

# The Acas Model Workplace

inform

advise

train

work  
with you

# Acas can help *with your employment relations needs*

Every year Acas helps employers and employees from thousands of workplaces. That means we keep right up to date with today's employment relations issues – such as discipline and grievance handling, preventing discrimination and communicating effectively in workplaces. Make the most of our practical experience for your organisation – find out what we can do for you.

## **We inform**

We answer your questions, give you the facts you need and talk through your options. You can then make informed decisions. Contact us to keep on top of what employment rights legislation means in practice – before it gets on top of you. Call our helpline **08457 47 47 47** or visit our website **[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)**.

## **We advise and guide**

We give you practical know-how on setting up and keeping good relations in your organisation. Look at our publications on the website or ask our helpline to put you in touch with your local Acas adviser. Our Equality Direct helpline **08456 00 34 44** advises on equality issues, such as discrimination.

## **We train**

From a two-hour session on the key points of new legislation or employing people to courses specially designed for people in your organisation, we offer training to suit you. Look on the website for what is coming up in your area and to book a place or talk to your local Acas office about our tailored services.

## **We work with you**

We offer hands-on practical help and support to tackle issues in your business with you. This might be through one of our well-known problem-solving services. Or a programme we have worked out together to put your business firmly on track for effective employment relations. You will meet your Acas adviser and discuss exactly what is needed before giving any go-ahead.

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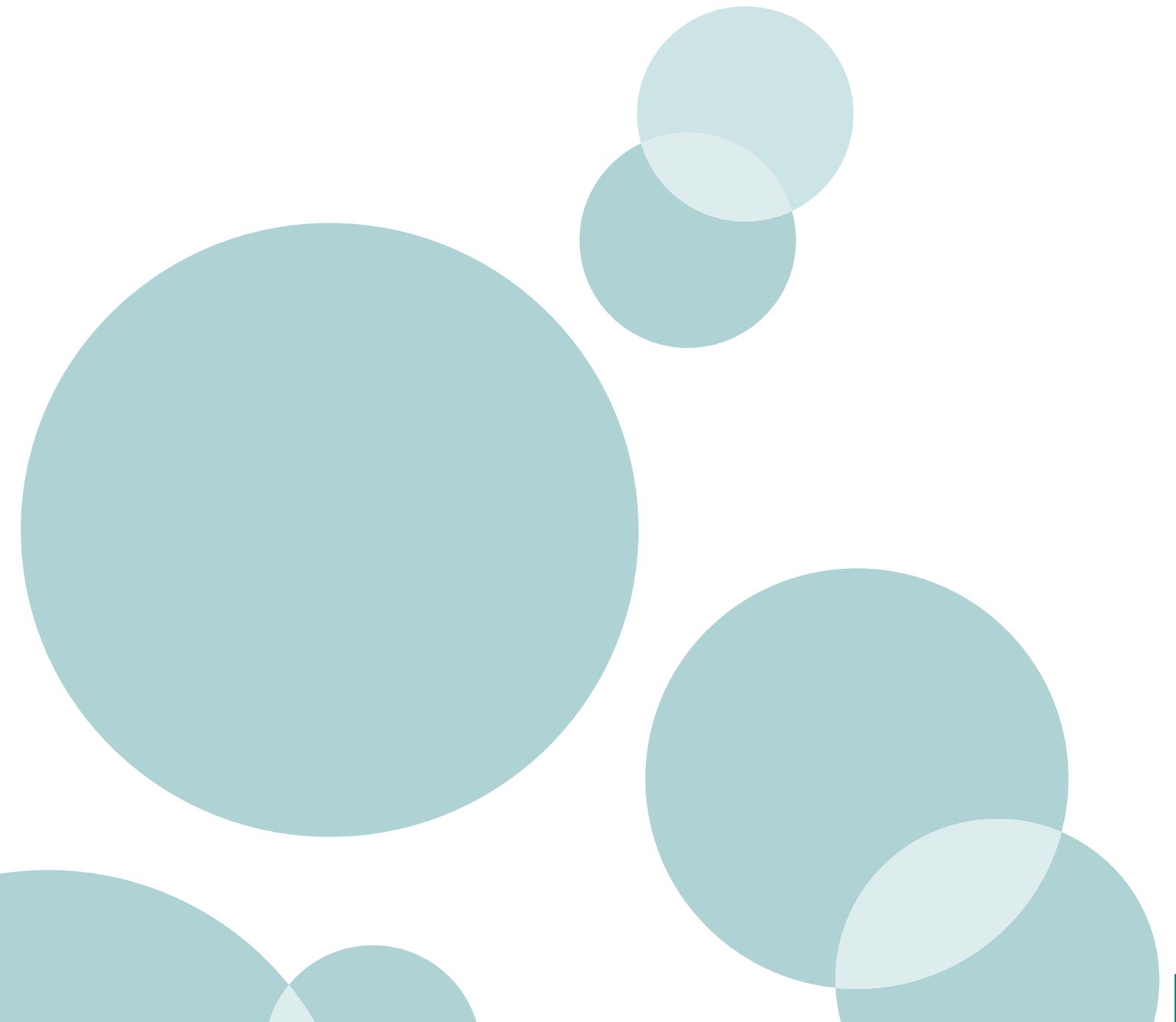
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*“Our ambition is to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations.”*



