

Counter town hall meeting notes

Hello and welcome

The Solidaire Informatique BM section was created recently, in early July 2024. It became official just before the announcement of the new office policy.

The CSE is our work council. In France, it's mandatory to have one for companies of a certain size. Members are elected, and are responsible to discuss with BM's direction about changes impacting our benefits and working conditions.

The new office policy from the CSE point of view

It's required by law to consult the CSE. They were contacted end of July about a plan for the new policy. A lot of members were on holidays, or with limited time to spend to give their opinions. The CSE asked to postpone the meeting to end of August, it was refused by the direction. The CSE refused to signed the agenda as a sign of protest.

The direction presented the plan for the new policy, suggesting that the lack of office presence would be linked to the company financial performance, and linked remote work to lack of creativity.

The CSE expressed 30 days later that they are against the new policy, with detailed arguments. They were presented with a new version. The direction asked for their opinion in 7 days instead of the legal 30 days. Everyone in the CSE voted against. An ultimatum was made by BM: either answer in seven days or the new policy will be enforced at the beginning of November. The short notice were stressful, some members had to work on their answer during their holidays. And in the end the direction didn't listen to their opinion.

The CSE asked for the data to justify the decision, which they didn't get. The CSE also asked for the opening of proper negotiations on a new collective agreements. The direction refused, preferring a unilateral decision, as the law allows.

In the agreement signed before COVID, for BOT members there were already 2 days of remote work allowed, but Monday wasn't mandatory so we're not sure it's legal to make this change. We asked for a delay, it was refused.

Q&As

Question: Do you know why the new policy was put in place, or have any assumptions?

Answer: This is what Thibaud wants, the direction is clear about it.

Question: Why weren't the negotiations public?

Answer: The minutes have to be redacted and signed by everyone before being published. Also legally they can't reveal the non public discussions.

Question: Would a union have more power than the CSE?

Answer: We are a union chapter without any elected representative. We can do meetings and organize ourselves but that's it. In 2 years there will be a new CSE election, they happen in 2 rounds. The first round is for union members, the second round is for everybody else. So far we didn't have union members at BM, so there isn't

any union member in the CSE. There probably will be next time, but for now we don't have more power.

Question: Do you think the new policy is to make people resign, and avoid firing them to reduce costs?

Answer: We have seen this happening in other companies, it might be, we hope it's not the case at BM, and we didn't see any sign indicating that this is the case, but we can't say for sure.

Question: Can we do a strike?

Answer: We have the right to do so, this is one of the things we can discuss.

Question: Would having a union member in the CSE make a difference?

Answer: Yes, it's a bit complicated but the for some decisions, the CSE opinion would not be consultative anymore. For example during the PSE, the direction and the CSE should have reached a deal for the lay-off to happen.

Intervention from Marc from Ubisoft

At Ubisoft, they have been working from home since 2020. In 2022, they started to come back to the office. It was based on employees decisions if they wanted to come back, and how often. Then the direction started enforcing one mandatory day of the week. Last month they received the new policy to enforce 3 days in the office, without any argument. Union reps decided to organize a strike.

They made a leaflet to inform people about the strike, and created an online form to get personal info and ask questions to employees. On the leaflet, they had a QR code that redirected to the form.

The law also allows us to organize meetings at the office. During these meetings, they distributed leaflets and informed people about the strike. One tweet led to several calls from journalists so public communication was easy. Journalists say that the return to the office policy is a trendy topic at the moment so this could be useful for us.

In the form, they asked several questions:

- Are you ready to strike? 75% of the respondents answered yes,
- If you are forced to come back to the office, will you resign? 50% of the respondents answered yes. These are clear data points for the direction and useful in the negotiations.

Last time they did a strike, 1/3 of the employees in Marc's building joined. The strike starts next Monday, for 3 days. Marc believes it will be massive. They found it nice to match the 3 days back to the office with 3 days of strike.

The negotiations with the direction started yesterday.

Q&As

Question: How can we give leaflets at BM?

Answer: It's legal at the beginning and the end of the day, BM can't prevent us to do so.

Question: Did you consider disobedience as well?

Answer: It's illegal, you can be fired. Striking is a safer action.

Question: How do you reach remote people?

Answer: We used twitter, our Solidaire Informatique account is quite followed by employees. Then people subscribed to the mailing list.

Next steps and call to actions

- Use the `:derelict_house_building:` slack emoji with the slogan "Let my people go surfing", which is a quote from Patagonia CEO to defend remote and flexible work
- Sign and share the open letter: <https://backmarket.solidairesinformatique.org/en/news/2024-10-13/open-letter/>
- Join the mailing list so that we can organize: <https://backmarket.solidairesinformatique.org/en/contact/>
- We are considering actions like walking outs on Monday briefs or striking (a strike would be legal in France, outside of France you need to check your local laws)
- Join us at Solidaire Informatique!