



Human Resources Training: HR for the Non-HR Manager

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Maintain healthy employee relations.
- ✓ Make performance appraisals a cooperative process.

Effective Management of Workforce

Attendance Management

The Cost of Absenteeism

Any company's successful operation relies on the attendance of its employees. Unnecessary or unexcused absences affect company operations. Some absences are unavoidable. Others are worth taking steps to control.

Have you ever taken the opportunity to see what absenteeism costs your company in any given month? Can you multiply that by 12 to see what it costs in a year? If you are counting sick days, that will provide you with a way to calculate what you are paying in terms of sick pay, or lost production. Can you also calculate the cost of replacing the worker, lost productivity, and the impact on morale to the remainder of the team?

We normally speak of absenteeism in terms of culpability. Non-culpable absences are related to illness or injury over which an employee does not have a choice: they break a bone and are in the hospital, need surgery for cancer, or have a contagious cold or influenza, and so they need to be away from work in order to recover.

These absences are not really their fault (hence the non-culpable term), and so as an employer we may demand a doctor's note that says they are not able to fulfill their job duties, and we may require more documentation to help with a modified or gradual return to work, but there is little that we can do to eliminate the absence entirely.

Culpable absences are different. Culpable absences are ones over which employees appear to make the choice to be away from work. They may result from many reasons:

- Low levels of employee engagement (leads to an "I don't want to go to work today" attitude)
- Persistent tardiness with no real reason
- A sick child at home, and a parent needs to stay with them
- A more mobile workforce with greater distances to travel
- Older, aging parents that sometimes need someone to stay with them
- Weather events that interfere with getting to work
- Hangover (due to drugs or alcohol)*

* A hangover can be a tricky absence to manage. When the employee is away due to being hungover (and they may not tell you that in order to save face), it may be an occasional thing, or it may become a chronic problem. In many jurisdictions, addiction to alcohol or drugs may be considered a disease, and

is therefore managed as a non-culpable absence during the period that the employee is undergoing active, daily treatment in a detoxification or addiction center.

If employees seem to be calling in sick or missing work due to engagement issues they probably will not tell you that either. Lack of leadership, poor management, bullying or harassment, and a lack of challenging work can all lead to disengaged employees. How does your workplace measure up?

If absenteeism is a problem in your business, it pays to take some time and discover the causes of the problem. For example, if winter absences are mainly due to influenza, it is probably a good idea to arrange an immunization clinic at your workplace. If a lot of your staff are struggling to quit smoking, and you realize that smoking will drive up your incidents of illness and absence, consider a supportive smoking cessation program. If people are struggling with obesity, help them with lifestyle changes, nutrition, and exercise. If people are late to work because of traffic challenges related to dropping children off at daycare, perhaps your company can consider space for an employee daycare. Many of these programs can also be set up proactively to head off problems before they occur.

The Case of Gretchen Washington

Case Study

Gretchen Washington has been doing routine administrative work in the accounting department of the City of Balderdash for eight months. She has been late for work on the average of six to eight times a month. Shirley Simms, her supervisor, has talked to her repeatedly. Gretchen always responds by saying she is very sorry and will try to do better. For several days she is on time, and then again she arrives late. She has a variety of unusual excuses that demonstrate a very creative mind. Her work is extremely good and would warrant a sizeable merit increase except for her persistent tardiness.

The last time Shirley talked to Gretchen, she warned her that something more drastic would happen if she didn't get to work on time consistently. Now, just a week later, Gretchen walks in, obviously distressed, about 15 minutes late.

Discussion Questions

What disciplinary action should Shirley take?

How should Shirley approach Gretchen after she puts her coat away?

How could this problem have been prevented?

Dealing with Attendance Management

Having a policy on attendance will not solve a problem with unscheduled absences, but it is an important way to ensure that employees know you are concerned about absences and it will serve as a clear indication of your expectations.

You should:

- Clearly outline the policy in your employee handbook.
- Discuss expectations during the orientation so that employees know about the policy.
- Indicate you take the policy seriously.
- Your policy should include specific disciplinary action for failure to properly notify the company of an absence.

As an employer, your organization has the right to:

- Require that an employee be examined by a doctor to determine whether the employee is able to work. Make sure that the doctor is also provided with the requirements of the job.
- Expect that employees who accept a job are available for work.
- Expect the employee to take responsibility for making you aware of health conditions that interfere with work, if applicable.