# Foreword

Thirty years experience has convinced us beyond all doubt that getting people to work well together is the key to improving performance and the quality of working life.

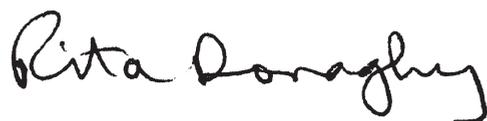
There is also a growing body of research evidence to confirm our practical experience – for example, in a series of Workplace Employee Relations Surveys carried out since the 1980s by Acas with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Policy Studies Institute.

This publication has drawn on our unique experience to suggest how managers, employees and their representatives can use the Acas Model to make their workplaces more effective.

Good relations between people at work are as critical for small businesses as they are for large ones. Very small changes can often make a big difference very quickly. For example, regular, open meetings can soon generate better ideas and result in improved job design and greater efficiency.

Our experience tells us that the way you do something is just as important as what you do. Having the right policies and procedures is vital but they won't work properly unless they are introduced and used in the right spirit.

I believe that this publication is one of the most important that Acas has produced and I strongly commend it to you. Follow its guidance and you really will see a difference.



Rita Donaghy,  
Chair of Acas

# The foundations of business success

A whole range of factors contribute to making your business effective.

## These include:

- planning
- effective day-to-day management
- operational efficiency
- sales and marketing
- design and innovation
- sound financial management.

All of these factors involve people: people to operate the machinery; people to sell the products; people to come up with new ideas; and people to make decisions.

People are vital to the efficiency of your business. They bind all of the other elements together. But how do you get the most out of the people in your workplace?

## The Acas Model

Acas has developed a model (see right) to help you improve the effectiveness of your business by focusing on the people you work with.

Using the model is entirely voluntary. No one will be telling you what to do or checking up on you – although we are happy to help if you ask us. You may wish to use the model as a list of the things you aspire to or to check how well you currently manage people.

## The Acas Model

Formal procedures for dealing with disciplinary matters, grievances and disputes that managers and employees know about and use fairly

Ambitions, goals and plans that employees know about and understand

Managers who genuinely listen to and consider their employees' views so everyone is actively involved in making important decisions

A pay and reward system that is clear, fair and consistent

A safe and healthy place to work

People to feel valued so they can talk confidently about their work and learn from both successes and mistakes

Everyone to be treated fairly and valued for their differences as part of everyday life

Work organised so that it encourages initiative, innovation and people to work together

An understanding that people have responsibilities outside work so they can openly discuss ways of working that suit personal needs and the needs of the business

A culture where everyone is encouraged to learn new skills so they can look forward to further employment either in the business or elsewhere

A good working relationship between management and employee representatives that in turn helps build trust throughout the business

We have split the elements of the model into three sections but you are free to work through them in a way that suits your business.

