

TRADITIONAL VERSUS TECHNOLOGICAL  
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURAL SYSTEMS  
AS PERCEIVED BY UNION OFFICIALS

By

Justin V. Cecil

A research Project

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management

Tusculum College

2003

TRADITIONAL VERSUS TECHNOLOGICAL  
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURAL SYSTEMS  
AS PERCEIVED BY UNION OFFICIALS

Justin V. Cecil

BSOM 358

Research Professor: Dr. William Cox

ABSTRACT

Effectively filing and tracking labor grievances has been and always will be an indicative feature of the unionized labor movement. Members expect efficient services from their union in exchange for their membership dues. One of those services is the filing and tracking of labor grievances. The purpose of this study was to examine union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural systems.

The sample consisted of 120 union officials from seven locations across the United States. Surveys were submitted to union officials in Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee, and Virginia. The survey consisted of six Likert statements, one multiple-choice question, and three demographic questions. The items on the survey were used to examine union officials' opinions toward the efficiency of both traditional and technological grievance procedural systems, and which system they preferred. The surveys were submitted and collected by traditional mail.

Of the 120 surveys distributed, 35 were returned. After all the data were collected, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted. Sixty percent were in agreement that the traditional grievance tracking system seemed efficient. Seventy-four percent were in agreement that the technological grievance tracking system seemed efficient. Overall, 40% of the respondents preferred the traditional grievance tracking system, and 57% of the respondents preferred the technological grievance tracking system. Three percent had no preference.

The study showed that union officials realize the efficiency of both traditional and technological grievance procedural systems, but most prefer the technological grievance procedural system. The results from the survey directly related and were consistent with the literature review. Unions must implement new grievance tracking technology to better serve the members and satisfy the hard-working union officials.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
List of Tables .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	1
Significance of the Study .....	2
Definitions of Terms .....	2
Literature Review .....	3
Research Questions .....	10
Scope of the Study .....	10
2. METHODS .....	12
Introduction .....	12
Research Design .....	12
Participants .....	13
Instrumentation .....	13
Collection of the Data .....	17
Data Analysis Procedures .....	17
Limitations .....	18
3. RESULTS .....	19
Introduction .....	19
Response Rates and Respondents .....	19
Analysis of the Data .....	20

4.	DISCUSSION .....	25
	Introduction .....	25
	Summary of Major Findings / Discussion .....	25
	Conclusions .....	26
	Recommendations .....	29
	REFERENCES .....	30
	APPENDIXES .....	32
	Appendix A: Survey Cover Letter .....	32
	Appendix B: Survey .....	33
	Appendix C: Administrator Cover Letter .....	34

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1.	Efficiency Comparison of Traditional Versus Technological Grievance Procedural Systems (A Represents Traditional, B Represents Technological) .....	21
2.	Preference Comparison of Traditional Versus Technological Grievance Procedural systems (A Represents Traditional, B Represents Technological) .....	22

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Effectively filing and tracking labor grievances has been and always will be an indicative feature of the unionized labor movement. Members of labor unions on the international and local levels have always depended on their union to file their grievances with the best interest of the member in mind. Due to rapid technological change in all industries, unions included, many business practices have changed. Unions have typically used traditional paper and pen methods for their grievance processing. However, new technology-based methods of processing labor grievances have begun to take shape within the union industry.

#### Purpose of the Study

Grievance filing, tracking, and resolving is a necessary part of any union's responsibility to its members. Members benefit by confidentially filing a grievance with their union against their employer. The union benefits by providing a value added service for members, justifying fees paid by the members. The purpose of this study was to examine union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural systems.

## Significance of the Study

To provide the best service for members, unions across the nation and world have begun to utilize new technologies to automate their duties and responsibilities. Due to the increased usage of computers and the Internet, unions, like all other industries, have to capitalize on these resources to enhance the quality of their services.

By evaluating the processes and effectiveness of traditional and technological grievance procedural systems, union officials across the globe would be more aware of the time spent on filing and tracking grievances traditionally versus technologically. The surveyed union officials would also provide insight to other union leaders on which method of grievance processing the surveyed officials preferred.

The decision makers within a local or international union organization could then make educated decisions about the grievance procedural system which would best suit their needs. This study would also allow unions to allocate resources where necessary to better serve the members and officials.

## Definition of Terms

Arbitration. A formal process where a neutral hears both sides of the dispute and renders a final and binding decision. Both parties must comply with this ruling (Elkiss, 1997).