Some additional suggestions:

- Be consistent.
- Consider establishing a paid leave bank.
- Address problem situations immediately.

- People who are adjusting to new health concerns or a chronic health condition can benefit from some flexibility on your part, and usually reply with increased levels of engagement. Flex time, paid leave banks, working from home part of the time (or full time) can all be reasonable accommodations to make.

How can your organization help combat unscheduled absenteeism?

Managing a Diverse Workforce

Dealing with Diversity

Diversity is a significant issue for many organizations today. While many organizations have come a long way in terms of hiring and promoting diverse populations, there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of workplace equity. While many of the more obvious diversity issues have been dealt with in some organizations, we are faced with more subtle challenges, such as stereotypes, hidden attitudes and assumptions, and reverse discrimination.

The human mind thinks in categories, and we need these categories to help us organize all that we experience as we go through daily life. Without categories, our brains would be filled with a jumble of disconnected facts, impressions, sights, sounds, thoughts, ideas, and sensations. The categories help us make sense of the world we live in and give us a shorthand way to respond to people and events.

The categories in our minds contain not just facts and data; they also contain meaning and evaluation. Our categories are not neutral. We usually have feelings about categories. These feelings may be positive or negative. Mention of a category often triggers an instant reaction, almost a reflex.

For instance, how do you feel when the following words are mentioned to you?

- Vegetables
- Americans
- Newspapers

- Blondes or brunettes
- Athletes
- Mercedes

As you can see, your reactions are rarely neutral. Most of us have judgments, opinions, and feelings about most categories of things.

While categories are not a problem in and of themselves, they become a problem when we cannot distinguish between the characteristics of a category, and the characteristics of an individual item, or individual person, within that category. Put another way, the category turns into a stereotype when we can no longer see an individual tree, but only see the forest. When we assume that all trees within a forest are identical, and cannot see that each individual tree has some characteristics in common with the others, that is when our category turns into a stereotype.

Diversity in the workplace must be accepted if a company is to establish itself as fair and just, and if it is going to be competitive. Today, it would be socially irresponsible (and illegal in most jurisdictions) to proclaim in an advertising brochure that "none but white women and girls are employed," as did Levi Strauss & Company in 1908. Nowadays, however, executives at Levi Strauss know that being successful in business means taking a much different approach. Although there is still a lot of work to be done in the business arena, we do see companies consistently challenging "glass ceiling," the unwritten and sometimes unconscious reluctance to promote qualified minorities and women into a company's top ranks.

The challenge for managers in the coming decades will be to recognize that people all have something of value to offer, and that the principles of multiculturalism and diversity respects the richness of ideas, thoughts, and culture that come from any group. Since each culture, each business situation, and each person is unique, there are no simple rules. Experts in managing diversity suggest that both employees and employers need to develop patience, open-mindedness, acceptance, and cultural awareness. Managers must have an acute awareness of characteristics common to a culture, race, gender, age, and ability level, while at the same time managing each employee as an individual.

Test your Knowledge

Why do we find it so natural to make quick judgments about some people, even when we know that we don't have enough information about them?

How can we tell that we have pigeon-holed ourselves (placing limits on our aspirations that are unnecessary and unrealistic)?

If you feel that you have pigeon-holed yourself, what questions should you ask yourself and what actions should you take?

Can you recall any situations in which the potential contribution of someone was limited because s/he had been pigeon-holed?

What are the indications that someone has been pigeon-holed?

If you see a group pigeon-holing one of its members, how can you make them aware of what they are doing and what negative effect it is having?

If you see that someone has underestimated their competence, how can you help them to get a more accurate and positive picture of themselves?

Your Experience with Pigeon Holes

Group A

Think of a situation where you were seriously misjudged by the people around you. It may be that they underestimated your education, your experience, or your overall competence to make a contribution to whatever was being considered. Then, respond to these questions.

What does it feel like to be pigeon-holed?

What did people say or do (what were the cues?) that gave you the impression that they didn't really appreciate your talents?

How did their behavior and your interpretation of it affect what you did or said?

Group B

Think of a situation when you had very strong, clear, but wrong beliefs about what another person knew, believed, or could do about a problem being considered. Then, respond to these questions.

Why do we pigeon-hole other people?

What did you say or do after you came to know more about the person?

How do you think your behavior influenced how the other person acted and how the whole episode unfolded?