The first section is mainly about putting the right systems in place and deals with pay, discipline, communication and health and safety.

Section two is about developing relationships at work and looks at issues like flexible working and personal development. Section three highlights the benefits of greater employee involvement in decision-making.

Although the main purpose of the booklet is to help you make your business more effective some aspects of the Acas Model are affected by statutory rights or duties and these are highlighted for your convenience.

You will be asked a series of questions about each element of the Acas Model designed to get you thinking. The questions may lead you to other sources of information and advice. For example, you can order a wide range of our publications, tel 08702 42 90 90 or via our website at [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk).

# Put the systems and procedures in place

Acas has worked with organisations of every size and from every sector for over thirty years. This gives us first hand knowledge of what makes organisations successful. So what is the key ingredient?

The quick answer is communications. The most successful employers keep their employees informed and genuinely listen to their views.

However, talking and listening skills work best within a framework of:

- clear written procedures for dealing with issues like discipline and grievances; and
- fair and open systems for communication, consultation and health and safety.

If the framework is in place then communications become easier and more fluid. Rather than relying on the grapevine to identify problems, employers and employees can work together to resolve issues proactively or manage future change.

The introduction of new pay systems or working patterns become opportunities for improvement rather than threats.

## Establish formal procedures

### Discipline

People need to know what is expected of them in terms of standards of performance and behaviour. Ambiguity can lead to broken rules and poor morale. Employees don't like to see colleagues ignoring rules or to see rules applied inconsistently or on the whim of a manager.

Similarly, employers don't like to see isolated problems persist or develop into potentially damaging issues. It is in their interest to 'nip things in the bud' at the earliest possible stage.

Nevertheless most organisations, however well managed, will sooner or later encounter problems with the conduct or behaviour of individuals. It will be easier to deal with these problems consistently if there are clear written procedures that employees and managers know about and understand. For further information see the Acas advisory handbook *Discipline and grievances at work* (call 08702 42 90 90 or visit [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)).

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... follow disciplinary and grievance procedures that are known to all employees?</b>	Do you include details of the procedures in the written statement of terms and conditions?	Employers are required by law to have procedures for handling discipline and grievances.
<b>... consult with employees, trade unions or employee representatives before writing the procedures?</b>	Ensure that you continue to consult when the procedures are updated.	Employees are more likely to accept a system that they have helped to create.
<b>... check that the procedures are applied fairly and consistently?</b>	Keep written records of all disciplinary action you take and any grievance issues you handle.	Review all your procedures against the Acas advisory handbook <i>Discipline and grievances at work</i> and train managers to handle discipline and grievance issues.
<b>... make sure your procedures take account of the standards set out in the statutory disciplinary procedures?</b>	Disciplinary action should be designed to encourage better performance and improve conduct – in most circumstances dismissal should be regarded as a last resort.	Employment tribunals may adjust any award of compensation by between 10 and 50 per cent for failure by either party to follow relevant steps of the statutory procedures.
<b>... have clear procedures for dealing with disputes with trade unions if they are recognised in your organisation?</b>	Make sure managers and employees understand how the procedures operate.	Acas can help you establish procedures.

## Grievances

Grievance procedures are used by employees to help resolve problems they may have at work. Employees need to feel confident they can take their concerns to their manager in the knowledge that:

- the problem will be dealt with confidentially and fairly
- there are effective grievance procedures in place for dealing with the problem.

Many employers may wish to have separate grievance procedures for dealing with sensitive issues such as bullying and harassment.

## Preventing and resolving workforce disputes

Disputes are bound to occur from time to time and a formal procedure for conducting negotiations can take some of the heat out of the conflict and limit possible damage. Acas can help organisations agree these procedures and provide training in communications, consultation and negotiation skills. We can also help settle disputes when independent outside help is necessary. For further details visit the Acas website at [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) or call our helpline on 08457 47 47 47.