Grievance. A complaint filed with a union by a member against the member's employer.

Grievance Procedural System. A step-by-step process of filing, tracking and resolving grievances filed by a union member.

Member. A person that works for a unionized company and pays membership dues to benefit from union services.

Union. An organization consisting of employer-based members that pay dues for services such as legal representation, contract negotiation and grievance processing.

Union Official. A representative of the union involved in the grievance procedure.

### Literature Review

Unionization has been on an almost unbroken downward slide since its peak of 35% in 1954. Only 14% of the workforce makes up unions today, and the number is even less at 10% in the private sector (Eisenscher, 1999). Grievance rates are the number of formal or written grievances filed per employee per month. The level of labor-management cooperation has often been an indicator of the number of grievances an employee files. Others express that labor-management cooperation is not only contingent upon grievance rates, but could be expressed by increased tardiness or absenteeism (Arthur & Jelf, 1999). One work suggested that grievance outcomes are perceived by the member as a reflection of the union as opposed to management (Clark, Gallagher & Pavlak, 1990).

Why grievance procedural systems are important. The grievance procedure is important to union officials for several reasons. First, rather than just their own grievance(s), union officials view several cases when resolving grievances. Union officials are in a position to recognize problems with the grievance procedure that the actual grievance filer may often overlook. Second, union officials are involved in every step of the grievance process, whereas the grievance filer is often only informed of the outcome or resolution. Third, the grievance filer, management, and the union official are all directly involved with the process because the grievance procedure is an extension of the negotiation process between management and the union. Not only is the grievance procedure a service to union members, but it also serves the union officials in the continuous negotiations with management. Finally, union officials may view the grievance procedures differently than their members because the union officials have to consider financial and organizational constraints just like any other service industry (Bemmels & Lau, 2001).

Union leaders are representatives of political organizations. They are often unyielding in their beliefs concerning grievances because they think that is the union members' desire (Elkiss, 1997). A study by Meyer (1994) found that political success and influence were determining factors in the amount of time it took to resolve grievances. The longer a grievance was in process, at any level, management would more likely respond favorably.

An effective grievance process does promptly address issues, and it is usually clearly defined in union rules and policies (Smith, 2002). It is

hypothesized that grievants more often voice their concern when they know that the decision maker has the ability to bring about a change. Also, the hypothesis explains that power is an important prediction due to the interpersonal sensitivity of the decision maker (Barry, 2000).

The grievance procedure is universally accepted as a collective bargaining technique. Many researchers have described that the grievance procedure ensures peace for the industry while giving groups of employees and individuals a voice (Catlett & Brown, 1990). One study found the following:

Representing members in the grievance procedure is one of the most visible services unions provide. This mechanism, more so than contract negotiations, legislative activity, or virtually any other union service, operates at the workplace level. It provides members with an opportunity to see the union 'in action' in a way that few union services are seen. In addition, the nature of grievances filed by individuals are such that the issues involved are almost always perceived, at least by the grievants, as extremely relevant. (Clark et al., 1990, p. 149).

Traditional Unionized Grievance Procedures. In the typical grievance procedure, both sides position themselves from the first step. Their position usually takes on the characteristics that neither side will budge from initial reactions. A study found that local union officers placed pre-arbitration as the focus of their grievance training. Lower steps of the grievance procedure usually consist of each side telling their story. During these lower steps, no attempts are

usually made at compromise and stewards try to convince management that the union is right (Elkiss, 1997).

A nine-step flow chart was established to describe the typical grievance process of one unnamed local union. The first step of the grievance process takes place when an employee completes a grievance form and submits it to the business agent. In the second step, the business agent locates the article the grievance will fall under. In the third step, the business agent assigns the grievance to the corresponding local, where the clerk assigns the index and article number. In this step, the clerk loads the grievance into a database and a hard copy is made and placed into a file folder. In the fourth step, the computer gives a printout where references from previous grievances are correlated and a carbon copy is given to the business agent. In the fifth step, the business agent arranges a meeting between the employer and employee, where the dispute is resolved and noted on the database or the dispute proceeds to the City Committee. In the sixth step, the City Committee becomes involved. During this step, the union local assigns a case number and updates the database. The local places dispute on an agenda and the business agent goes before the City Committee. The dispute is then resolved or it moves to the seventh step, which is the State Committee. At the State Committee, the local assigns a new state case number, and the local sets the agenda. The business agent goes before the State Committee, where the dispute is resolved or it proceeds further to the eighth step, being the Joint Arbitration Committee. At the Joint Arbitration Committee, the local assigns a new JAC case number, and the local sets the

agenda. The business agent goes before the Joint Arbitration Committee, where the dispute is resolved or it proceeds further to the ninth step, being arbitration. Arbitration is the final step in the grievance process, and the dispute is resolved (Cecil, n.d.).

