

## **The Practice of Good Employee Relations**

The many problems which are currently besetting workplaces tend to be rooted in poor employer-employee relations and industrial relations practices. Generally, much of the fallout can be prevented if management took a more serious approach to its human relations. In recent times the need to develop a more wholistic approach to the management of people, has been a significant factor in driving the change from the employment of personnel managers to human resources managers across the various employment sectors. In the corporate sector, the move to engage human resources managers has already been embraced. While this is a work in progress as part of the public sector reform initiative, the pace of transitioning is seemingly slower than that within the private sector.

The fallout which generally occurs between employers and their employees is given currency by a communication divide which exists. This is coupled by the insensitivity of the employer in some instances. The outcome of this results in tension, which in turn leads to some form of industrial action being contemplated or initiated. This is a case where good leadership and management in the exercise of proactive thinking and action can avoid potential fallout. Since it cannot be treated as an overnight thing, the leadership and management of an enterprise or organization must first have a real understanding and appreciation for creating a conducive environment and strategies that would support the development of an effective communication mechanism.

Employers should be conscious of the fact that how they treat to their employees makes a fundamental difference to workplace relations, as this is the key to maintaining their loyalty, dedication and commitment. Communication therefore becomes essential to the creation of a better workplace. It certainly contributes to a more comfortable, stable and productive environment. Employees function best in an environment in which they are made to feel a part of the decision making, where information is shared and they are made to feel valued and appreciated. It is seemingly good sense to canvass the opinion of the staff but most importantly, to respect their opinions and ideas and as far as possible, to embrace them.

How much of this is reflected in the thinking of employers is a matter of speculation. If they are appreciative of the fact that the practice of good employment relations rest behind the idea of reducing staff conflict, then it is to be expected that they would recognize the importance of having motivated, efficient and productive employees. This is pivotal to good employee-employer relations, as it can potentially help in the process of resolving problems and disputes between staff and management.

Based on the evidence of poor level of staff morale, turnover of staff, absenteeism and internal conflict, the managers of many enterprises and public sectors departments, can be accused of poor employment relations practices. This does not help their personal cause or that of the enterprise or organization. It represents an administrative weakness which needs to be corrected. This can be corrected and the way to do so is to place emphasis on the treatment of employees, ensuring that they buy into the vision and mission of the organization.

There is no need to ponder on what is required, as it is well known that employee recognition and rewards go a long way in motivating staff. The development of a programme which addresses the idea of work life balance is now imperative. Meeting the training and retraining needs of the staff should always be paramount. Where possible, promotional opportunities should be offered and/or provided.

The fact that there are many complaints by employers of low productivity, suggests that there is something wrong. With this awareness, it is now opportune for individual managers to undertake a review of their performance. There can be no harm, but much to be gained from completing personal introspection and peer evaluation. It is the only way individual managers can become aware whether they are the problem or part of the problem within the enterprise or organization.