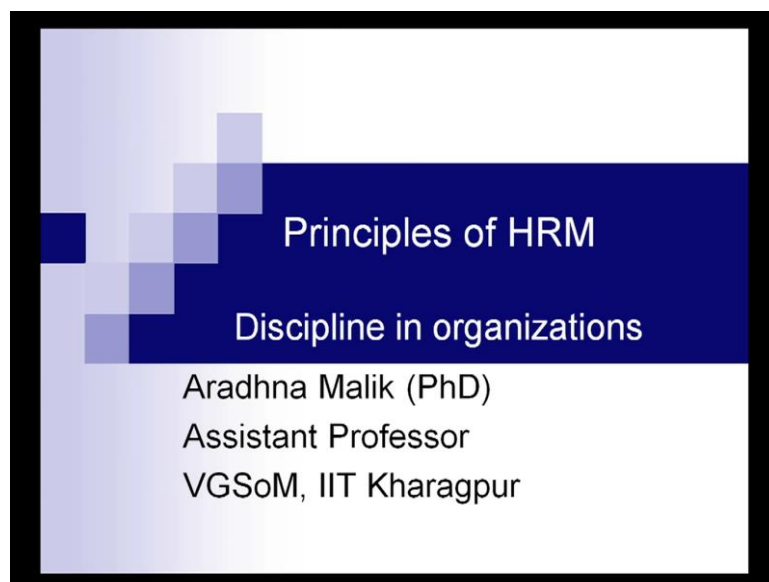


Principles of Human Resource Management
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Module No. #08
Lecture No. #30
Discipline in Organizations

Welcome back, to the class on, Human Resources Management. My name is Aradhna Malik. And, i have been helping you, with this course. We have discussed, various things, till now. Various things related to, human resources management. Today, in this, this is one of the last lectures, that you will have. There are, several more to come, after this. But, this is, one of the last.

And, in this lecture, we will be dealing with, Discipline in Organizations. You know, we have discussed, what you must do, in your capacity, as human resources professionals. How, you can help the employees. Where do you draw the line? etcetera. We will be touching upon, a very, very, dicey topic, if i may use that term. A very sensitive issue. That is the issue of, Discipline in Organization. So, let us get on, with it.



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Again, some resources.

Sources

Gomez-Mejia, L. R., Balkin, D. B. & Cardy, R. L. (2012). *Managing human resources (7th Ed.)*. New Delhi: PHI Ltd.

Williams, S. & Rumbles, S. (2009). Grievance, discipline & absence in organizations. In S. Gilmore & S. Williams (Eds.). *Human Resource Management (Indian Edition)*. New Delhi: Oxford. 259-281.

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Two books, that i have been referring to, very often. And, i have referred to, these books. I have a lot of material, for you. But, i have referred to these books, because, i believe, they are readily available in the market. And, you can actually, go through these books. And, you can read up, whatever i have discussed, or a lot of whatever, i have discussed, in these books, and a lot more.

These books are very good, they have little caselets, etcetera. So, these are the two books, that i have refer to, primarily. Okay.

Discipline

(Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 2012)

- “Tool that managers rely on to communicate to employees that they need to change a behavior”
- Forms:
 - Progressive discipline: “Series of management interventions that gives employees opportunities to correct their behavior before being discharged.” – primarily warning steps, e.g. Verbal warning – written warning – suspension – discharge
 - Positive discipline: “...encourages employees to monitor their own behaviors and assume responsibility for their actions.”. Four step process – Counselling session between employees and supervisors – follow up and formation of a new timetable & plan – final warning - discharge

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Discipline. Discipline is a tool, that managers rely on, to communicate to employees, that they need, to change a behavior. So, what does discipline mean. Discipline. The need for discipline arises, when employees are not doing, what is expected of them. When employees are not performing, up to the mark. Okay. Now, various forms of discipline.

Discipline can be enforced, in various forms. One is, the progressive discipline, where you have a, series of interventions. You go through, a series of steps. You recognize that, there is something, that needs to change. And then, you verbally, counsel the employee. You call the employee, to your office. And, you will say, look, you know, please, start working, well.

So, you first start with an informal conversation, with the employee. And then, if the employee does not change, or does not correct, his or her behavior, then you move on to a verbal warning, that you record in your own notebook, but do not document anywhere. And, you at least, keep the record, of the date and time.

So, you may call for a meeting, with the employee, and just, so that way, there is some record. And then, you issue a, if the employee still does not correct her behavior, then you issue a written warning, to the employee. And, if the warning, if the behavior, still does not change, then you issue suspension orders. An investigation is conducted.

