

Cat's paw theory

[Business](#), [Human Resources](#)



The Cat Paw Theory is based on a French fable from the 17th century. There is a cat and a monkey. The monkey tricks the cat into picking up chestnuts from smoldering embers. Once the cat burns his paws the monkey runs off with all the chestnuts they had picked up together. “ Cat’s paw” can be defined as a person that uses another person as a tool or dope (Hrsentry, 2011). This concept was recently used by a judge to make a ruling regarding a human resource issue in courts. A company had fired an employee claiming that the firing was based on bad performance when in reality the motivation was based on discrimination against military personnel. The employee had taken several leaves due to military obligations. The cat paw theory comes in into effect because the supervisors duped the human resource manager into thinking the firing was based on legit reasons when in reality it was based on discrimination. The termination was illegal because it violated the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

In order to avoid a ruling against a company based on Cat Paw’s Theory HR resource managers can take measures to prevent its occurrence. The HR manager should educate himself on all the current anti-discrimination laws and he should ensure that the company’s policies are aligned with the law. Whenever a HR manager is faced with a termination decision the person should never take the word of the supervisor at face value. He is supposed to investigate the situation and eliminate the possibility that the incentive for the termination is based on discriminatory practices. The use of employee evaluations to be performed on a recurrent basis can help a HR manager determine whether the claims of a supervisor are true.

References

Hrsentry. com (2011). Cat's Paw Theory and Your Organization. Retrieved August 1, 2011 from <http://blog.hrsentry.com/2011/06/30/cats-paw-theory-and-your-organization/>