Each party in a collective bargaining agreement has certain rights. The grievance procedure is introduced when disputes arise regarding the rights in the collective bargaining agreement. Both sides will seek total victory in the final arbitration if the rights go unresolved in earlier steps. Arbitration was at a rate of approximately \$1,500 per case in the late 1980s, and the costs can now go up to \$2,500 plus. Attorney fees and transcript costs must also be considered in the process (Elkiss, 1997).

The traditional grievance procedure is a formalized series of steps recognized and generally accepted in the United States and Canada. This system consists of a legally binding labor agreement that must be honored by both parties. During the steps of the grievance procedure, management and the union meet to discuss the problem. If no resolution is met, a third-party in the form of an arbitrator is brought in to settle the dispute (Clark et al., 1990).

New technological unionized grievance procedures. Expedited procedures have been popularized because parties are not satisfied with conventional grievance procedures. Excessive costs and delays have fueled this movement. Some parties are doing away with the middle steps because they replicate previous steps in the grievance procedure. Some parties are introducing a grievance mediation process as a replacement for arbitration.

Other parties have developed their own unique methods to improve efficiency and handle more grievances (Bemmels & Lau, 2001).

According to research, employee satisfaction is more dependent upon the decision-making process as opposed to the decision itself within a grievance procedure (Keppler, 1990). Local leaders will reap timely feedback and more intrinsic rewards when grievances show a faster resolution rate. Reducing the number of steps in a grievance procedure, expediting the grievance procedure, or other attempts to streamline the grievance procedure will lead to higher satisfaction in the grievance procedure (Bemmels & Lau, 2001).

Work teams and other new production technologies and innovations have been adopted by many businesses. These businesses are sensitive to product enhancements and a demanding market. Disagreements will ultimately arise from competition and new technology. The disagreements must be resolved, and their needs to be efficient mechanisms in place to aid in the resolution of the disagreements (Elkiss, 1997).

AlaTek, LLC is a software development firm which has developed the Internet Grievance System. The system is targeted to local unions to increase a higher level of profitability and effective management of their grievance process. Communication and data basing of grievances can be centralized and automated by using the Internet. With the user-friendliness of new technologies, any union official that has access to a computer and the Internet can efficiently learn to use the Internet Grievance System ("Internet grievance", n.d.). Grievances are seldom solved at arbitration. Earlier steps in the procedure usually take credit for

solving grievances (Bemmels & Foley, 1996). By using the Internet Grievance System, the union official can access information from any of the committee steps at the touch of a button (“Internet grievance”, n.d.).

Union leaders’ perception of the grievance procedure. Negotiating contracts and resolving grievances is the primary concern of union officials (Eisenscher, 1999). Local leaders that perceive the importance of grievance issues tend to be satisfied with the procedures, which suggests that they also view their job as more meaningful (Bemmels & Lau, 2001). Local leaders perceive that their success in grievance procedures results in a successful political standing. It is stated to be a circular pattern by which success in grievance procedures results in political influence which results in further success of grievance procedures (Meyer, 1994).

Several hypotheses were developed explaining how union officials’ satisfaction with their grievance procedures is related to the outcome, characteristics, and union officials’ attitudes of their grievance procedures. The first hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when they have greater discretion in grievance processing decisions. The second hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when the numbers of union members represented are lower. The third hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when the grievance-filing rate is lower. The fourth hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when they have a higher perception of the

importance of grievance issues. The fifth hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when grievances are resolved quicker. The sixth hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when more grievances are settled in the first three steps. The seventh hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when a larger proportion of their grievances perceive to be settled in favor of their unions. The eighth hypothesis explained that local leaders who have higher concerns with the time and costs invested in grievance processing will be less satisfied with their grievance procedures. The ninth hypotheses explained that union officials will be less satisfied with their grievance procedures when they have a higher concern over duty-of-fair-representation charges (Bemmels & Lau, 2001).

### Research Questions

1. What are union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional grievance procedural systems?
2. What are union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of technological grievance procedural systems?
3. Which grievance procedural system do the union officials prefer?

