

Workplace Standards

Workplace standards are a set of criteria within an enterprise which relate to the functioning and carrying out of operations. These are designed to ensure that there are safe systems of work, delivery of quality service, reliable and consistent performances by employees. These are elements that reflect the values of the establishment and the culture associated with it. It is generally viewed that workplace standards are dictates which employees are expected to observe. It is noteworthy that these standards equally apply to the employer and management personnel. These individuals are expected to display both ethical and professional behavior which are associated with the standards. In so doing, this would lend to the respect which the enterprise earns, and to preservation of its image and character.

This brings us to developing an understanding as to what is the purpose of workplace standards. These standards are based on the guiding principle that employers have a responsibility to make sure their employees are treated fairly and with respect. This means that there are established rules, regulations and procedures which bear some relation to labour laws, policies, practices and business acumen. The purpose of having work standards is for the purpose of giving effect to following rules, standards, practices and procedures which can help improve the quality of work life. Employers ought to place a premium on their efforts which are directed towards helping to ensure that employees conduct themselves in a professional and safe manner.

The overarching intention behind the establishing of workplace standards is for employers to ensure that their workplaces are safe places of work, free from discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying, recognizes and respects human rights and workers' rights, and encouraging open communication between the employer and employees. It is important to understand that standards are meant to provide people and organizations with a basis for mutual understanding of operational procedures and expectations. These are identifiable tools which are used to facilitate communication, towards achieving the end of an efficient and effectively managed enterprise.

Employers and management have a decisive role to play in developing workplace standards. They have a responsibility to ensure that the standards are set out in the company's policy. It generally should fall to the Human Resources Department to develop the policy. The participation of workers in the exercise is most appropriate, as the consultation and engagement allows for input and buy-in. This will reduce the level of any push back, help to win support for and acceptance of the standards. As a consequence of these, there is unlikely to be any major issues surrounding compliance.

Persons interested in starting up a business should be aware that workplace standards and guidelines are essential in establishing a company. This is important if they are to ensure that

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their potential employees, customers and business clients, have a clear understanding of the organization's cultures and values, expectations of the behavior and performance of the employees. The workplace standards which are developed should reflect the do's which are expected to be practiced and observed and the don'ts that will not be tolerated. It would be expected that the standards focus on ensuring that the business operates in an efficient, effective, businesslike manner and professional manner, that a good corporate image is promoted, and that there is a stable, congenial, collaborative and safe work environment.

Basically, the workplace standards should address employment standards, workplace rights and responsibilities, a code of conduct and safety and health practices. From both the perspective of the employer and employee, it is important that the standards address workplace violence and harassment. These should fall under the code of conduct and identify behaviours which are not permitted by employees and also by the employer or management.

The code of conduct is meant to send a clear message of what the employer will not accept or tolerate. The code of conduct is to be seen as a working document which is directed at arresting inappropriate and unethical behaviours at the personal and collective level. It is meant to ensure that employees treat others at work, including co-workers, superiors, customers and visitors with dignity and respect. The aim is to eliminate acts such as bullying, harassment, intimidation, breaches of confidentiality and the developing of a hostile environment which lends to conflict at the employee upon employee, and poor employer- employee relations. Taking all of this into consideration, the bottom line is that effective communication becomes a critical factor in the promotion of the workplace standards. Whereas communication is widely accepted as the appropriate mechanism to drive the workplace standards, there is no place for inappropriate communication, which is completed through the use technologies such as mobile phones, whatsapp messaging, text messages, social media posts and emails.

In developing workplace standards in this modern age, it is important that the employer pays attention to work place gender equality and diversity. With the several changes occurring within the workplace, it is becoming necessary to develop workplace standards that extend to addressing a no smoking policy, and a drug and alcoholic policy which includes cannabis use. What is of primary importance is the monitoring of workplace standards, with critical attention to be paid to enforcement and the imposition of sanctions against those who commit breaches.