

PART 4 - CONDUCTING YOURSELF AS A SUPERVISOR (1000)

(September 1988)

Your working relationship with your employees is an important factor in determining whether a grievance ever gets started. However, if a grievance is filed, it does not reflect negatively on the supervisor unless he/she has willfully failed to abide by departmental policy or the collective bargaining agreement.

1. YOU REPRESENT MANAGEMENT

Supervisors are part of the management team, and as such, you should always be management's advocate. When you are discussing grievances and the position of the grievant does not coincide with that of management, present management's position.

2. GRIEVANCE MEETINGS SHOULD NOT DISRUPT DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS

The procedure provides for investigation and resolution of grievances with minimum interference in orderly and efficient operations. Informal grievances should be discussed as soon as possible. Whenever possible, arrange your discussion for a time and place mutually agreeable to you and your employee.

3. IF THE GRIEVANCE INDICATES THAT AN ERROR IN JUDGMENT WAS COMMITTED, ADMIT THAT YOU OR YOUR SUBORDINATE IS WRONG AND PROVIDE THE CORRECT REMEDY TO THE SITUATION

Remember, supervisors can and do make mistakes and the employee could be right. Admitting your mistakes will improve your credibility with the employee and his association. It is easier to admit mistakes and correct them yourself than to have them corrected by higher management. If the remedy requires involvement or approval by higher level management, get them involved at this stage of the grievance procedure so that it can be resolved in an expeditious and efficient manner.

4. MAINTAIN AN ATMOSPHERE OF PROFESSIONALISM

It is a good practice and it assists in developing mutual respect.

5. GRIEVANCES ARE A SERIOUS MATTER TO THE EMPLOYEE CONCERNED

Remain serious and sincere at all times while handling a grievance.

6. DO NOT ALLOW AN EMPLOYEE OR HIS REPRESENTATIVE TO INTIMIDATE YOU

Do not allow yourself to be pressured by the employee's representative. Do not commit yourself unless you are sure about your decision. If you do not know an answer, check on it.

7. DO NOT GRANT A GRIEVANCE OR ALLOW A PRACTICE TO DEVELOP WHICH IS NOT IN CONCERT WITH DEPARTMENTAL POLICY

Often, departmental policy or the labor contracts allow flexibility for management in recognition of differing needs or preferences. However, when no flexibility exists because of a policy or contract provision, consistent application is very important. Differences can be used against the department and you do not want to be responsible for their impact on others. If you are unsure about a policy or contract provision, seek clarification from management (not the union) before acting.

8. DO NOT LET GRIEVANCE MEETINGS GET OUT OF CONTROL

When it is obvious that tempers are short and nothing productive is being accomplished, give serious consideration to ending the session and rescheduling the meeting for another time.

9. YOU ARE THE DECISION MAKER

Do not ask a grievant or his/her representative for help in solving a grievance or you will lose your authority with the employee and the union.

10. STRESS THE POINT THAT EMPLOYEES MUST OBEY ORDERS UNTIL A DECISION IS MADE ON THEIR GRIEVANCE

This allows operations to continue in an orderly manner and the employee still retains the right to resolve the dispute through the grievance procedure.

11. DO NOT TAKE AN EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE AS A PERSONAL ATTACK

Remember that employee organizations have their own internal politics. Some grievances which may appear insignificant to you may be stressed by the employee organization for their own reasons. Keeping this in mind may help you look at grievances objectively rather than something directed at you personally.

12. BE AWARE OF THE NEED FOR POSSIBLE POLICY CHANGES

If you come across a regulation, policy or contract provision which is unclear or causes numerous grievances, let higher management know so the department can make an effort to change the troublesome provision.

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