

GUILD LEADER

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A.H. Belo seeks pay cuts; We need your feedback

Guild members have taken a lot of beatings from the A.H Belo Company over the past few months. We've seen about a hundred of our friends lose their jobs. The company protected its managers while showing the door to the people who sell the ads, take the pictures, write and edit the stories – the people who make the paper and website worth paying for.

A.H Belo is trying to cheat us out of our pension supplement payments. And now, they want us to take a 2.5 percent pay cut.

This time it's different. This time, if you want, you get to say no.

We have a contract that says we get a raise. We got it. If they want to take it away, we have to agree to give it to them. They have to negotiate.

The Executive Board will create a committee to meet with the company. That committee will demand something in return for any pay cuts, and will get the best deal the company is willing to offer.

Then we'll bring it to you for a vote. You can take it or leave it. If members reject the offer, the company cannot legally cut our pay. This will be your decision. Not the company's. Not the leadership's.

But we need your help. Members of the board have been approached with suggestions on things that might, if offered, make you consider going along with a pay cut. The most frequent one is a guarantee of no layoffs for some period of time. Others have pointed out that the employees of the New York Times were offered extra vacation weeks to accept a pay cut there. And still others have pointed out a few more personal days than the three being offered would pretty much equal 2.5 percent.

We need your guidance, and we need it quickly. We have had successful negotiations in the past mainly because so many Guild members filled out

questionnaires, telling us what you thought was important. That guided us on where to hold our ground and where to bend a little. We need that insight again.

On the back of this sheet is a survey. **Please fill it out and return it to a member of the executive board or to the Guild office at 270 Westminster St. by Wednesday April 8. (Fax: 421-9495)**

As angry as we are, this is also business. We may have an opportunity here to get some things we value. If there is a deal worth a pay cut, we will try to get it

There is a lot of nerve in the company's proposal. The letter is signed by a "colleague" who got a 140 percent raise last year and is now so graciously cutting it by 20 percent.

When they wanted to pay their executives bonuses in December, the lament was that a contract was a contract, despite the economic conditions, it had to be respected. Yet when our contract called for the pension supplement payments, suddenly delay and flexibility, not sanctity of contract, were the words of the day.

We are told this is the most challenging time in our industry's history, calling on sacrifices from all. And yet the A.H. Belo is demanding the lion's share of sacrifices from us. In February, we were told that the next layoffs would be across the board, that no part of the company would be spared, and no department or job category required to shoulder too big a share of the load. But when the dust cleared after March 6, the newsroom ratio of laid-off Guild members to non-union was 18-to-1.

We've given enough. Any further sacrifice will require something in return. Tell us what you'd like that to be.

MEMBER SURVEY

Please return this form to the Guild office at 270 Westminster St. by Wednesday April 8.
(Fax: 421-9495)

I would be willing to accept a 2.5 percent pay cut if the company provided the following in return. *Please check ONE OR TWO items from the list below:*

_____ Additional personal days equal to the value of the pay cut.

_____ Restoration of pay within 12 months.

_____ An additional week of vacation for all Guild members.

_____ A guarantee of no further layoffs during 2009.

_____ A guarantee of no further layoffs for the duration of the contract.

_____ An agreement not to cut the pay of those whose pay was already reduced by bumping.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

_____ Other (please specify) _____

_____ There are no circumstances under which I would accept a pay cut.

Comments:

Please fill it out this form and return it to the Guild office at 270 Westminster St. by Wednesday April 8. (Fax: 421-9495)