Privacy Issues

The privacy of personal information is becoming a bigger and bigger concern with the amount of private information that we store electronically, and with people's demands that information be protected.

Let's take a quick look at ten principles of personal information protection.

- **Accountability:** An individual or group within the organization should be appointed to be responsible for compliance with the Privacy Act.
- **Identifying purposes:** Reasons for collecting personal data must be defined before it is collected.
- **Consent:** Agreement, preferably in writing, is required for collection, use, and disclosure of information.
- **Limiting collection:** Information gathering is restricted to only what is necessary for the purposes identified by the organization.
- **Limiting use, disclosure, and retention:** Information may be used only as defined in the consent agreement and must be destroyed when its purpose is complete.
- **Accuracy:** Data is correct, complete, and up-to-date.
- **Security:** Safeguards are in place appropriate to the sensitivity of the material.
- **Openness:** Individuals can get complete information about how their personal data are managed and used.
- **Individual access:** Individuals can see all files and can challenge their completeness as well as correct inaccuracies.

- Challenging compliance: An individual can challenge an organization's practices and file complaints for misuse of personal information.

Compensation and Benefits

The Role of Compensation and Benefits

We all recognize that organizations could make changes more easily if employees would take personal initiative. The trouble is that we can't force or bribe people to take initiative. Instead, we have to create the right climate, one in which people will feel comfortable taking action.

There is always the danger that you will do a good job in training, developing, and motivating employees, only to have them walk out the door to the competition. However, if employees like their working environment, they are less apt to leave.

Most employees will stay at their present jobs unless lured away by an offer of more responsibility and more money, or turned away by the wrong kind of supervisory management and work environment. There's nothing you can do to dissuade an employee from a real chance for advancement, but there are many things you can do to keep a talented employee from looking in the first place.

Pre-Assignment Review

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation refers to all rewards that individuals receive in return for the work that they do. Direct financial compensation includes pay received in the form of wages, salaries, bonuses, and commissions. Indirect financial compensation (benefits) includes all financial rewards that are not included in direct compensation. Indirect benefits include a wide variety of options.

To remain competitive with companies in the same industry or geographic location, compensation systems must be developed toward performance that reflects key business goals. In addition, the uniqueness of each employee must also be considered to some degree. People have different needs or reasons for working. The companies with highly desirable compensation packages will meet as many of those needs as possible. When people are having difficulty providing food, shelter, and clothing for their families, for example, money may be the most important reward. Yet, some people receive little pay, and still love their work. To a large degree, then, adequate compensation meets some level or standard of living, and beyond that is of varying importance to different employees.

One role of management is to create work environments that attract, motivate, and maintain competent employees. Since achieving these goals is accomplished largely through a firm's compensation system, managers must foster an environment that provides for challenging, engaging work, and where there is

compensation equity. Equity refers to the perception that one is being treated fairly. When chief executives are paid millions of dollars in one year and receive huge bonuses along with other benefits but middle managers and front-line employees are forced to accept cutbacks, for example, serious questions arise within organizations as to what constitutes fairness.

A condition of external equity exists when a firm's employees are paid comparably to those who perform similar jobs in other firms. Compensation surveys enable organizations to determine the level of external equity. Internal equity exists when employees are paid according to the relative value of their jobs within an organization, and an effective job evaluation is the means for describing whether that internal equity exists. Employee equity can be defined as a process of ensuring that individuals performing similar jobs for the same firm are rewarded according to factors unique to the employee, such as performance level or seniority. Equity concerns might include salary equity, promotion equity, recognition equity, and raise equity. Team equity is achieved when more productive teams receive greater rewards than less productive groups. Performance levels are generally determined through appraisal systems.

Inequity in any category can result in severe morale problems. If employees feel they are being compensated unfairly, they may restrict their efforts or leave the company, leading to poor overall performance for the organization. If two accountants in the same firm are performing similar jobs and one is acknowledged to be superior to the other, while both receive equal pay increases, employee equity is denied and the more productive employee is likely to be unhappy.

Most workers are concerned with pay equity, both internal and external. Employees are likely to have access to information about pay issues within their own organization, and use available data to form their perceptions of equity. To maintain viability, the organization has to be competitive within the labor market, and so external equity must always be a prominent consideration. The difficulty in maintaining equity on all fronts has long been an organizational challenge.

