



Ethical Trading Initiative

For workers' rights. For better business.

Progressing worker representation

Entry points for mapping and developing strategy

There are three key entry points to enable mapping of working representation in supply chains, supported by suggested activities to progress independent and effective worker representation.



Workers cannot voice their concerns freely and there is no worker representation

TO PROGRESS

Initiate, promote and communicate



Workers have some recourse to dialogue with employers

TO PROGRESS

Evaluate, scale and skill up



Workers' needs are represented by trade unions or democratically elected representatives

TO PROGRESS

Develop, strengthen and mature

Suggested mapping entry points and indicators

What this means

Workers cannot voice their concerns freely and there is no worker representation

The agenda for events or interactions led solely by employers is typically set without staff or elected representative input, or consultation. They are not designed to address specific workplace or industrial relations matters. There is no legal protection nor anything binding in their terms of reference. Accountability is often assigned to the event convener **and in some instances, there** is little or no policy audit trail. **Worker** engagement efforts (despite their limited nature) may be part of an umbrella policy linked to indicators on sustainability, non-financial reporting, social impact of business and transparency

Where you may find this

Stakeholder engagement, auditing and verification, self-assessment questionnaires and CR or sustainability forums.

What this could look like on site

Whether worker representatives are elected, or staff are selected to attend. The agenda for meetings is developed by managers (or higher levels). Meeting facilitation may be conducted by external experts.

Workers have some recourse to dialogue with employers

Typically, these are informal, even philanthropic in nature, with an agenda designed without staff or elected representative input or consultation. There may be legal or regulatory requirements for this to be done (for example, in relation to factory safety) but there is no binding mechanism protecting workers from reprisal. Workers may be **selected to participate** or may be asked to volunteer. Engagement takes place based on the **principle of good will**. There is little or no accountability feedback loop to prioritise worker wellbeing, pay or employment terms and conditions. There is an element that could be used as window dressing. In some instances, where fundamental worker rights are not acknowledged, companies may develop policy and mechanisms to engage formally with the workforce.

Standalone grievance mechanisms, worker surveys, participation committees, workplace committees for safety, health, equalities and learning.

Whether representatives are elected, or staff are selected to attend. Little or no ownership or accountability. Little or no feedback loop. Decisions made do not change workplace practices or conditions. No evidence of pre-consultation.

Workers' needs are represented by trade unions or democratically elected representatives

This is based on accessing globally accepted workers' rights (ILO conventions), protocols and goals (e.g. SDG 8 with particular reference to pay, terms and conditions in workplace). A newly established process will typically feature implementation of freedom of association, collective organising in a workplace with free elections of officials. Agendas will be developed and determined by workers on matters pertinent to them and formal documented meetings will be established with managers. Collective bargaining agreements may include any and/or all elements of the worker experience - ranging from pay and productivity arrangements to employment status. Agreements should apply to all workers contributing to workplace production (permanent, agency, seasonal and temporary).

Social dialogue initiatives, worker representation committee and/or trade union meetings, bargaining or safety committees.

Signed agreements between worker bodies and managers. Formal arrangements for meetings, election processes, registration of the worker group, bargaining agendas, wage consultations, decrease in staff turnover, decrease in industrial action, better health and safety performance. Effective conflict resolution.

Developing the strategy and action plan