### Scope of the Study

The participants of this study were union officials that were directly involved with their members' grievance procedures. The union officials were

elected in clusters based on their geographical location throughout the United States. Questionnaires were distributed to 120 union officials in Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee and Virginia. The study was conducted between February 1, 2003 and March 5, 2003. The surveys were used to examine union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural systems.

## CHAPTER 2

### Methods

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural systems. In Chapter 1, this study cited research literature used to relate to and further enhance the significance of this study's research questions concerning grievance procedures and those involved. This chapter defines the process and subjects used to conduct the study to answer the research questions.

#### Research Design

This research was a descriptive study used to determine union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural systems. Data were collected from the union officials of different local unions across the United States. The data were used to determine if the union officials preferred traditional or technological grievance tracking methods. From February 1, 2003 to March 5, 2003, surveys were distributed and collected from the union officials to determine the outcome of this study.

## Participants

Due to the vast amount of union locals across the United States, there was no determination of the amount of union official population that represented all of these locals. Therefore, the sample was drawn from the researcher's previous union contacts with several locals across the United States. The respondents were selected by judgmental sampling using the cluster sampling method. It was impractical for the researcher to compile an exhaustive list of the target population. Therefore, geographical cluster samples were taken from the north, south, east and west to reduce expense and time requirements. The sample included union officials that were familiar with both traditional and technological grievance procedural systems. Some of the union officials surveyed had previous experience with both traditional and technological grievance systems and others had only experience with their traditional grievance tracking system. One hundred and twenty surveys were distributed to union officials in Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee and Virginia.

## Instrumentation

The instrument used contained a cover letter (Appendix A) which was used to introduce the survey (Appendix B). The survey contained two brief grievance tracking system scenarios at the top of the page. The first was labeled Grievance Tracking System A and the second was labeled Grievance Tracking System B. Grievance Tracking System A was an example of a traditional

grievance tracking system. Grievance Tracking System B was an example of a technological grievance tracking system. Labeling the scenarios by letter reduced any biases that a named label may create. Although the questions were completely different, the remainder of the survey was modeled from another researcher's instrument (Isaacson, 2001). The survey questions were developed to identify the union officials' opinions of the different grievance tracking system scenarios. The survey also identified the appropriate demographics of the union officials that responded to the survey.

The survey contained 10 items. Survey Items 1 through 6 were used to answer the research questions. Survey Item 7 was used to correlate the amount of time spent on grievance issues with the union officials' perceived importance of the grievance procedural systems. Survey Items 8 through 10 were asked to identify the appropriate demographics of the respondent.

The questions on the survey were broken down into three appropriate sections. The first section included six items presented with a Likert scale. The respondents' choices for answering included Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Item 1. Grievance tracking system A described above seems efficient.

This survey item was designed to answer the research question about how union officials' perceived the effectiveness of traditional grievance procedural systems.

Item 2. Grievance tracking system B described above seems efficient.

This survey item was designed to answer the research question about how union

officials' perceived the effectiveness of technological grievance procedural systems.

Item 3. I prefer grievance tracking system A. This survey item was designed to determine if union officials' preferred traditional grievance procedural systems to technological grievance procedural systems.

Item 4. I prefer grievance tracking system B. This survey item was designed to determine if union officials' preferred technological grievance procedural systems to traditional grievance procedural systems.

Item 5. I prefer electronic databases to paper-based filing cabinets. This survey item was designed to determine if union officials' preferred electronic file storage to traditional file storage.

Item 6. I prefer paper-based filing cabinets to electronic databases. This survey item was designed to determine if union officials' preferred traditional file storage to electronic file storage.

The second section of the survey contained Item 7, which asked for the average time spent dealing with grievance issues. This item was presented as a multiple-choice question with the respondent circling the appropriate response.

Item 7. How many hours per month do you spend dealing with grievance issues? less than 1 hour, 1-4 hours, 5-9 hours, 10+ hours. This survey item was designed to determine the amount of time the union officials' spent on grievance issues and how that time related to their opinion of differing grievance procedural systems.

The third section of the survey contained Items 8 through 10, which were asked to gather demographics to determine the level of education, gender, and age of the respondents. Survey Item 8 was presented as a fill-in-the-blank answer. Survey Item 9 was presented as a multiple-choice answer with only two possible responses. Survey Item 10 was presented as a fill-in-the-blank answer.

Item 8. Level of education (years of school or degree). This survey item was designed to determine the average level of education of the respondents.

Item 9. Gender. M / F. This survey item was designed to determine the gender of the respondents and how their gender related to their answers.