Compensation theory has never been able to provide a completely satisfactory answer to the question of how to determine what an individual is worth on the job market. Since this is a human business, no scientific approach is available but a number of relevant factors are typically used to determine salary including the strategic direction of the organization, the labor market, the jobs within the organization, and the employees.

To managers, the whole area of compensation is considered as both an expense and an asset. As an expense, compensation is a reflection of the cost of hiring labor. As an asset, wages and benefits encourage employees to do their work and remain in their jobs. As a natural result, compensation programs have a lot of influence on employee's attitudes and behavior where morale is higher when compensation is considered fair and morale is lower when compensation is considered to favor the employer, demonstrates unfair practices, or does not reflect the local labor market.

Martin Evans managed a large but financially struggling computer networking company. Although no formal policies had been established, Martin had a practice of paying the lowest wage possible. For example, one of his interns, Greg Masterson, was paid minimum wage. During a period of three weeks, Greg had shorted out a server, lost an entire role of cable from the back of his truck because it was not securely tethered, and he had burned out the clutch in a new pickup truck. Melvin grumbled, "Greg is the most expensive darned employee I've ever had."

As Martin discovered, paying the lowest possible wage didn't save money; instead, the practice was extremely expensive. In addition to relatively unproductive workers, he had a high turnover rate, as his more qualified employees quickly left to join better paying organizations. In addition, poorly trained or disgruntled employees can have particularly disastrous consequences for the company if their role involves customer contact. No firm can tolerate continued poor customer service in today's competitive business environment.

The organizational level at which compensation decisions are made can also affect pay. To ensure consistency, pay decisions are often made by senior managers, albeit they often consult resources within the human resources department. There are advantages, however, to making pay decisions at lower levels, where there is better information about employee performance and levels of competence demonstrated.

Discussion Questions

Do you agree with the definition of compensation? Why or why not?

How do you think Martin could compensate his employees in non-financial ways?

How would you define effective rewards?

Case Study: It's Not You, It's Me

Case Study: What can you do when you can't promote an ambitious and capable employee?

You've got an excellent employee who has made no secrets about her desire to get ahead, and to do so quickly. As a leader, you want to keep her interested in the company because she quickly proved herself to be a strong benefit, but you are restricted in what you can offer for salary, and you have no authority to promote her at all. You have a very real concern that if you don't do something that engages her, she will look for those rewards somewhere else.

What can you do to keep this employee engaged?

Managing Disciplinary Issues

Discipline is concerned with maintaining appropriate conduct. Traditional disciplinary usually involves a penalty against an employee who fails to meet established standards. Effective and fair disciplinary action addresses wrongful behavior, not the employee as a person.

While workplaces will have their own disciplinary rules in place, they generally follow the four steps outlined below.

The Four-Step Disciplinary System

Step One

A meeting, sometimes called an interview, is held during which the problem behavior is discussed and the employee is counseled. There are no threats or warnings prior to or during the meeting. The

supervisor's role includes getting a commitment to behave or perform as requested. The supervisor keeps note of the meeting in their records.

Step Two

If the substandard behavior is repeated, the supervisor counsels the employee again. This time a memo summarizing the conversation and the employee's commitment to changed behavior is placed in the employee's personnel file. (At this point, the counseling may or may not require a witness. Check with your HR department.)

Step Three

On the third repetition, the employee is directed to take one to four days leave with or without pay (depending on the rules established at your workplace and any collective agreement in place). This is not a holiday; the individual will be given a series of questions to answer on return to work. Depending on the situation, the questions can be quite pointed, such as, "Do you realize the next infraction will mean immediate dismissal?" On return from leave, the employee is counseled again, this time almost certainly in the presence of an employer and an employee representative. The employee's decision to change behavior is documented and placed on file. The employee and/or the witnesses sign the document.

Step Four

If there is yet another break of this same rule, there is no alternative but to terminate the employee, but this drastic action will be based on decisions made by the employee. (Depending on your workplace, this process may be completed a few more times before you can terminate the employee without repercussions. Make sure that you know the rules and limits of your own authority.)

Summary

This entire procedure has been based on the premise that management does not control behavior. It is the employee's responsibility to behave according to established work rules and procedures. Discipline without a punishment system takes the intense emotional aspect away from management/employee interaction. The concept also places responsibility for behavior on the employee, conveying the message, "In this firm we hire adults; we expect them to behave as adults."