## Explain plans

Everyone at work needs to feel there is a point to what they do. This sense of purpose is largely achieved by identifying goals – at individual and organisational level – that everyone can understand. These goals need to be as realistic as possible – reflecting the organisation's ambitions without placing too much pressure on managers and their staff.

## Business plans

In order to make the connection between individuals and what happens to the business – in terms of markets, and new products and services – employers need to make sure their business plans are linked to day-to-day work.

On an individual level employee appraisal systems are the ideal way of clarifying objectives. Appraisal interviews also give managers the chance to check that employees understand what is expected of them and to give feedback on their performance.

## Communications

Good internal communications are the cornerstone of an effective organisation. There are many ways of communicating with employees and the style of communication can often be as important as the content. In most cases a mix which includes various methods of written, face-to-face, and possibly electronic communication is best.

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... give employees a written statement of their main terms and conditions?</b>	Make sure you review contracts and update job descriptions.	You must do so within two months of employees' start date.
<b>... give employees information on how to do their job effectively?</b>	Do employees know what contribution their work makes to the business?	Check your induction process – this should be carried out in the first few weeks.
<b>... talk with employees about their personal work objectives?</b>	Do you keep personal objectives up to date if business plans are adjusted?	Unless your employees know what is expected of them how can they perform effectively?
<b>... inform employees about the bigger picture – such as financial performance, orderbooks and possible changes?</b>	Well informed employees can make a greater contribution to better decision-making.	From 2005 organisations employing 150 or more employees will be legally obliged to provide this kind of information on request. The obligation will extend to small firms (with 50 or more employees) by 2008.

Small firms are likely to rely on a more informal system of face-to-face discussions or meetings. Larger organisations may need to hold larger meetings and also make use of team-briefing systems, employee representatives, newsletters or intranets. For more information on how to develop an effective policy on communication and consultation in your workplace see the Acas advisory booklet *Employee communications and consultation* at [www.acas.org.uk/publications](http://www.acas.org.uk/publications) or call 08702 42 90 90.

## Listen

Managers in your organisation genuinely listen to their employees – true or false?  
Hopefully true but:

- how often do they listen?
- is there a system for ensuring that what they hear affects the decisions that they make?

## Consultation

Consultation means genuinely listening to employees. It involves managers seeking the views of their employees and then taking these views into account before making a decision.

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... listen regularly to the views of your employees?</b>	Make sure meetings are focused and relevant, with opportunities for employee feedback.	Consider setting up a committee or other consultative forum – see p21 for more details.
<b>... meet regularly with union or employee representatives?</b>	Keep employee or union representatives informed of future changes and build in time for proper consultation.	Representation can have important benefits for the employment relationship – see the Acas advisory booklet <i>Representation at work</i> .
<b>... know your legal requirements to consult on issues like health and safety, business transfers, redundancies and pensions?</b>	Try to make full use of the benefits of consultation and don't be satisfied with just fulfilling minimum legal obligations to consult with employees.	Check legal requirements to consult in the Acas advisory booklet <i>Employee communications and consultation</i> .

Effective consultation – whether formal or informal – often depends upon employees having representatives who act as intermediaries with management. Representation gives employees a means of expressing their views at work. There are legal requirements for:

- **discipline and grievance meetings** – where employees can choose to be accompanied by a fellow worker or union official
- **informing and consulting with employees** – on issues like health and safety, business transfers, redundancies and pensions
- **collective bargaining** – where employers negotiate changes in the terms and conditions of employment with recognised trade unions or with representatives on works councils.

Consultation allows employers to work closely with employees in making decisions about every aspect of the employment relationship. For further information see the Acas advisory booklet *Representation at work* at [www.acas.org.uk/publications](http://www.acas.org.uk/publications) or call 08702 42 90 90.

## Reward fairly

There is much evidence which shows that, when it comes to work, people are motivated by more than just pay. However, unless employees feel they are fairly rewarded then they are likely to be resentful and dissatisfied. This makes it difficult to build a productive relationship. This dissatisfaction can lead to higher levels of absence, labour turnover and conflict.

