

SHIFT CHANGE

A FILM BY MARK DWORKIN & MELISSA YOUNG

At a time when many are disillusioned with big banks, big business, and growing inequity in our country, employee ownership offers a real solution for workers and communities. SHIFT CHANGE visits the 50-year-old network of cooperative businesses in Mondragón, Spain, and thriving examples of such businesses in the U.S. The film shares on-the-ground experiences, lessons, and observations from the worker-owners on the front lines of the new economy.

CASE STUDIES

In addition to SHIFT CHANGE, this DVD contains nine individual case studies. Most of these case studies are also found in the main feature, but each individual case study is a bit longer and more complete. In addition, there are three case studies not included in SHIFT CHANGE for lack of time – Austin Polytech, CHCA, and the EBO Group.

Case studies also represented in SHIFT CHANGE

LA EMPRESA ES NUESTRA – This case study compiles all The Mondragón sections of SHIFT CHANGE in one piece rather than being interspersed with worker cooperative examples from the U.S. In addition, the Mondragón case study includes two additional stories that were cut from SHIFT CHANGE for the sake of time.

EVERGREEN COOPERATIVES - Cleveland, Ohio is working to revitalize this rust belt city by developing new businesses rooted in low income neighborhoods, each owned and operated by its workers. A partnership among city government and local institutions, with assistance from the Democracy Collaborative, Evergreen seeks to fight poverty with family-wage, sustainable jobs for local residents, jobs that will never be move away.

ARIZMENDI BAKERIES - a network of six cooperative bakeries in the San Francisco Bay area, inspired by the Mondragón cooperatives in the Basque Country of Spain. The worker owners in each Arizmendi bakery earn the same wage, and each has one vote in decisions that affect their company. These independent businesses work together to begin new worker-owned bakeries, providing opportunities for others to work in democratic enterprises.

WAGES - WAGES is a non-profit agency in Oakland, California which helps immigrant women to start green house-cleaning cooperatives. There are now five independent companies owned and operated by the women themselves.

MADISON - Madison, Wisconsin is home to some of the oldest worker cooperatives in the U.S. Examples include: Isthmus Engineering, a designer and manufacturer of high-tech machine tools; Community Pharmacy; and Union Cab, whose drivers and dispatchers have owned and run their own business for thirty years. Rebecca Kemble, a Union Cab driver who helps guide us through the city, is also president of the U.S. Federation of Worker Coops.

EQUAL EXCHANGE - Equal Exchange is a worker cooperative founded to help cooperatives of small coffee producers get a fair price for their crop. Begun in the mid-1980s, Equal Exchange now provides stable and rewarding jobs for its hundred plus worker-owners. Over the years Equal Exchange has added more fair traded products and has become an inspiration to newer, aspiring worker cooperatives.

Case studies that are not found in SHIFT CHANGE.

CHCA - The eighteen hundred worker-owners of Cooperative Home Care Associates provide essential in-home support to thousands of disabled clients in the New York City area. Home care workers are often immigrant women, traditionally poorly paid and disrespected, so CHCA helps these workers get decent wages, a voice in their workplace and the chance to develop leadership skills. CHCA providers are also members of the Service Employees International Union - Local 1199.


AUSTIN - Austin Polytechnical Academy in Chicago is part of an ambitious effort, modeled on the history of the Mondragón Cooperatives, to use a school as part of a strategy for community economic development. It was founded by the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council, a collaboration of business, labor, city, community, and civic representatives to restore Chicago as a world center for advanced manufacturing.

EBO GROUP - Not all employee-owned companies are cooperatives. The great majority are ESOPs [employee stock ownership plan] where day-to-day experience on the job may not be much different than in traditional corporations. Yet studies show that ESOPs tend to be more innovative, efficient, and profitable when they encourage employees to put forward their ideas for how to make the company better. EBO Group is committed to maintaining manufacturing in Ohio and is a leading example of an ESOP that encourages and benefits from such a participatory work environment.

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