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# NEWS

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## Book Review ~ **Workplaces That Work**

***Workplaces That Work***: A Guide to Conflict Management in Union and Non-Union Work Environments (Aurora: Canada Law Book, 2006)

By Lisa Tenace

Author Blaine Donais has devoted much of his career to being a labour lawyer, and working with public and private sector professionals. He is an expert in both the practice and theory of assisted labour/management negotiation, mediation, mediation-arbitration and facilitation. He trains and teaches HR professionals, labour leaders and others in human rights, labour and employment law, collective bargaining, and conflict resolution. He has researched and written a great deal on the topic of “workplace fairness”. *Workplaces That Work* is the author’s first book and, with a wealth of opportunity to explore real-life workplaces, Donais is a credible advocate for a balanced approach to workplace conflict management. Of note, he is also president and founder of the Workplace Fairness Institute, which provides resources and consulting services related to workplace conflict management.

Taking a cue from the well-known tome by authors Constantino and Merchant on “client-centered process design”, Donais revisits the design process through a comprehensive exploration of the whole workplace at critical levels, and sets out a formula that any workplace can use to review and change its conflict management system. However, ***Workplaces That Work*** is readable and accessible. The author provides many conflict management options that can be used in most workplaces, while also meeting fairness objectives. Tools and checklists guide readers with little or no systems design experience to formulate a picture of the conflict management system in their workplace.

Donais uses the term “fairness” to describe workplace conflict management systems to distinguish them from traditional definitions, asserting that the real goal of conflict management is to instill fairness into conflict resolution – that the

real cause of conflict is the perceived unfairness in systems and results, and that all those involved in system design must reach beyond traditional notions of conflict management to create a workplace that works.

The author espouses a theory of fairness in workplace conflict management systems that requires analysis of 21 measures and 4 quotients. By rating the strength of each measure and developing a score for each quotient, readers will come to understand where the challenges to fairness can be found in their organizations' systems. The author's provocative Donais Fairness Theory – that workplace fairness can be measured and achieved in workplace conflict management systems – challenges traditional notions of conflict management system design which opine that the point of system design is workplace efficiency. The measures, or focuses, run deep into the system. Donais encourages readers to look at the system through each of the 21 focuses, providing a fresh perspective each time a new focus is considered.

The book offers a thorough analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of union and non-union workplace conflict management systems. The author provides advice on how to differentiate between union and non-union workplaces. ***Workplaces That Work*** is a valuable tool for HR professionals, union representatives, and all stakeholders in the analysis or design of a conflict system. It furthers our understanding of the underlying causes of organizational conflict and its resolution, and the necessary integration of the fairness imperative.

Order the book at [www.workplacesthatwork.ca](http://www.workplacesthatwork.ca).

Also check out the Workplace Fairness Institute at [www.workplacefairness.ca](http://www.workplacefairness.ca).

And be sure to visit the workplace fairness blog at [www.workplacesthatwork.blogspot.com](http://www.workplacesthatwork.blogspot.com) ◀

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