### Types of pay system

Pay systems fall into two main categories:

- those where pay does not vary in relation to achievements or performance (basic rate systems); and
- those where pay, or part pay, varies in relation to results/profits/performance.

Basic rate systems are the easiest to operate and work well for many employers and workers. However, some organisations introduce pay systems with incentives – for individuals or groups within the workforce – as a way of improving performance and increasing profit margins.

The involvement of employees and their representatives is also key to the development or improvement of an effective pay system. Employees can often contribute to the design and review of pay systems through joint committees or steering groups. See the Acas advisory booklet *Pay systems* for further information (visit [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) or call 08702 42 90 90).

## Equal pay

All pay systems should comply with the law on equal pay. Women and men have the right to equal pay if they are doing 'like' work or work that is of 'equal value'. As pay arrangements are often very complicated, it might be worth evaluating your existing pay system. Acas can help you do this – contact 08457 47 47 47.

ARE YOU	YES	NO
<b>... paying your employees a competitive rate for their work?</b>	Your pay system should be carefully monitored and evaluated so that you remain competitive with other employers in attracting and retaining staff.	Poor rates of pay can be the final straw for many employees and lead to high labour turnover.
<b>... aware of the National Minimum Wage (NMW)?</b>	The NMW is reviewed every year. Check the Department of Trade and Industry website for updates – <a href="http://www.dti.gov.uk">www.dti.gov.uk</a> .	All workers must be paid at least the NMW. This includes pieceworkers, homeworkers, agency workers, commission workers, part-time workers and casual workers.
<b>... paying your male and female employees equal pay for work of equal value?</b>	Acas ( <a href="http://www.acas.org.uk">www.acas.org.uk</a> ) and the Equal Opportunities Commission ( <a href="http://www.eoc.org.uk">www.eoc.org.uk</a> ) can help you evaluate your system.	Employees may claim for up to six years' arrears of pay from an employment tribunal if they have not received equal pay.

## Work safely

In recent years, health and healthy living have become increasingly important issues both in society at large and in the workplace. Employers and trade unions are now looking at issues like smoking, alcohol and stress alongside traditional occupational health issues such as noise, dust and chemical hazards.

### Health and safety and the law

Sometimes employers need to do more to improve the working environment. For example, employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to working conditions or the workplace where that would help to accommodate a particular disabled person. For further information see the Acas advisory booklet *Health and employment* at [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) or call 08702 42 90 90.

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... review health and safety measures regularly?</b>	Visit the Health and Safety Executive website ( <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk">www.hse.gov.uk</a> ) to check you are up-to-date with health and safety issues.	Employers, workers and their representatives have statutory responsibilities under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and regulations made under the Act.
<b>... consult with employees, trade unions or health and safety representatives on health and safety issues?</b>	A business that shows concern for the welfare of employees will benefit from lower illness and injury rates, lower labour turnover and higher productivity.	You are required by law to consult with health and safety representatives (where there are trade unions) or elected employee representatives (where there are no unions).
<b>... promote health education in the workplace?</b>	Have you considered whether your employees are able to maintain a healthy balance between working life and home life? See p17 for more details.	Read the Acas advisory booklet <i>Health and employment</i> .
<b>... take steps to tackle the problem of work-related stress?</b>	Work towards the Health and Safety Executive management standards ( <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk">www.hse.gov.uk</a> ) or see the Acas advisory booklet <i>Stress at work</i> .	If you don't tackle it, work-related stress can result in high levels of sickness absence, grievances and resignations.

# Develop relationships

If you have the right systems and procedures in place you are already well on the way to developing good relationships in the workplace.

Relationships between individuals, managers, teams and employers are more likely to flourish if:

- everyone is treated fairly and differences are respected and valued
- work is organised to encourage initiative and innovation
- managers understand the need for employees to balance personal and business needs
- people are encouraged to develop new skills.

Employers may find that some of these improvements will evolve naturally if people communicate. For example, if managers listen to staff they may find out concerns employees have about the way they balance their life at home and work (see 'Balance personal and business needs'). Policies can then be developed to change working patterns or job design in order to improve efficiency.

