

The discipline and discharge of employees

[Education](#), [Discipline](#)



Discipline, in the context of a work place, can be defined as the act of implementing acceptable behavior in wayward employees to create a comfortable working environment. Discharge of an employee means to dismiss him or her from their job. The discipline and discharge of employees tends to be a thorny issue at any work place. No person really wants to be told they are wrong or that they are lagging behind in their work, that they do not show team spirit or are rude to colleagues and disrespectful to those in charge.

Just as there are guidelines on how to handle other issues that may arise at work, there are also guidelines on how to discipline and discharge employees. Though they are generally tenacious duties to carry out, with the right approach, it can be done without leaving one feeling like the offender. Approaches to discipline at the work place There are four major areas which cost employers the most when it comes to discipline. These are namely, absenteeism, wasted time, substance abuse and pilfering (Levine, 1998). The objectives of discipline are basically accepted as good.

They are accepted as being vital to the work place. Discipline is necessary to promote the health and safety of all employees, to protect company property, to ensure steady production and to create a pleasant working environment. The controversy comes about in how should these disciplinary measures be taken (Levine, 1998). There are two approaches that can be taken toward employee discipline, that of being lax on the rules without clearly outlining what they are to create a freer atmosphere or that of letting employees know all the rules and the penalties for violating them.

Though management can argue that outlining all the dos and don'ts will make their employees feel as though they are children who cannot tell between right and wrong, it has been shown that taking the lax approach is detrimental to a good working environment. In the case of a lawsuit, the employer stands to lose if there are no formal and written documents outlining the discipline code expected by the employer. Again, the relaxing of rules gives a green light to mutinous employees who will incite a good number into a sort of rebellion.

And again, the lack of a written statement that covers various violations and accorded remonstrations may make employees think that they might misbehave without being punished (Levine, 1998). When it comes to employee discipline, management can borrow a leaf from educators who believe that there should be a middle ground. This means that discipline should not be taken to extremes with rigid unbendable rules and constant monitoring. The message that should be passed across to the employees is that there is a limit to their expression and behavior which affects not only themselves but the rest of their team.

They must also be made to understand that their bad behavior brings down the whole team and there are consequences for misbehavior which they must face (Levine, 1998). The written rules should not take on a confrontational tone. Rather, they should sound like they solely have the employee's welfare in mind. On the other hand the rules should not sound apologetic. The wording should not bring about any ambiguity. Let the statements be simple and to the point with the offense and punishments

clearly outlined (Levine, 1998). Though there may be general rules to offenses, it is best to treat each case of misconduct as an isolated incident.

Management has to consider under what circumstance the rules were broken. For example if an employee is an hour late for work an investigation has to be done into his late coming to see if it is justifiable. The employer has to consider also the employee's record of time keeping thus determining what disciplinary action to take (Levine, 1998). It is paramount that the punishment stipulated for any misdeed should be to make the employee see his mistake. Never should a punishment be given for the sake of punishing. An employee should be able to learn from his error as the employer stresses on the mistake, not the person who has made it.

The punishment should also be equitable to the offense being neither too grievous nor too light (Levine, 1998). Finally there should be no favoritism shown by the employer when it comes to meting out punishment. All employees should be punished accordingly when on the wrong. If there are signs that some employees are getting off too lightly, there will be resentments held amongst the workers. This will not create amiable working environment (Levine, 1998). What is thornier than disciplining an employee is discharging one. There is just no easy way of informing a person that his employment is being terminated.

The ex-employee may feel aggravated to the point of filing a lawsuit. How does an employer minimize the probability of being taken to court or in the event of that happening and prove he fired his employee on perfectly legal grounds? There are cases where employers discharge employees on personal reasons, discriminating on grounds of sex, religion, color, race, age

or physical disability. If an employee is fired on these grounds, he has the right to sue, as long as he can convince the court that he was wronged. On the other hand, an employer can fire his employee with due process and respect.

The correct way of going about this is to inform the employee of what is expected of him, in detail. If he shows deficiencies, inform him in detail how he can upgrade his performance. The employer should give a verbal warning for misconduct followed by a written warning, a suspension and finally discharge. At no point should the employer show contempt toward his employee. The employer should also keep detailed records of the employer's misdemeanor in the case that a lawsuit is filed by the employee. With the proper guidelines and attitude, an employer can instill the required discipline in his workers without raising aggression or hostility.

It is important that the employer lead by example to encourage his employees to follow suit. With discipline, there is a relaxed working atmosphere and greater output seen. Disciplinary policies and procedures We have already what disciplinary problems are that may be experienced at work and divided them into four broad categories: absenteeism, time wasting, substance abuse and pilfering. Though the employee is free to choose the mode of punishment, there are general policies that are used to outline these punishments.

