What is interest-based consultation?
Standard workplace consultation often involves one party starting discussions with the other about business changes that will affect them. It can be about things like organisation size and structure, work locations, new technology, training or other processes. Usually the employer tells those likely to be affected about planned change. If consultation is genuine, they will consider any input shared before changes are made.

Interest-based consultation (IBC) is a strong version of standard consultation. It usually starts earlier than standard consultation would. IBC often covers the problem, issue or opportunity before forming a proposal, and the merits and effects of the proposal. The parties are likely to share more information. Trust and respect are key elements. IBC allows the parties to get better input which helps make better decisions.

The process:

- will often include some joint research
- will involve joint problem solving, including interest-based problem solving, as the issue is considered, and
- must be adaptable so it suits the issue that the consultation is about.

The aim of interest-based consultation is to reach agreement. However, that isn’t always possible. IBC is not co-determination. The initiator (usually the employer) can proceed even in the face of opposition if the parties don’t agree.

Why interest-based consultation?
When decisions are imposed on employees it can result in resistance and frustration. It’s good for people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives, including at work.

Employees know their workplaces and engaging with them enables real and sustained improvements. Giving employees a chance to contribute can also lead to better decision making and implementation of change.

Do you want to try interest-based consultation?
All parties need to agree to develop new workplace relationships. Parties will need to prepare by reviewing the current relationship and agree to reset it. Then they can prepare how they will go forward.

- Find out more on our New Approaches webpage.
- Read the companion guide, A guide to interest-based consultation.
- Have parties undertake joint training in interest-based consultation.

How can the Commission help?
The Commission can assist with its training and facilitation services, customised to the needs of each set of parties. For further information email newapproaches@fwc.gov.au.

Apply for our help by lodging a Form F79.