Other issues – such as equality and discrimination – relate more closely to legal rights and will need a more proactive approach. For example, employers should be aware of the legal protection given to employees against discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief. For further information on equality issues, see the Acas advisory booklet *Tackling discrimination and promoting equality* at [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) or call 08702 42 90 90.

## Value employees

Do you value your employees? Many employers would say yes and point to the competitive rate of pay, ongoing training, and the regular canvassing of employees' views on key issues.

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... look to blame employees if things go wrong?</b>	You may undermine your employees' confidence and discourage initiative and flexibility.	A 'no blame' culture can promote efficiency and innovation – but check that training needs are met.
<b>... encourage employees to talk confidently about their work?</b>	Employees will make fewer mistakes and learn more quickly if they get regular feedback and encouragement.	Employees are likely to be less productive if their input is not valued.

Whether an organisation values its employees often comes down to its 'culture' – the way things are done and the attitudes people have. An organisation's culture has a direct bearing on the day-to-day relationships between managers and their teams. Managers who talk to employees and acknowledge the value of their work are more likely to have a motivated workforce. This can be vital for building confidence and encouraging initiative.

These everyday management skills may be supported by systems for employee appraisal, training, and team-building. For further information see the Acas advisory booklets *Employee appraisal* and *Teamwork: success through people*.

## Treat fairly

Most forward-thinking organisations have policies that reflect their commitment to ensuring equality in the workplace. A formal equality policy sends a clear message that you:

- value people for their differences; and
- actively promote the benefits of having a diverse workforce.

## Equality and discrimination

There are many benefits for employers spelling out where they stand on tackling discrimination and promoting equality. For example, an equality policy:

- helps all your staff feel valued
- shows staff, potential recruits and customers that you are serious about fairness
- helps you comply with the law
- helps win business by showing your business to be inclusive and forward-thinking.

An equality policy should have the support of everyone in the organisation – so ideally involve managers and consult with employees and their representatives. For further information see the Acas advisory booklet *Tackling discrimination and promoting equality* or call our equality helpline on 08456 00 34 44.

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... have an equality policy?</b>	Check that it addresses all forms of discrimination, including on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion or belief.	You may find it harder to comply with the law. During 2003 over 9,000 complaints were made to employment tribunals on grounds of sex, race and disability discrimination. There is no limit on tribunal awards for discrimination.
<b>... know the law on discrimination?</b>	By October 2006 employees will also be protected against discrimination on the grounds of age. Check the DTI website for updates – <a href="http://www.dti.gov.uk">www.dti.gov.uk</a> .	The Acas advisory booklet <i>Tackling discrimination and promoting equality</i> can help you identify the key areas.
<b>... know the meaning of 'harassment'?</b>	The Government plans to introduce a new definition of sexual harassment. Check the DTI website for updates – <a href="http://www.dti.gov.uk">www.dti.gov.uk</a> .	Harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating someone else's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

## Encourage initiative

Every employer wants to get the most out of their workforce. Making sure employees have the right skills to do the job is a good start but it doesn't end there. To make full use of their skills employees need to be encouraged to be innovative.

Work can usually be done in a better way. Employees often have a very good idea of:

- how their job works best in terms of organisation and work-flow
- what causes the bottlenecks or problems; and
- how work patterns can be improved to increase productivity or save time.

The extent to which employees can fulfil their potential often depends on the way a job is designed. Important characteristics of good job design include feedback on performance, clear goals that provide a challenge and enough resources to do the job. For further information see the Acas advisory handbook *The A to Z of Work*.

## Balance personal and business needs

In the past the balance between personal and business needs has not always been recognised. Two things have helped to change opinion:

- the diverse UK workforce – today women comprise almost half the workforce. Many of them are working parents, some are lone parents and overall there are more people at work with caring responsibilities;
- the constant consumer pressure on organisations to produce and deliver goods and services when they are wanted.

