

Disciplining Staff to Maintain Productivity

Start by asking yourself the following questions:

Am I practicing what I preach?

Needless to say, discipline isn't effective if you are an offender. For example, trying to discipline an employee on attendance issues when you or other managers arrive with no consistent schedule will reduce your credibility.

Am I sure I know all the facts?

Take the time to investigate when the situation warrants it.

What is the employee's performance record?

If you have an otherwise outstanding employee with a consistent record of performance who has had a lapse in judgment, there certainly needs to be some consideration made for this. Nevertheless, if a pattern of behaviour develops, it has to be addressed regardless of the length of service.

What level of severity does this warrant?

Traditionally, the disciplinary process begins with a verbal warning as part of a progressive discipline system. If the behaviour continues, a written warning should follow. If this doesn't correct the situation, another written warning or suspension to provide time to investigate the circumstances is usually appropriate. Finally, if the behaviour continues, you may decide to terminate.

Behaviours that could warrant immediate dismissal are:

- Possession of or use of drugs or alcohol on company property
- Sexual harassment
- Threatening employees or customers with violence
- Theft
- Sleeping on the job
- Extreme insubordination

The following steps will help make the discussion more effective:

1. Describe the problem or offense
2. Ask for reasons: listen to the response
3. Describe the action and reasoning
4. Indicate follow up action and set follow up date
5. End the counselling session on a positive note indicating confidence in the ability of the person to change behaviours

Disciplinary discussions are difficult and unpleasant. However, putting off these discussions can undermine your business and your staff. Take charge of these situations and you can avoid spoiling your whole bunch!