

## Workplace Governance

The governance of the workplace is known to be founded on the application of policies, rules, regulations and procedures. Adherence and observance of these are meant to ensure that discipline characterizes the workplace. Additionally, the application of the policies and regulations are generally akin to what the law allows, and to accepted industrial relations practices.

The observance of these by employers, management and employees, suggest that they accept and respect the limits which are imposed on their actions and behaviour. With this being so, a case can well be made that this serves to promote workplace standards. A problem emerges where there is a tendency to act without due regard for the rights of the individual, and /or to follow due process.

At the level of the employer and management, the sign of a break in the employee - management relations at the workplace can manifest itself where there is evidence of unilateral action being taken by the employer/management, or because of the failure to follow accepted procedures and processes. Such action can lead to disharmony and disruption in the workplace. Workers can become disillusioned, disheartened and/or demotivated. This is where indiscipline on the part of employees may become apparent. Indiscipline in this case does not refer to unruly behaviour, but more so to a decline in productivity.

Good governance in the workplace starts with the involvement of employees in the decision making process. There is a role for consultation and dialogue to take place. The lack of communication can lead to a level of divide between the management and employees. Where there is tension existing between the two parties, there is an expectation that management is sensitive to the cause for the divide. Management has to be conscious that the matter could only be redressed, if it is receptive to having dialogue with the workers and their representative body.

As part of the governance arrangement, it is advisable that employers treat with the trade union which acts as the representative body for the workers. Those who attempt not to interface with trade unions are therefore setting up a governance structure that is not inclusive, but one which alienates employees. This practice sets the stage for the possible contentious relationship, where the employees tend not to trust the employer. Under this arrangement it becomes apparent that there is no accommodation made for

the participation of the workers. This is a practice that will do little to change the idea of a top – down management approach.

Good workplace governance starts with a recognition, acceptance and practice of democracy within the organization. There is no place for dictatorial or an autocratic style of leadership. Where this is followed, it virtually kills the spirit of cooperation and goodwill. Further it acts as a means of suppressing ideas. More over it promotes the 'I' over the 'We.'

For a work place to demonstrate the features of good governance, it is expected that there is an embrace of the eight major characteristics that are associated with it. These are participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and following the rule of law.

Those employers who have a narrow view of what constitutes good governance, should be aware that poor governance can only lead to failed enterprises, which are plagued by one crisis after another, that culminates in industrial disputes, a high turnover of staff and the subsequent erosion of public confidence.