

# Grievance handling procedure



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Principles suggested by Indian Institute of Personal Management for addressing the grievance are as follows:

- A grievance should be dealt within the limits of the first line manager.
- The appellate authority should be made clear to the employee so that if he cannot get satisfaction from his immediate manager, he should know the next step.
- The grievance should be dealt with speedily

In establishing a grievance procedure, if the grievance is against an instruction given by a superior in the interest of order and discipline, the instructions must be carried out first and then only employee can register his protest. There should be no recourse to official machinery of conciliation unless the procedure has been carried out without reaching any solution.

Grievance machinery is usually thought of in connection with a company that deals with a labor union. Though the union must be given some credit for stimulating the installation of such procedures, all companies, whether unionized or not, should have established and known methods of processing grievances

To establish new grievance machinery, workers in each department and each shift shall select, from among themselves and for a period of not less than one year at a time, departmental representatives and forward the list of person so selected to the management.

Where the unions in the undertaking are in a position to submit an agreed list of names, resource to election may not be necessary. Nor will this be necessary when a works committee is functioning satisfactorily, for the works committee's member of a particular consistency shall act as the departmental representatives.

The details of the grievance procedure vary from industry to industry and from trade union to trade union because of the variations in the size of organizations, trade union strength, the management philosophy, the company traditions, industrial practices and in the cost factor. An important aspect of the grievance machinery is the reassurance given to an individual employee by the mere fact that there is a mechanism available to him which will consider his grievance in a dispassionate and detailed manner, and that his point of view will be heard and given due consideration.

An employee's conception of his problems may be quite biased. Venting his grievance and being heard gives him a feeling of being cared for. He gets it "off his chest", so to say, and it does a lot of good for his morale as revealed by the famous Hawthorne studies. Initial step The greatest opportunity for the settlement of a complaint or grievance lies in the initial step of the procedure.

If there is no formal procedure and the firm announces an open door policy, then it is possible that the manager may get bypassed by the worker who would take his grievance directly to the higher level of management. But such bypassing not merely undermines the manager's authority, who loses face, but also creates an atmosphere of win-or-lose in which both the worker and manager will try to prove the other wrong.

As the figure indicates the next step on the management side of the procedure is to submit the dispute to middle management. Involving the manager's, middle and senior line managers in the grievance process helps in two ways. Initially, the social barriers between the various categories are,

to some extent, broken by personal contact and mutual understanding. Secondly, the problem solving approach integrates the various levels in the organization into a team to jointly overcome the problem which concerns not only the worker but the manager as well.

However it is important to ensure that the line management assumes prime responsibility for the settlement of a grievance. In many organizations, the Personnel department is injected into the procedure as a decision making power. On the union side, intermediate levels are represented by higher personnel in the union hierarchy. In most of the organizations, the business agent, a full time negotiation specialist of the union, takes over the intermediate and sometimes the final step.

The presence of a business agent may explain why management is often outmanoeuvred by the union. Business agents are specialists in union management negotiations and it is also their full-time job. The line manager also considers grievance processing a minor, incidental, and distasteful duty. This lack of specialization and interest on his part of line management has led to the situation in which the staff personnel department is given authority to make decisions about grievance.

Usually, the final step to be undertaken by the company and the union is a discussion of the grievance between representatives of the top management and top union officials. For management, it may be the President in important grievance, a Vice-president, or a high level industrial relations executive but, for the union, it may be the president of the local union, the

Union Executive Committee , or a representative of the International union .

it is difficult to secure an integration of interest at this high level.