

## **Following Workplace Instructions**

Within workplaces, employees are expected to follow instructions, orders, rules, procedures and policies. These also apply to employees who opt to work from home and those who engage in contract for service. Irrespective of where the workplace is located, the need for discipline and order is required if standards of behaviour and operations are to be maintained.

Generally, it is anticipated that the discipline which is expected of workers, follows on the tone set by the leadership; be it the employer or management. Employees are expected to comply, act responsibly and to be accountable for their actions. Employees should never lose sight of the hierarchy which exists in the workplace, where there is a clear distinction to be made between the leadership, management and the rank and file workers, who assume the position as subordinates. With the recognition of this, there is less likelihood that individuals will resort to flouting instructions, orders, rules, procedures and policies.

Where the workplace, enterprise and/or organization is plagued by indiscipline, the question as to why this is so, is left to be answered. The opportunity presents itself for the leadership of all workplaces, enterprises and organizations to do some serious introspection of their behaviour. Employers, managers, supervisors and leaders, generally who exhibit dictatorial, insensitive behavior such as bullying tactics, engage in compromising standards set and who are inconsistent in following good leadership and management practices, must recognize that they are contributors to a system which breeds indiscipline.

It is common knowledge that there are consequences for breaching the company's or workplace policy as well as not following instructions, rules and/or procedures. It is considered arbitrary action where an employer undertakes to impose any form of disciplinary action without providing for due process. This is where the process starts with an investigation, to be followed by a disciplinary hearing. No employee should believe that he/she is exempt from being disciplined if found in breach of rules, instructions given, or procedures as set down.

Since there is no excuse for acts of indifference, it would be unreasonable to expect that any flagrant act would be overlooked. Leaders and employers should have an appreciation of what it means to give instructions. The one thing which they ought to scoff upon is that of ignoring a given instruction. In the reverse, some leaders, employers, managers and supervisors do not respond favourably to following instructions or playing by the rules. It is this unjust and hypocritical behaviour that creates the basis for a lack of co-operation and trust, and lends to accusations of behaviour which is contradictory; as it amounts to do as I say, and not as I do.

By following instructions, employees eliminate confusion, frustration, save valuable time and preserve the health, safety and well-being of their colleagues. The onset of COVID-19 across the globe has brought to the fore more than ever before, the importance attached to preserving the health, safety and well-being of all employees in the workplace. The standing protocols which have been introduced, namely, social distancing, hand sanitizing and the wearing of masks, are required to be observed if the spread of the Corona virus is to be contained.

In the preservation of a safe workplace and in the interest of promoting productivity and safe guarding the business enterprise, every employer has to ensure that the protocols are constantly observed. The insistence on observing the safety and health protocols, should help to reinforce the need for the establishment of Safety and Health Committees in the workplace which are required to have oversight and to monitor the level of compliance by staff members.

Employees in their own interest, are required to follow the instructions as dictated by the protocols which apply as a consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Neither employers nor employees can afford to compromise on following the safety measures. What is at stake is lives. Following protocols in the new environment, is a matter that must be strictly enforced and carefully monitored.

**Following Workplace Instructions: Dennis de Peiza: Labour Relations & Employee Relations Consultant: Regional Management Services Inc., 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020**