Item 10. Age. This survey item was designed to determine the average age of the respondents and how their age related to their answers.

A group of four participants were used to conduct a pilot survey. The participants were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the survey instrument to answer the corresponding research questions. All of the pilot members agreed that the survey items appropriately answered the research questions. The pilot survey participants suggested changing the two grievance tracking scenarios to lettered labels opposed to named labels to reduce any biases the named labels may create. The pilot survey participants also suggested changing Item 6, which was not directly related to the research questions. Item 6 was changed and became the counterpart to Item 5, which also helped reduce any biases from Item 5.

### Collection of the Data

The surveys were grouped and mailed as a packet to the union locals from February 1, 2003 to February 10, 2003. Contacts were made with the appropriate administrator at each local before the surveys were mailed. The designated receiving administrator at each local was asked not to take the survey, but just submit it to the local's business agents and other union officials involved in grievance procedures. The administrator was also given a separate cover letter (Appendix C) explaining how to administer the survey. Each administrator was also asked to sign an Ethics in Research Agreement.

On the cover letter of each survey the union official was asked to return the survey to the designated envelope, mail it to the researcher, or fax it to the researcher. These options were all given to ensure the privacy of the union officials' responses. It was also emphasized on the cover letter that the respondents' answers would remain completely anonymous, their participation was voluntary, and their name was not required to take the survey. A large stamped envelope with a return address was also included with the initial package sent to each local's designated administrator. Participants were asked to complete and return the survey by February 17, 2003. The surveys were returned by March 5, 2003.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The results of the survey were used to define union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural

systems. Each response on the Likert scale was given a numeric value, and statistical data were compiled to tabulate each response. Results were also analyzed to correlate the demographic information with the responses to the Likert items. SPSS was used to tabulate the data, and the results were presented in both a descriptive summary and data tables, providing trends between the demographics and initial questions.

### Limitations

Actual grievance filing and tracking experience was a threat to the internal validity of this study because some of the union officials surveyed may have been new to grievance procedures. The union officials' fear of technology or any kind of change may have also threatened the internal validity of this study. The external validity was threatened by using the cluster sampling method. This method may have caused some cluster bias, but the study tried to combat this bias by sending surveys to different geographical areas across the country. Another factor that may have threatened the external validity was the sample size. The 120 union officials surveyed may not have been representative of the entire union official population in the United States. Some affinity bias may have also been created because the respondents likely knew the individual who gave them the survey. Lastly, non-response bias was not avoided because every survey mailed out was not returned.

## CHAPTER 3

### Results

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural systems. This study was conducted to determine how union officials perceived two unique grievance tracking systems, and to answer three research questions based on their perceptions. The research included union officials across the United States that had a direct involvement in grievance procedures. This chapter identifies the respondents, response rates, and data analysis, including tables representing the results.

#### Response Rates and Respondents

The survey was distributed to seven union locals across the United States. The representative states participating in the survey included Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee, and Virginia. With 120 surveys distributed to these varying local unions, 35 were returned. The response rate of participation in this study was 29%. Ninety-four percent of the respondents were

male. Seventy-one percent of the respondents devoted 10 or more hours per month handling grievance issues.

### Analysis of the Data

The data were collected and entered into an electronic spreadsheet program. The survey questionnaire used six primary Likert statements to answer the research questions. All percentages used were rounded to the nearest percent. Tables are used in this study to graphically display the findings of each research question.

Likert survey Items 1 and 6 were used to answer the first research question, What are union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional grievance procedural systems?

Item 1 showed that 60% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the traditional grievance tracking system described seemed efficient. The question was used to determine the union officials' opinion toward the effectiveness of a traditional grievance procedural system.

Item 6 showed that 43% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was paper-based filing cabinets to electronic databases. The question was used to reemphasize the union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of a traditional grievance procedural system.

Likert survey Items 2 and 5 were used to answer the second research question, What are union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of technological grievance procedural systems?

Item 2 showed that 74% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the technological grievance tracking system described seemed efficient. The question was used to determine the union officials' opinion toward the effectiveness of a technological grievance procedural system.

Item 5 showed that 54% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was electronic databases to paper-based filing cabinets. The question was used to reemphasize the union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of a technological grievance procedural system.

Table 1 shows the efficiency comparison of the traditional versus the technological grievance procedural system based on union officials' opinions from Survey Items 1, 2, 5, and 6. Some responses were left blank.

Table 1

Efficiency Comparison of Traditional Versus Technological Grievance Procedural Systems (A Represents Traditional, B Represents Technological).

