

SHIFT CHANGE

A NEW FILM BY
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SHIFT CHANGE FACT SHEET

What are employee owned businesses?

These are companies where employees have some type of ownership stake which may be stock, profit sharing, or something else. There are over 19,000 companies that collectively employ over 25 million workers that fit under a broad definition of employee ownership. (Figures from "*The Alternative American Dream: Inclusive Capitalism.*")

Chris Mackin is interviewed by Paul Solman, Economics desk of **PBS NewsHour**, August 2013.

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/businessdesk/2013/08/the-alternative-american-dream.html>

What is a worker cooperative?

It is estimated that almost one third of the U.S. population is a member of some kind of coop – a credit union, rural electric, producer, housing, etc. Most familiar to many is a *consumer* cooperative like a food coop. A *worker* cooperative is a business in which employees both own and manage the business; one person, one vote, and no outside investors can make business decisions. In the U.S. there are several hundred of these cooperatives that operate in many sectors, and internally they vary in how they are organized.

Why is this program important for the general public?

- Deep concern about decent jobs, particularly among marginalized, immigrant, and young people
- There has been a lot of media attention on problems with the economy, but this program looks at one of the types of business that could help lead to a more sustainable economy
- Increasing interest in the local – supporting local food producers and businesses

Resources for those interested in finding out more

- U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives <http://www.usworker.coop/>
- National Cooperative Business Association <https://ncba.coop/>

Some of the diverse enterprises featured in *Shift Change*:

- **Arizmendi Bakeries**, Bay Area, CA. *Six employee owned and managed bakeries work together to provide the financial and legal services they need, and to incubate new bakeries.*
- **Evergreen Cooperatives**, Cleveland, OH. *Local hospitals, educational institutions and city government are key to these cooperatives of once marginalized workers, that provide green commercial laundry services, install solar energy systems, and grow vegetables in vast urban greenhouses. This community development model is*

being taken up by other cities: Richmond, CA; Atlanta, GA; Washington, D.C.; Reading, PA; and Amarillo, TX.

- **Isthmus Engineering and Manufacturing**, Madison, WI. *A 30-year-old workers' cooperative designs and builds custom automation equipment for high tech industries.*
- **WAGES**, Oakland CA. *This non-profit organization helps train primarily immigrant women to run green house cleaning cooperatives around the Bay Area.*
- **Equal Exchange**, Boston, MA. *The world's largest worker-owned and managed roaster of fair trade coffee also imports fair trade chocolate, tea, and bananas from small farm cooperatives in the global South.*
- **Mondragón Cooperatives**, Basque Country of Spain. *Over the past 50 years, these cooperatives have transformed a depressed area of Spain into one of the most productive in Europe with a high standard of living and an egalitarian way of life. These worker-owned coops produce bicycles, appliances, and sophisticated industrial machinery, employing 85,000 people. The Mondragon Corporation is the 10th largest business group in Spain.*