

Managing Indiscipline in the Workplace

There is an expectation in the workplace that standards of discipline will be observed. This applies to employees at all levels, inclusive of management and supervisory personnel, who are duty-bound to adhere to policy guidelines, rules, regulations and established procedures. The culture of the work environment more often than not tends to dictate the customs and practices that obtained within any particular work environment. Any variations are not expected to be radical or drastic. Accepting that changes will occur over time, it is for management to adopt a measured approach to introducing any aspect of change. It makes good sense to ensure that there is buy-in by employees, as opposed to having changes unilaterally foisted upon them. This approach if adopted, should speak volumes to the level of maturity and responsible behavior exhibited on the part of the employer and management.

From the employee's vantage point, there can be no lesser an expectation. Inasmuch that employees are tasked with specific duties, roles and functions, there is nothing to remove them from the need to demonstrate good values which should inform how they conduct themselves in the workplace. These will impact significantly on the attitudes and dispositions that individuals display, the demonstration of respect for the rights of others, respect for authority, the exercise of decency, loyalty, honesty, integrity and commitment; along with other significant groundings that are embedded in the value system, which emerged from the socialization process.

The bottom-line remains that each individual whether at the level of employee or management, must be held accountable for any act of indiscipline or transgression. The authority resides within management to enforce discipline. Notwithstanding that this is so, any action which is taken must be exercised fairly, without fear or favour, and not without prejudice in any form. Discrimination must not play a part in the process, and the dictates of natural justice should be followed. At the end of the day, the appropriate and established disciplinary procedures are to be observed.

It is to be advocated that indiscipline in any form is not to be tolerated and/or encouraged. In the meeting out of penalties for a breach or action

that is inimical to the interest of the enterprise/organization, it is important that the punishment fits the crime. Further, that it is exercised in accordance with code of discipline as agreed upon and set out in the Disciplinary Code, which has been shared with all employees. It can be detrimental to the enterprise/organization where management buries its head in the sand, and fails to take action when a glaring act of omission or breach is committed. The fall out is equally far reaching in the instance where the offender receives a slap on the risk. Management should always weigh the pros and cons of its actions, as the course of action taken as in the case of the two examples given, could send the wrong message both to the offending party and those looking on.

The case involving Damesh Ramdin, the West Indies Wicketkeeper Batsman, makes for interesting study. As reported in the media, the player on having scored a century in the test match, England vs West Indies at Edgbaston in 2012, apparently took out and displayed a piece of paper from his pocket, which read. "Yea Viv, talk nah." It is claimed that the action taken was in response to a comment made by the legendary West Indies cricket captain, Sir Vivian Richards, about Ramdin's poor batting performances and wicket keeping. Having breach the International Cricket Council (ICC) Players' Code of Conduct, Ramdin was subsequently fined 20% of his match fee for conduct deemed to be contrary to the spirit of the game.

Of current interest is the player's recent published comments over his exclusion from the West Indies Team to play against India in the upcoming home test series in Caribbean, which were apparently directed to the Chairman of Selector of the West Indies Team. If it is accurate that personal comments were directed at the Chairman, then such can be considered to be in poor taste, and moreover, border on insubordination.

In examining this case, the first point to be established is whether Mr. Ramdin is one of the contracted players of the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB). If this is factual, it logically follows that he becomes an employee of the Board, who as a professional player is engaged under contract. It therefore would be more than a passing interest to know the thinking of

the West Cricket Board on the dispensing of disciplinary action in the two instances involving Mr. Randim.

The startling fact is that following Mr. Randim's action at Edgbaston, he was rewarded with the captaincy of the West Indies team for a total of 13 test matches. Is this a case of a slap on the wrist, or more so, the turning of a blind eye which has come back to haunt the employer? Is it that the WICB is conveniently willing to accept the punishments handed down by the ICC, rather than to exercise the authority it has as the regional body, so as to ensure that the standards of conduct are not flouted with impunity?

The cases involving Mr. Ramdin have become public issues. This is unfortunate, but this is seemingly so, as a consequence of his own actions. Though the court of public opinion may have its say, the key point to remember is that the principles of natural justice should be observed; if he is required to answer any charge(s) brought against him from the latest incident.