

Addressing Workplace Shortcomings

There have constantly been loud cries and complaints by management over the level of productivity of employees. Much of this has been lead to a high loss of man hours. For the most part, management has chosen to blame this on the level of absenteeism and lateness of employees in arriving at work. The general conclusion has been reached that there is a drastic decline in the work attitude of employees. Whilst this may be a reasonable conclusion to draw, there is room for a clear study or investigation to be completed to determine the basis for this development. Any such study or investigation would be appropriate if it also examined management styles, techniques, attitudes and disposition of employers, management and supervisory personnel.

It would appear that the assumption has always been made that the calculated or deliberated actions of workers have contributed to low productivity. Employers and management would do themselves a world of good if they were to undertake some serious introspection, so as to determine if and to what extent their actions and decision making contribute to the problems of absenteeism, tardiness and low staff morale.

It should occur that the actions of some employees come as a response of the fact that the employer displays a lack of respect for them as employees. Employees are often left out of the decision making process. In the absence of consultation and involvement, this means that their views are unlikely to be heard, considered and embraced. The approach by employers and management to hand down instructions and to apply penalties where there is non-compliance, is one way that will lead to the frustration of workers and force a reaction, whether individually or collectively by them.

Next there is the issue of the overall treatment meted out to individuals by their immediate supervisor, who are sometimes accused of tending to abuse their power and authority. As if this is not bad enough, there is the issue of micro management. In many an instance, this leads to tensions and disquiet as employers are not allowed to use their initiative, and can be subjected to harassment and ridicule.

The demands which some employers/management place on and require of their employees cannot be overlooked. This can lead to serious burnout and frustration. Concerns with issues associated with the contract of employment could also drive employees to react in different ways. The fact that an employer pays a worker \$5 an hour for an 8-10 hour workday, and being granted one off day per week, which is against the law as in the case of Barbados, is enough to drive workers to take some form of protest action, or to work in a manner that will undermine productivity. There is also the issue where contrary the constitutional right of the individual's right to associate and to bargain collectively by joining a trade union, is constrained by the

employer. This comes as a consequence of the fear of victimization that can manifest itself in termination of employment, under the guise of retrenchment or layoff.

Management by way of some of its human resources practices can contribute to the fallout which occurs. Workers often complain of being overlooked for promotion. Some are not afforded opportunities for training and retraining. Worse yet, many employees despite their best effort and unswerving commitment where they go beyond the call of duty, are often not given any recognition.

It however does not necessary follow that all employees who absent themselves from work or who are frequently tardy for work for whatever reasons, are at odds with their employer or management. However the possibility exists that there are other workplace stressors which may have taken root. For example, an individual may have problems working with individual colleague(s). On the other hand it is quite possible that the behavior of some may be directly related to personal domestic issues. It is therefore not fair, just or reasonable to make the blanket conclusion that absenteeism or tardiness of workers is calculated or a deliberate action.