Item Statement	Frequency (Percent)				
	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
1. Grievance tracking system A described above seems efficient.	6(17)	15(43)	3(9)	5(14)	5(14)
2. Grievance tracking system B described above seems efficient.	11(31)	12(43)	7(20)	1(3)	1(3)
5. I prefer electronic databases to paper-based filing cabinets.	10(29)	9(26)	9(26)	4(11)	1(3)
6. I prefer paper-based filing cabinets to electronic databases.	3(9)	12(34)	7(20)	7(20)	5(14)

n=35

Likert Survey Items 3 and 4 were used to answer the third research question, Which grievance procedural system do the union officials prefer?

Item 3 showed that 40% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was the traditional grievance tracking system. The question was used to determine the preferred grievance procedural system of the surveyed union officials.

Item 4 showed that 57% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was the technological grievance tracking system. Like Item 3, the question was used to determine the preferred grievance procedural system of the surveyed union officials.

Three percent of the surveyed union officials did not select strongly agree or agree when choosing their preferred grievance procedural system.

Table 2 shows the preferred comparison of the traditional versus the technological grievance procedural system based on union officials' opinions from Survey Items 3 and 4. Some responses were left blank.

Table 2

Preference Comparison of Traditional Versus Technological Grievance Procedural Systems (A Represents Traditional, B Represents Technological).

Item Statement	Frequency (Percent)				
	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
3. I prefer grievance tracking system A.	4(11)	10(29)	7(20)	7(20)	6(17)
4. I prefer grievance tracking system B.	11(31)	9(26)	7(20)	5(14)	1(3)

n=35

There were some interesting correlations between the demographics and the Likert responses from the questionnaire. One unique correlation was between the level of education of the respondents, and the grievance procedural system preference.

Item 8 showed that 63% of the respondents were college graduates or had some college experience. From the college-experienced respondents, 59% preferred the technological grievance procedural system, while 32% preferred the traditional grievance procedural system. Nine percent of the college-experienced respondents equally preferred both systems.

Another unique correlation was between the age of the respondents, and the grievance procedural system preference.

The mean age of respondents in this study was 44 years. Nine percent of the respondents were exactly 44 years old. Of the respondents that were 44 years old, 33% preferred the traditional grievance system, and 67% preferred the technological grievance system. Three percent of the respondents did not reveal their age.

Forty percent of the respondents were under the mean age of 44. Of those 40% under the age of 44, 70% preferred the technological grievance procedural system, and 30% preferred the traditional grievance procedural system.

Forty-nine percent of the respondents were over the mean age of 44. Of those 49% over the age of 44, 35% preferred the technological grievance

procedural system, 53% preferred the traditional grievance procedural system, and 12% equally preferred both systems.

## CHAPTER 4

### Discussion

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional versus technological grievance procedural systems. This chapter correlates the major findings of the survey questionnaire to the research questions defined by this study. This chapter also includes conclusions to the data collected and recommendations for any relevant future study of grievance procedural systems.

#### Summary of Major Findings / Discussion

The survey was used to determine union officials' opinions of two completely different grievance procedural systems, one being traditionally based with paper and filing cabinets, and the other being technologically based with computers and electronic databases. The literature review and the research questions from Chapter 1 were used to design the survey instrument.

Research Question 1: What are union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of traditional grievance procedural systems? Sixty percent of the

respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the traditional grievance tracking system described seemed efficient. Forty-three percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was paper-based filing cabinets to electronic databases.

Research Question 2: What are union officials' opinions toward the effectiveness of technological grievance procedural systems? Seventy-four percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the technological grievance tracking system described seemed efficient. Fifty-four percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was electronic databases to paper-based filing cabinets.

Research Question 3: Which grievance procedural system do the union officials prefer? The majority (57%) of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was the technological grievance tracking system. Forty percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their preference was the traditional grievance tracking system. Three percent of the respondents did not prefer either system.

## Conclusions

The first research question was developed to determine how union officials' perceived traditional grievance procedural systems. The traditional grievance procedure consists of a series of steps where the employee fills out a grievance form, the business agent processes the grievance, and the clerk makes a hard copy and files the appropriate paperwork (Cecil, n.d.). This form of

grievance processing was addressed in Item 6 of the survey. Forty-three percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they preferred paper-based filing cabinets to electronic databases. The traditional grievance procedure is a formalized series of steps recognized and generally accepted in the United States and Canada (Clark et al., 1990). Traditionally, this formalized series of steps was and often still is recorded on paper, filed in a filing cabinet, and viewed via hard copy. Survey Item 1 showed that 60% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the traditional grievance tracking system described seemed efficient.