A Discipline Checklist for a Supervisor

- Proof rule was posted prior to incident
- Proof employee was aware of rule prior to incident
- Proof rule was consistently enforced
- Proof rule(s) given to union, if applicable
- Item(s) involved retained for evidence (if applicable)
- Signed and dated witness statements retained for file (if applicable)
- Documents, policies, and reports retained for file (if applicable)

- Police and medical reports retained for file (if applicable)
- Legal statutes reviewed and complied with (if applicable)
- Proof alternatives were offered to employee (if applicable)
- Proof employee's explanation or request was given reasonable consideration and recorded (if applicable)
- Proof of time, date, and location of incident are accurately recorded
- Proof of work average re: attendance or lates (if applicable)
- Proof all events, observations, and actual statements are accurately recorded
- Proof employee given instruction or training (if applicable)
- Proof employee and/or union received all relevant correspondence
- Proof proper investigation was finalized
- Proof all personnel file requirements have been met
- Proof of previous discipline record and previous discussions with employee have been finalized and recorded (if applicable)
- Proof collective agreement clauses relating to union representation and timelines have been met
- Proof second management opinion obtained (if applicable)
- Proof all evidence double-checked for accuracy
- Proof decision finalized as quickly as possible

Terminating Employees

Letting Staff Go

Termination (firing or dismissing an employee) is the most severe penalty that management can impose and should therefore be the most carefully considered. The termination experience is traumatic for the employee, leading to feelings of failure, fear, disappointment, and, inevitably, anger. The work that you have done leading up to the termination meeting, however, makes it less of a surprise to the employee.

Firing is also difficult for the person who makes the decision. The realization that termination may affect not only the employee but often an entire family can add to the trauma. Not knowing how the terminated employee will react may also create considerable anxiety for the manager who must do the firing. The impact on the remaining team members must be also considered.

There is a distinct psychology, therefore, that surrounds termination. The fired employee may experience a series of emotions in quick succession: initial shock (even if he or she knew or suspected), anger, the feeling that there must have been a mistake, possible identity collapse, and/or ego disintegration. Then wild swings in mood may follow, perhaps culminating in depression. The restoration in self-confidence can take some time.

Concurrently, the manager may experience feelings of self-pity (Why me?), followed by guilt (Could I have done better for this person?), and compassion (How will the employee survive?). There may be a

desire to retain the employee, or, conversely, a tendency to blame the employee for "doing this" to the manager.

In some cases, though, firing can be a relief. The employee who is struggling to perform at a job that they are unable (or unwilling to do), their repeated poor performance, the impact that they are having on their colleagues and clients, can mean that the firing itself is also a relief.

The Termination Meeting

The manager must prepare for the termination interview in order to remain in complete control. The termination interview should always be conducted before a witness (usually a member of the human resources team) and in an environment where the manager has a psychological advantage (for example, the company boardroom). Some managers avoid using their offices for this purpose, as they do not want employees to associate routine calls to the office with the possibility of dismissal. The environment should be calm, formal, polite, and unemotional. The meeting should be short, without a repeat of all prior offenses required. No matter what the fired employee says or does, the manager must keep control over his or her emotions. The employee should be told of the decision and the documented reasons. An official letter of termination should be ready. It should be made clear that the decision is final. There should be no debate.

Case Study: How to Fire an Employee?

You have to fire an employee. It can't be painless, but you want to keep it honest. What can you do?

Exit Interviews

Whether an employee resigns, is terminated, or is laid off, there should always be an exit interview. The exit interview gives your company the opportunity to learn from past factors that resulted in the loss of an employee.

An exit interview can be as simple as a questionnaire that an employee fills out or it can be a formal interview. (Sometimes, if an employee has been terminated, it may be useful to give them the questionnaire to take home, and then set up a follow up interview a week later. This gives them time to cool off and think about their reaction.)

Regardless of the method you choose, let the employee know that their feedback is valuable and will be considered, if not acted upon.

Sample Exit Questionnaire

Date:

Department:

Name:

Job:

Do you feel you made satisfactory progress with this company?

Was your compensation satisfactory? Why or why not?

When you first started with this company, did you receive adequate orientation to the organization?

Are you leaving to accept another job?

What will be your responsibilities?

Why have you chosen to accept this position?

How would you rate your supervisor's leadership skills in the following areas?

How would you rate your supervisor's communication skills in the following areas?

If you had the opportunity to come back to work here, what improvements would you suggest?

Other Comments

Eligible for rehire? Yes/No

Exit Interviewer: _____