



Oct. 31, 2007

Uncle Dennis wants your cell phone!



Tribune wants to take ownership of your cell phone. It announced a new cell phone policy recently. Since such policies can't be imposed unilaterally on union members, the Guild requested bargaining, and those discussions are ongoing.

Until now, many of us who use our personal cell phones for work have been getting monthly reimbursements to offset the cost. Generally, these have been \$25 a month in the newsroom, and \$50 a month in advertising, where cell phone use is heavier. (Some people who need to be in touch all the time, such as photographers, have been getting company-provided phones for some time.)

Tribune has started rolling out a new policy in advertising. There hasn't been a launch yet in the newsroom, but it's coming. Here's how Tribune wants the new policy to work: No more monthly stipends. Those who are getting them now would have two options:

Either:

-- Get a company cell phone to use for business. You generally couldn't use it for personal calls, so you'd presumably become a carrier of two cell phones: personal and business.

Or:

-- Turn in your personal cell phone, and Tribune will assume ownership of it. You could still use it for business, but not generally for personal use. You wouldn't have to carry around two phones (or give new numbers to all your advertising clients or news sources), but you wouldn't have a cell phone of your own for personal calls.

Although this policy is designed to save money, the Guild believes it will actually cost Tribune more, because it will be picking up the full cost of mobile phone service for people for that now get only partial reimbursement.

The Guild has proposed a third option: Let people continue to get partial reimbursement if that's what they want.

If you have any thoughts about this, let the Guild bargaining team members know. They're Angie Kuhl in advertising and Tanika White in the newsroom, as well as Tiffany Harris from the Guild staff.

While the bargaining is going on,, you can continue to do what you've been doing: use your personal cell phone for business and collect a monthly reimbursement.

-- Bill Salganik, local president