The second research question was developed to determine how union officials' perceived technological grievance procedural systems. Communication and data basing of grievances can be centralized and automated by using the Internet ("Internet grievance", n.d.). This form of grievance processing was addressed in Item 5 of the survey. Fifty-four percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they preferred electronic databases to paper-based filing cabinets. Reemphasizing the paradigm shift to technology, Survey Item 2 showed that 74% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the technological grievance tracking system described seemed efficient.

The third research question was developed to determine which grievance procedural system the union officials preferred. One hypothesis explained that local leaders will be more satisfied with their grievance procedures when grievances are resolved quicker (Bemmels & Lau, 2001). According to Survey Item 4, the majority (54%) of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed

that they preferred the electronic filing steps of the technological grievance tracking system. Union officials are involved in every step of the grievance process, whereas the grievance filer is often only informed of the outcome or resolution (Bemmels & Lau, 2001). According to Survey Item 3, 43% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they preferred the paper filing steps of the traditional grievance tracking system.

Age has an important influence on technology usage in the workplace (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000). The mean age of respondents in this study was 44 years. Nine percent of the respondents were exactly 44 years old, and 3% of the respondents did not reveal their age. Evidence suggests that age differences in information processing have an impact on older workers' performance of computer-based tasks (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000). This evidence proved true based on the results of this study. Nine percent of the respondents were exactly 44 years old. Of the respondents that were 44 years old, 33% preferred the traditional grievance system, and 67 % preferred the technological grievance system. Forty percent of the respondents were under the age of 44. Of those 40% under the age of 44, 67% preferred the technological grievance procedural system. Forty-nine percent of the respondents were over the age of 44. Of those 49% over the age of 44, 35% preferred the technological grievance procedural system. The younger union officials highly favored the technological grievance procedural system, while the older union officials highly favored the traditional grievance procedural system.

Cluster sampling and the limited number of responses to the survey questionnaires could affect the results of this survey.

This study was not defined by the recommendations of another study. The literature review in this study directly related to union officials perceptions of grievance procedural systems. The study showed that the respondents recognized the effectiveness of both the traditional and technological grievance procedural systems, though, overall the respondents preferred the technological grievance procedural system to the traditional grievance procedural system.

### Recommendations

Based on this study, recommendations are for union locals to implement an electronic grievance tracking system because a higher percentage of union officials prefer it to the traditional systems. Union locals should effectively train their officials to utilize an electronic grievance tracking system. Special training and attention should be given to the older officials and any who are uncomfortable with new technology.

Future studies should have a larger sample size if the targeted population is union officials across the United States.

## REFERENCES

- Arthur, J.B., Jelf, G.S., & Gregory, S. (1999, Winter). The effects of gainsharing on grievance rates and absenteeism over time. Journal of Labor Research, 20 (1), 133-145.
- Barry, B. (2000). When will grievants desire voice?: A test of situational, motivational, and attributional explanations. International Journal of Conflict Management, 11 (2), 106-134.
- Bemmels, B. & Foley, J.R. (1996, Special Issue). Grievance procedure research: a review and theoretical recommendations. Journal of Management, 22 (3), 359-384.
- Bemmels, B. & Lau, D.C. (2001, Summer). Local union leaders' satisfaction with grievance procedures. Journal of Labor Research, 22 (3), 653-667.
- Catlett, J.L. & Brown, E.L. (1990, Spring). Union leaders' perceptions of the grievance process. Labor Studies Journal, 15 (1), 54-65.
- Cecil, V. (n.d.). Grievance steps. Unpublished manuscript.
- Clark, P.F., Gallagher, D.G., & Pavlak, T.J. (1990, Summer). Member commitment in an American union: the role of the grievance procedure. Industrial Relations Journal, 21 (2), 147-157.
- Eisenscher, M. (1999, Summer). Leadership development and organizing: for what kind of union? Labor Studies Journal, 24 (2), 3-21.
- Elkiss, H. (1997, November). Alternatives to arbitration: are unions ready for change? Labor Law Journal, 48 (11), 675-690.
- Internet grievance system quick start users guide release 2.0. (n.d.). Provo, UT: AlaTek, LLC. Retrieved November, 2000, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.union2000.com/Grievance/quickStart.pdf>
- Isaacson, T. (2001). Researching and redefining the committee structure of "EFG Company". Unpublished bachelor's thesis, Tusculum College, Greeneville, Tennessee, United States.
- Keppler, M.J. (1990, August). Nonunion grievance procedures: union avoidance technique or union organizing opportunity? Labor Law Journal, 41 (8), 557-563.

