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Switzerland

# **FNAC Switzerland: smile, you'll get a pay rise!**

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**At the end of March, the Swiss news site Watson reported on the controversial wage system at multimedia retailer FNAC. The latter openly admits that from now on, a part of its staff's wages would be determined directly by customer satisfaction!**

After moving to Geneva and then Lausanne two decades ago, the FNAC group, which now has an annual turnover of 8 billion Swiss francs, is expanding into German-speaking Switzerland and Ticino, thanks in particular to the partnership with Manor – among the three largest groups in the Swiss retail trade.

## **Wages tested by customer satisfaction**

What exactly is it all about? According to information provided by the CEO of FNAC Switzerland in a press interview, the wage structure of workers is made up as follows: a fixed monthly wage supplemented by a so-called variable wage. The fact that part of the wage varies is undoubtedly questionable, but it is not in absolute terms an unknown. That is, similar remuneration models exist in Switzerland, with a basic wage that is supplemented, for example, by the provision on turnover.

However, the evaluation made by the customers does not constitute, as such, a wage (which does not mean that it does not manifest itself in the evaluation of worker performance. Nonetheless, for FNAC CEO Cédric Stassi, customer satisfaction is a decisive part of his staff's wages, which depend "on the one hand, of course, on sales, but on the other hand, especially on the satisfaction of our customers and members. After each purchase, the customer receives a survey with a rating scale of 1 to 10: 1 to 6 is not satisfactory, 7 to 8 is average-to-good and 9 to 10 is very good."

If the example of FNAC is striking in that it generates a generalized pressure on workers, it perfectly reflects the management practices that became dominant in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then enterprises have been pushed to embrace ultra-neoliberal imperatives, the very form of work organization had to be adapted according to the new rules of company management. The latter are obviously not without impact on the direct conditions of workers who have since been under constant evaluation and in competition with their peers.

## **360° evaluation: the company as panopticon**

If previously, working conditions were physically very harsh in terms of assembly lines, the pressure of the rhythms or the repetitiveness of movements, today workers are treated and evaluated as isolated elements. This is reflected in particular with the implementation of completely individualized and differentiated specifications and objectives within the same work team.

As a result, training and socio-professional background are no longer the only criteria for remuneration; what becomes decisive are qualities such as risk-taking, initiative, creativity, or and management of stressful situations.

Beyond their destabilizing nature, such changes weaken the possibility of a collective organization of employees. Not only does modern management contribute to permanent job insecurity, but it also makes it very difficult to build a

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working community, with workplaces fragmented and employees atomized. FNAC's new wage system fits perfectly into this model where the "soft skills" of workers (i.e., their friendliness, equable mood) are valued more than their knowledge. In addition, it contributes to what is known as "360°" evaluation, with regard to permanent evaluation by their managers, their peers and now by clients.

The new forms of work organization imply new forms of suffering at work, already establishing openings for the intervention of the trade union movement and concerns for our social camp.

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Translated from [Solidarités](#)

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