## Flexible working

Many employers are adopting flexible working – such as part-time working, shift-working and annual hours – to respond to changing demands, many employees are using flexible working to shift the balance between work and home life.

Employees have their own reasons for preferring one pattern of working to another. For example, people with responsibilities to care for children, the sick or the elderly may not be able to work certain shifts, weekends or during school holidays.

Some people with particular disabilities may be unable to work full-time; and those who have retired may only wish to work on a part-time or temporary basis.

ARE YOU	YES	NO
<b>... aware of the law on flexible working?</b>	For help with responding to an application to work flexibly see the Acas advisory leaflet <i>Flexible working</i> .	Parents of children aged under six and parents of disabled children aged under 18 have the right to apply to work flexibly and the employer has a duty to consider such requests seriously.
<b>... aware of the challenges faced by employees with young children or caring responsibilities?</b>	There are many different ways of working flexibly, including part-time working, flexitime, job-sharing, shift-working and homeworking. Have you discussed any of these options with your employees?	Every individual has different needs. Regular one-to-one meetings can help highlight any particular challenges or concerns.

Giving serious consideration to a request to work more flexibly is a legal obligation. However, it is also a clear sign that employers value their employees and wish to retain their skills and experience. For further information see the Acas advisory leaflet *Flexible working* and the Acas advisory booklets *Changing patterns of work* and *Parents at work* (visit [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) or call 08702 42 90 90).

## Develop new skills

Most employers realise that new recruits need to learn new skills to perform effectively. Induction programmes and specialist training often help them to adapt to their new working environment.

Training and development strategies are increasingly seen by employers as a key to organisational success. They improve:

- the ability to respond to change flexibly and quickly
- service levels
- retention of experienced staff
- sales
- market share.

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... regularly review your employees training needs?</b>	As well as internal training, check whether employees are interested in acquiring externally recognised accredited skills (eg NVQs), and assess whether you can help them do this.	If you are to get the best out of the technology, machinery or systems you use, give your employees the training to get the best out of them.
<b>... include personal development programmes as part of the ongoing review of employee performance?</b>	Make sure that development needs – such as training or secondments – are based on a commitment to equality of opportunity for all employees.	If the organisation has aspirations, then so should employees – focusing on the individual can help improve personal performance.

Workplaces often have to change quickly in response to external demands. To respond effectively, employees and teams may need to become ‘multi-skilled’, so it’s up to managers to be forward-looking to help employees acquire the new skills and training they need to respond.

Helping employees reach their full potential is also central to the Investors in People (IIP) Standard. Acas training services can help organisations work towards their IIP accreditation. For more information please see the Acas website at [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) and the Investors in People website at [www.investorsinpeople.co.uk](http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk).

# Work together

The Acas Model will help you successfully manage the people in your business. If you have followed the key principles outlined in this booklet you are probably well on the way to building an effective workplace. But what is the real test of how well things are going?

You need to ask yourself two questions:

- Is the working relationship between managers and employee representatives adding value to the business?
- Is there a climate of trust between managers and employees and their representatives, throughout the business?

Employee representatives play a vital part in employment relations because they provide a channel for employees to communicate with managers, and vice versa. If this relationship works well, it can help to build trust and a cooperative approach to problem-solving and quality improvement.

Unless your organisation is very small (and you deal face-to-face with your employees) you might already be working with employee representatives. This involvement may range from staff councils or working groups through to negotiations with a trade union and full-scale partnerships.

## Building trust

Trust does not just happen overnight. It develops as employee representatives and managers learn that they can rely on what each other say and do.

It helps if everyone:

- focuses on the issues rather than personalities
- takes account of each other's legitimate concerns and interests
- shares information openly and frequently.

These principles may be hard to put into practice – especially where relationships are based on confrontation. Also, managers and employee representatives often need time to find the right system for working together. Acas can offer practical advice on what will work best for you.

There are many effective ways in which managers and employees can work together. These include:

- working groups set up to consider particular issues
- permanent consultative groups – often called staff councils or consultative committees
- collective bargaining where employers negotiate terms and conditions with trade union representatives.

