that is saleable at full profit arriving at a primary benefit for both white collar and blue collar participants.

I must admit that the principal of Common Codes can be used in all business environments. The principal is to bring together into a common frame of mind which allows for unification and success. I have several definitions to this approach whereby I will list a few samples.

1. COMMON CODES OF BEHAVIOR is referred to as the code identity by which the organization creates inspiring vision allowing for a behavioral pattern that defines the

organization. The objective is to create unison between all phases of the organization in our case both white and blue collar to achieve a superior common outcome.

2 COMMON CODES OF BEHAVIOR define the real charge of the organization. If all parties accept the approach whereby the codes are mutually applied then the organization will arrive at its highest state of achievement.

3. COMMON CODES OF BEHAVIOR consist of fundamental beliefs, concepts and principals that define the culture of the organization. They provide guide lines for decision making and behavior for the entire enterprise.

#### THE AUTHOR'S DEFINITION

The COMMON CODES OF BEHAVIOR system has been my system of operation. My objective is to integrate both blue and white collar into a team. I have had positive based experiences that prove it works for the benefit of all. I have dedicated years of involvement in this approach to bear out my point of view. I finally end up in claiming "I Love Labor Unions". The Common Code approach results in creating a unified cooperative group with the same desires and objectives. Human or Common Codes are the foundations of civility that bring together labor and management resulting in a peaceful environment with common views and objectives. Individuals bring to the scene a common predisposition whereby conflict is forced to evaporate and is replaced by positivism.

The leader or the vice president makes it clear on a daily basis by his manner of speech and actions that are exacting revelations of this Common Code application. The supervisors will follow suit and treat the rank and file as required in the Common Code approach. It is impossible to make an error



since this profile meets the needs of all humanity. It allows them to behave accordingly while accepting the system that purports comfort, happiness and cooperation.

At times the rank and file people have misgivings about management. My supervisors tell me this is a frequent question. They expect the supervisor to be able to provide them with insights since the supervisor is considered the publicity contact. If the supervisors finds happiness and satisfaction in his work he will most likely serve as an excellent publicity agent to the rank and file. Consequently he becomes the “middle man”. It is impossible to come away with false impressions since the proper use of the Common Codes process produces a personality based on all the desirable characteristics. Consequently the entire environment is filled with change for the better. Labor management problems are discussed without conflict and only positive interchange prevails which is used to find the true solution. To further demonstrate all the above I will relate case history material from my experience that will support the wonders of common codes.

One day I fired two line operators for cause. Both labor and management agreed on the decision. The latter terminology refers to the CBA Collective Bargaining Agreement. It explains that the actions taken were textbook in content. The supervisor subsequently advised me that they were the best two employees in the department with clean records. The question now is how we can overcome the facts 1. Discharge for cause. 2. The best two operators in the department. So that is the dilemma and we must creatively design a path that will take care of all the negatives. The task can only be accomplished if the Common Codes are

demonstrated during the discussions which in a long run may develop a suitable outcome.

For example Fairness, Trust and Sincerity must provide the basis for all activities. Safety and dignity are part of the background in a very powerful manner. Courtesy and communication are further demands of the approach. So all of the interactions on the case have been carried out under the Common Codes described. All members at all levels of the problem have been invited to contribute and the following groups were involved.

#### PARTICIPATING GROUPS

BLUE COLLAR	WHITE COLLAR	
Rank and file	Supervisors	Warehousing
Steward	Quality control	Shipping
Local President Union	Plant manager	
Home office representative Union	Maintenance manager	

This list provides the proper participants that could have direct involvement in the manufacturing environment on a daily basis. So therefore all or part of this group will potentially participate in finding a solution. As might be expected in a Common Codes environment the blue collar group came forward with a fantastic recommendation. Their position was as follows. The 2 employee's records had been completely reviewed by the union steward with assistance from human resources. Their findings were as follows. The two employee's record for years were close to perfection. There was absolutely

nothing negative on the record (sincerity and fairness). Their ability to perform was impeccable (Togetherness and respect). The tenor of the group was to evaluate a respectful appraisal of the lad's history (Cooperation and fairness). It was in short order that both union and management concluded to make an exception. The meeting was over and the two lads were put back to work and as expected there was never another need for questionable conduct and all parties achieved (comfort and trust).

Such an example is not unusual in the Common Codes Process. I am sure that the participants left the meeting with an inner feeling of happiness that a decision could be found enabling kindness and value for all the employees. Needless to say this particular approach is civilized, considerate and correct. Unfortunately the particulars of a case at times may not welcome such gentility and consideration. My response in the meeting I remember clearly when I said to the group, "You have convinced me that your recommendation is valid and must be carried out". I recommend that when the two lads are contacted that it is clear how a cooperative spirit such as the one that exists in our enterprise made it possible that a positive conclusion was the only answer. Therefore I ordered my people to bring the employees back and reinstate them. I also emphasized that the two lads be fully aware of who was responsible for this decision which in fact was a blue collar group and a white collar group. Such is the humanistic and objective approach that comes forth when human codes are in play and I must say that my association with the rank and file has been where we both ruled according to fact and values for the betterment of the manufacturing entity.

I should point out that I entered the department shook hands with the two lads and said, "Don't try it again, we could

rule differently on the second time around”. Big smiles and Thank you! I felt like I was talking to my sons. A second occurrence never surfaced.

In finality a summation is due as follows. In the manufacturing entity there will always be two important groups i.e. blue collar and white collar. Both parties after examination are striving for the same objectives. All of these objectives can be found through the Common Codes procedure. This is an area of commonality even though the two groups are separate with characteristics that are different and appear to some erroneously that the objectives are different. As a person that has lived in this environment successfully for decades I have a strong opinion that the Common Codes System is the only management concept that can be totally successful for both management and labor. If these values do not exist in some of the participants then steps must be taken by a special committee to develop awareness among the dissidents that they should join the crowd while providing training and awareness. This chapter has outlined an updated management system which I have labeled The Common Codes of Behavior. Although it is the first time in writing. I have gained many wonderful experiences and would propose that it should be made knowledgeable to all working people. I propose that the matters in this chapter be given full consideration to those individuals that on a daily basis have the opportunity to provide comfort and happiness to the populous.

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