

An Employee's Worst Nightmare

What constitutes an employee's worst nightmare can easily become the subject of debate, conjecture and speculation. Individual employees will at sometime point in time have a legitimate concern about something that is job related. In some cases the substance of the matter may not be enough to drive fear within the heart of the individual, but can be most upsetting. The loss of motivation, momentum, productivity and interest can be the resulting fallout. It is the perceived consequence of any workplace action that can constitute an employee's nightmare.

The recent shut down of the Federal Government in the United States of American that lasted for over a month, is a glaring example of what can constitute an employee's nightmare. The decision of the Donald Trump led Republican Administration to shut down the government, would have caused severe economic hardship for the estimated 800,000 Public Officers, who were required to work without pay. This cannot by any stretch of the imagination have been a position that workers would have endorsed, considering that the lives of many would have been impacted upon. It is established that this action is disadvantageous to employees, and moreover, it constitutes an inconvenience to them.

It is well known that one of the fundamental conditions of employment is the determination made on the remuneration of an employee. As it applies in the case of public officers, salaries are paid on a monthly basis. Where an employee is not paid after completing the agreed hours of work, this means that the employer is in breach of the contract of employment. In the case of public officers, they seem not to have a recourse to the actions of government where there is non-payment or delayed payment. This cannot be the best example for government, as the model employer to portray.

It is known that temporary public sector workers in some jurisdictions, are sometimes at the receiving end of the non-payment of a salary for periods ranging from 1-3 months. The reason usually given is that an authority for payment has not been issued. This is an unreasonable and inhumane act by the authorities who are responsible for such an injustice. It is unreasonable to expect an employee to report for work and to be motivated to perform satisfactorily. It is more than likely that an individual stands to be demotivated by the fact that there is no knowledge of when a pay cheque will be forthcoming. If this is not fundamentally wrong, then what is?

It is accepted that the non-receipt of a monthly pay cheque matters most, to all employees, but nonetheless, this may not be the worst nightmare for some. Job security can be a source of worry to employees, for this means guaranteed employment, secured social security benefits: inclusive of a gratuity and pension. Being faced with the possibility of termination from the job can be one's worst nightmare. Termination whether by retrenchment, dismissal for cause, or being made redundant is never easy to accept. To be laid off from work is equally devastating, as this

translates into none payment of a wage or salary, and where applicable a dependence on a social security benefit from the state, such as funds paid from unemployment benefit scheme.

Termination for cause can be an employee's worst nightmare. This is a threat that can however be avoided, for it only requires that an employee acts in good faith and be responsible. Mildly put, termination for cause generally occurs when an employee makes a severe error in actions or judgment, such as stealing, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds or fraud.

For some employees their worst nightmare is to find themselves in a job that does not meet with their expectations and in which for them the experience is a living hell. Such individuals often find the job challenging, get no satisfaction from doing the job, feel pressured in the work environment, and are usually disgruntled. Being unable to find alternate employment and feeling stuck in hole, can be intimidating, demoralizing and even a threat to the health of the individual.

Being not engaged at work adds to the frustration of the employee, who by virtue of their exclusion in the decision-making and life of the workplace can feel a sense of marginalization. Failure to recognize the contributions of the hardworking, dedicated and committed employee, can be devastating to the individual. The worse part of this experience is being overlooked for promotion or a recognition award.

The breach of an employee trust and the breach of confidentiality are two dishonourable acts that few can tolerate. On the other hand, workplace bullying for most, is definitely a nightmare. Workplace Bullying has been defined as "Repetitive, abusive behaviour that devalues and harms people on the job. Workplace bullying is not physically violent but relies on the formidable weapons of hostile actions and words. (Barrow: 2010, p77)

Employees' nightmares can have a long standing psychological impact. Depending on what has occurred the scars can be external. The employee who is injured on the job and receives no attention or has no interest shown by the employer, is left to experience their worst nightmare of being left to languish and suffer.