It is the intent of any disciplinary policy to anticipate possible acts of violation of company policy and to encourage employees to change their behavior before it becomes chronic or intolerable leaving discharge as the only viable option (Normand, 2006). The first thing that management must

ensure in implementing policies is to keep up consistency. Employees do complain of their bosses as being 'unpredictable' and 'capricious'. This may be because of having no formally written out rules and regulations outlining the punishments for wrongdoing.

It may also be because of leniency or favoritism on the employer's part. Disciplinary policies should be adhered to without regard to friendship or family ties. It should be noted that the punishment policies include all personnel all the way up to management (Normand, 2006). There are stages in notifying an employee of his misconduct depending on the grievousness of the offense and the number of times the offense has been repeated in the past by said employee. The first can be done verbally then in written form followed by a suspension if need be and ultimately a dismissal.

For small offenses, the employee can give up to four repeats with a graver consequence for each repeat. On the other hand, an offense as grave as possession of or working under the influence of controlled substances could and should be met with an outright discharge (Normand, 2006). Since in the present day, employee lawsuits seem to be the norm, it is imperative that written warnings given to the employee and duly signed by the offended and the offensive party be kept as part of the employee's record for future reference (Normand, 2006).

In summary, when implementing disciplinary policies at work, make it clear to the employee what his mistake is, give appropriate punishment in accordance with the misdemeanor. Punishment must be administered within an acceptable time limit, ensuring that it is not delayed as its impact will be significantly reduced. Importantly above all, keep written records in case a

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dismissal boomerangs in the company's face. Managerial ethics in employee relations Ethics is the learning process of differentiating between right and wrong and making the decision to do the right thing.

But is this case really applicable at the work place? Are there not a lot of grey areas where the line between right and wrong is too thin? Business ethics generally can mean to know what is right or wrong in the workplace and choosing to do what is right, this being in regard of products, services and relationships. The role of business ethics is to help managers know how to react when ethical issues arise (McNamara, 1997). Managing ethics has several benefits for both the employee and the employer and employee in the work place.

In times of rapid change like the times we live in, business ethics act as a moral compass for management, making it easier to make right and moral decisions. Ethics also play a role in cultivating strong teamwork and discipline by aligning employee discipline towards those behaviors that their employers want. By having open dialogue with employees that the management wants, feelings of integrity and trust are built, features that are essential in building a strong team spirit (McNamara, 1997). Ethics policies also help employees grow as individuals.

It helps them face reality, both good and bad, about themselves and their work place. It gives them the confidence to admit their mistakes and shortcomings (McNamara, 1997). The ethics programs help identify values that management wants to uphold, then aligns the employees behavior to uphold these values. Indirectly, this leads to higher quality assurance in the products and services delivered by the company, because the employees will

pay greater attention to detail. The employees will also put greater value on the client satisfaction and work harder to achieve this (McNamara, 1997).

Having an ethics program goes a long way in improving a company's public image. Potential clients will feel reassured on learning that they will not only get value products but that their interactions with the employees of that company will be conducted with regard to their human dignity and respect for their needs. The word 'ethical' inspires in one the confidence to trust that the person they are dealing with is not out to get the better of them. It would work the same way for a company (McNamara, 1997). Having strong workplace ethics has several benefits as has been outlined.

Nut how does one an ethical working environment? One, there is the need to recognize that inculcating ethical behavior in employees is a process that takes time. It is said that old habits die hard, thus the employer should not expect employees to 'unlearn' bad behaviors overnight. It takes time and patience to get employees to abide by a certain code of ethics (McNamara, 1997). The ethical approach taken by a company should be practical, workable and beneficial. The expected change in behavior should bring a corresponding increase in productivity.

The management should work towards integrating ethics management with other management practices so as to show employees that it is given equal weight. This also allows for management to allow their employees to know what ethical behavior is expected of them (McNamara, 1997). Forgiveness within a company fosters an amenable environment. To err is human and where there are several people involved, there will be mistakes made. It is important that mistakes be recognized as such and be let go off, <https://assignbuster.com/the-discipline-and-discharge-of-employees/>

not bringing them up to the surface whenever there is a disagreement (McNamara, 1997).

If a company is to succeed in instilling ethics in its employees, it must develop an appropriate code of conduct. There are essentials that are applied in outlining the code of conduct to be used by the company as guiding its ethical principles (McNamara, 1997). The management has to identify the key behaviors that it wants its employees to develop and then incorporate in the code of conduct. When writing out a code of conduct, use wording that stipulates that the code is to apply to all employees (McNamara, 1997).

Before implementing the code of conduct, management should obtain opinions from key people on its workability and its practicality. Management has to distribute written copies of the code to employees so that they do not give the excuse of ignorance if they are caught in acts that go against recommended behavior (McNamara, 1997). In conclusion, cultivating a healthy working environment is of the greatest essence but it is a challenging task that is full of pitfalls. The employer is charged with this multi faceted task that with the proper guidelines he or she can achieve with minimum damage.