

Office Harmony: 10 Tips For Business Owners And Managers To Foster Better Employee Relations

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After reaching out to clients, followers of my blog and group members on LinkedIn, employee relations and staff management was identified as one of the most difficult issues facing management.

This problem is only made more difficult for managers and business owners who do not have the formal training in human resources or familiarity with the legal boundaries that managers face daily. Sticking to these tips will assist in creating a more efficient and harmonious office environment.

1. Hiring:

Employment relations begin at the interview of candidates. If it is appropriate, perform a background check. In New Jersey, employers may obtain all records of convictions and records for pending arrests and charges for violations of New Jersey laws. In Fact, failure to conduct a criminal check for prospective employees may be evidence of negligent hiring. In addition to criminal background checks, ask for references and actually check with any references provided. In many businesses, it may be wise to perform drug testing on prospective employees. Drug testing may also be performed in current employees, but it is best to consult an attorney before beginning such a program and to implement specific criteria for testing.

2. Written job descriptions:

Job descriptions are necessary for employees to be advised of their job duties and critical for gauging performance. Job descriptions can be a vital tool when disciplining or terminating an employee and to avoid discrepancies regarding the employment expectations.

3. Written Performance evaluations:

Employees like to know where they stand with his or her manager. Similarly, it is important for managers to keep employees aware of their progress and to identify strengths and weaknesses of employees. Although written evaluations can result in friction, that is not often the case. The problems are usually more common when an employee is not performing at the level he or she is required. Having these performance evaluations written and documented are the best way to track progress and can be used when imposing discipline, performance improvement plans or following termination.

4. Consistency:

Consistency is important in any environment, especially employment. Many people spend more time at work than with their family during the week. Consistency is king. Policies should be enforced fairly and consistently. When employees perceive favoritism or see that they are being treated differently, it may result in friction in the workplace and at times complaints with the EEOC or New Jersey Division on Civil Rights.

5. Professionalism:

Regardless of the nature of your business, all employees should act professionally. If professionalism is not present in the office, that behavior will eventually spread to clients, patients or referrals for your business. In certain circumstances, dress requirements shall be imposed and enforced. Although this may not be appropriate or necessary in all offices, there should be some requirements when clients, customer or patients will be present in the office.

6. Promptly Address Complaints by Employees:

If an employee presents a complaint, it should be addressed immediately. If it may involve a legal issue such as harassment or discrimination, an investigation should be performed promptly and professionally. Prepare a written review of the investigation identifying the individuals who were interviewed, materials reviewed and the outcome of the investigation.

7. Prepare a written handbook:

A well drafted employment handbook set forth the expectations of managers and employees. The

handbook should set forth office rules, policies and procedures for vacation time, sick time, discipline, family leave, harassment and other expectations of employment.

8. Incentivize the office:

If possible, reward employees for hard work and success. This does not necessarily mean you need to provide large bonuses or put a dent in the bottom line. Incentives can include performance bonuses, company bonuses, free lunches, gift cards and paid time off. Incentives will increase your productivity and help with retention.

9. Termination:

A rotten apple will actually spoil the whole barrel. If an employee has violated company policies or is not performing their job duties, it is better to terminate that employee before allowing him or her to impact others. Termination of employees should be done carefully and managers should consult with an attorney if before terminating an employee if they suspect that the employee may have the basis for a claim against the manager or company. When terminating employees, it is important for managers to be consistent and fair.

And most importantly

10. Contact a Professional when necessary: If an issue arises that requires professional guidance, contact a profession with whom you feel comfortable and who can immediately address the issue. This may be an attorney, accountant or benefits administrator.

Let the readers' know below: What do you do to have better employee relations in your firm, company or organization?