There are a number of legal requirements for informing and consulting with trade unions and other employee representatives. These are set out in the Acas advisory booklet *Representation at work*, and in the good practice advice on information and consultation found on the Acas website ([www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)).

DO YOU	YES	NO
<b>... have working groups of employees and managers to look at specific issues affecting working relationships?</b>	Training in joint problem-solving techniques can be very useful in helping to reach workable solutions. Acas can help you with this.	Managers may find it harder to implement decisions that employee representatives have not been involved in making.
<b>... have working relationships based on trust and cooperation?</b>	If you value your employees views, then why not involve them more closely in the decision-making process?	It may be worth reviewing the way you consult and communicate with employees – see the Acas advisory booklet <i>Employee communications and consultation</i> .
<b>... have effective systems for representation?</b>	Make use of your employee representatives – they can act as very useful conduits between managers and employees.	Organisations need some form of representation to comply with the law on consultation.

Whatever the forum, it is important that those involved know exactly what they are trying to achieve and whether the group is being used to inform, consult, negotiate or make decisions. Both managers and employees may need training to fulfil their roles – for instance in negotiation or problem solving techniques.

Some businesses that have developed high levels of trust feel able to move to a form of partnership where many decisions are made jointly by managers and employee representatives.

## How Acas can help

The Acas Model sets out a range of factors which can make businesses more successful. It provides you with a yardstick against which you can measure the effectiveness of your employment relationships and can help you to identify areas for development. The Acas Model is not an academic exercise – the principles it sets out are based on the practical lessons Acas has learnt from improving organisations and working life through better employment relations and people management.

When you examine the Acas Model you may identify some aspects of employment relationships in your organisation which need attention. If you decide that you require outside assistance to implement change, then Acas is ideally equipped to provide this help. Acas has an enviable reputation for independence and impartiality and we have over 30 years experience of helping employers, employees and their representatives to deal with issues and put measures in place to bring about long term improvements in the workplace.

Here are some examples of how Acas can help:

- **You may have recognised a need to set up, or change your procedures**

Acas publications and e-learning packages on our website can give you practical advice on how you can set up procedures. Acas also offers training for businesses of all sizes on key employment issues, including sessions on how to set up written statements, procedures for dealing with discipline, grievance, absence and a wide range of other employment topics. If required these can be customised to suit your own workplace.

- **You may have effective procedures in place, but you believe that your organisation's communication and consultation policies and practices do not match up to the principles set out in the Acas Model**

Acas could help your managers, employees and their representatives examine ways in which communications and consultation could be improved in your organisation. The very act of getting managers and employees to work together to identify and address issues can improve cooperation and help to develop a more participative environment. This in turn can have business benefits.

At the end of such an exercise Acas could also deliver bespoke training on communications and consultation to embed the new processes into your workplace.

Information about statutory rights and duties can be found on the Acas website [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk).

You can also receive up-to-date information on employment legislation from the Acas helpline 08457 47 47 47.

## Acas Training

Our training is carried out by experienced Acas staff who work with businesses every day. They will show you the value to your business of following good practice in employment matters and how to avoid the common pitfalls. We also run special training sessions on new legislation.

Look at the Acas website for up-to-date information about all our training or if you want to book a place online.

Training sessions are specially designed for smaller companies and our current programme includes:

- Managing discipline and grievances at work
- Managing absence from work
- Dealing with bullying and harassment at work
- Employing people: an overview
- The written statement and contracts of employment
- New employment legislation

We also have online learning packages to help you – just go to [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) and click on e-learning.



Acas aims to improve organisations and working life through better employment relations. We provide up-to-date information, independent advice, high quality training and we work with employers and employees to solve problems and improve performance.

We are an independent, publicly-funded organisation and many of our services are free.

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*Helpline* **08457 47 47 47**

**08456 06 16 00**

helpline for textphone users

**08456 00 34 44**

for questions on managing  
equality in the workplace

**08702 42 90 90**

for ordering Acas publications



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[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)