Meyer, D. (1994, Winter). The political effects of grievance handling by stewards in a local union. Journal of Labor Research, 15 (1), 33-51.

Morris, M.G & Venkatesh, V. (2000, Summer). Age differences in technology adoption decisions: implications for a changing work force. Personnel Psychology, 53 (2), 375.

Smith, M.H. (2002, April). Grievance procedures resolve conflict. Nursing Management, 33 (4), 13.

## APPENDIX A

To: All Union Officials Who Partake in Grievance Procedures

From: Justin Cecil

Subject: Research Project Questionnaire

Enclosed is a short questionnaire for you to fill out at your convenience. Your participation is strictly voluntary. This questionnaire is for academic research and is a requirement for the completion of my Bachelor's of Science degree in Organizational Management. You were picked for this research because you possess a complete knowledge of grievance procedures.

At the top you will see two short grievance tracking system examples (A & B). Please read both examples and then fill out the questionnaire according to the directions. Your answers will remain completely anonymous and your name is not required to complete the questionnaire. Please return this questionnaire to the designated envelope. If you would rather submit it yourself, please send the questionnaire to Justin Cecil at the address or fax listed below. Please submit this questionnaire by February 17, 2003. Thank you for your participation!

Justin Cecil  
156 Echo Valley Dr.  
Cookeville, TN 38501  
Or fax: 931-520-0894

If you have any questions or concerns please call me at 931-520-0894.

Thank you,

Justin Cecil

APPENDIX B

**Grievance Tracking System A**

The member files a grievance with their union. The union official then goes through the grievance steps up to arbitration. In the meantime, all of the documentation is completed and filed by pen and paper. When the union official wants to reference the grievance, he or she must find the appropriate file(s) in the appropriate filing cabinet and folder to view the grievance documentation.

**Grievance Tracking System B**

The member files a grievance with their union. The union official then goes through the grievance steps up to arbitration. In the meantime, all of the documentation is centrally filed and stored in a secure online database. When the union official wants to reference the grievance, he or she must logon to the union local's secure Internet database and type the appropriate search criteria to view the grievance documentation.

Please answer by placing a checkmark in the box for the best answer or filling in the blank where applicable.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Grievance tracking system <b>A</b> described above seems efficient.					
Grievance tracking system <b>B</b> described above seems efficient.					
I prefer grievance tracking system <b>A</b> .					
I prefer grievance tracking system <b>B</b> .					
I prefer electronic databases to paper-based filing cabinets.					
I prefer paper-based filing cabinets to electronic databases.					

How many hours per month do you spend dealing with grievance issues?      less than 1 hour | 1-4 hours | 5-9 hours | 10 + hours

Level of education (years of school or degree) \_\_\_\_\_

Gender    Male \_\_\_\_\_    Female \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

To: Administrator of Grievance Procedure Questionnaire  
From: Justin Cecil  
Subject: Directions for Administering Research Project Questionnaire

Enclosed is a group of questionnaires for you to distribute to your business agents and other union officials. Please do not take the questionnaire yourself. This questionnaire is for academic research and is a requirement for the completion of my Bachelor's of Science degree in Organizational Management. You were picked to administer this questionnaire because you have spoken to the researcher and have agreed to accept and administer this questionnaire packet. Participation is voluntary.

Enclosed you will see a stamped envelope, addressed to the researcher. Please ask the participants to place their questionnaire into the envelope when completed. The participants also have the option to mail or fax the questionnaire back to the researcher if they do not wish to place it in the provided envelope. Also, enclosed is an Ethics in Research Agreement, which says Appendix B at the top. Please sign and date the agreement at the bottom. The agreement simply ensures that the researcher is complying with all regulations by submitting this questionnaire packet. Your name and union name will remain completely anonymous throughout the body of this research.

When you have collected all of the questionnaires in the provided envelope, please submit them to the researcher along with your Ethics in Research Agreement. Please submit this research questionnaire packet by February 17, 2003. Thank you for your participation!

Justin Cecil  
156 Echo Valley Dr.  
Cookeville, TN 38501  
Fax: 931-520-0894

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at 931-520-0894.

Thank you,  
Justin Cecil