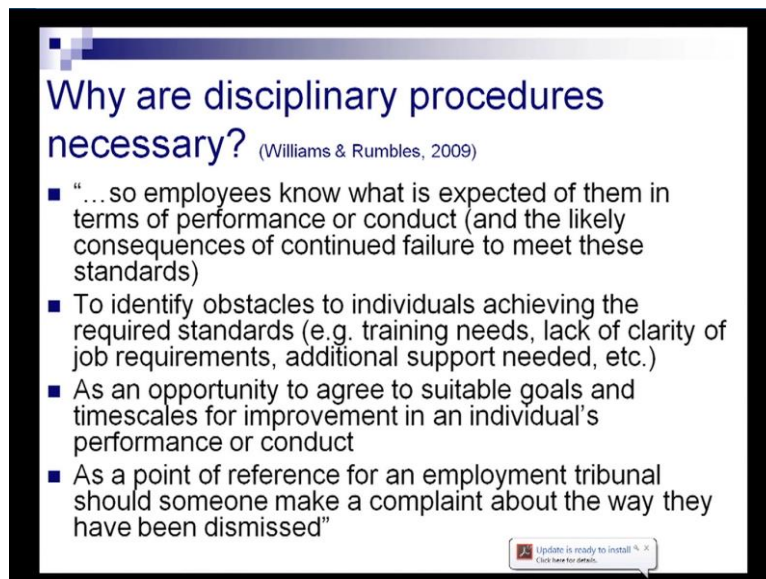
And, if the employee is really found to be guilty, of not having done, whatever was expected, or, at least having tried, whatever was expected, then the employee is finally discharged, from her or his duties. And, all of this is, very contextual. But, progressive discipline essentially refers to, you following a series of steps, to ensure discipline, or to correct the actions of an employee, in such a way, that the employee starts doing, whatever is expected of her or him. Okay.

Then, the other way of disciplining employees is, positive discipline. Which essentially, as the name suggests, encourages employees, to monitor their own behaviors, and assume responsibility, for their actions. Now, progressive discipline, may not necessarily be supportive. But, when we talk about positive discipline, we are talking about, a process in which, employees are helped, to correct their actions.

They are helped to do, whatever is expected of them. They are helped to perform, to their best potential. Okay. It is again, a four-step process, typically. And again, this is just a suggestion. You know, these things, are not set in stone. You can have your own way, of disciplining employees. But, it is always nice, to lay these things down, back and white.

So, positive discipline essentially starts with, a counselling session between, employees and their supervisors, between subordinates and their immediate supervisors. That is, you know, after that, if things do not change, then there is the follow-up meeting, and a formation of new time-table and plan. And, you know, the supervisor sees whether, whatever was suggested to the employee, is being followed or not.

And then, there is a final warning. And, there is a discharge. There is no suspension. But, you give the employee, every opportunity, and every support, to succeed, and change one's behavior. Various forms of, unreasonable difficult behaviors, exist. And, we will deal with, each of those later, in greater detail. But, we are talking about, the specific procedures. Okay. So, just, sorry, general procedures to deal with, unexpected behavior.



Why are disciplinary procedures necessary? (Williams & Rumbles, 2009)

- "...so employees know what is expected of them in terms of performance or conduct (and the likely consequences of continued failure to meet these standards)
- To identify obstacles to individuals achieving the required standards (e.g. training needs, lack of clarity of job requirements, additional support needed, etc.)
- As an opportunity to agree to suitable goals and timescales for improvement in an individual's performance or conduct
- As a point of reference for an employment tribunal should someone make a complaint about the way they have been dismissed"

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Why are disciplinary procedures, necessary? Disciplinary procedures are necessary. So, employees know, what is expected of them, in terms of performance or conduct. I mean, they need to know, what the organization, expects from them. They need to know, what they are supposed to do. And, what will be acceptable. And, what is not acceptable.

And, what will happen, if they do not do, what is expected of them, you know. So, it is very essential that, you lay down, clear guidelines for the employees, to follow, you know, in the process of their work. Okay. And, to identify another reason why, disciplinary procedures are necessary is, to identify obstacles to individuals, achieving the required standards. So, if somebody wants to work.

And, but for whatever reason, the employee is not able to perform well, when you start the disciplinary process, in the initial verbal warning state. Some employees, may not feel very comfortable, coming to their supervisors. And, telling them, that something is not right. They just do not, you know, they feel stifled, they feel uncomfortable. And then, they are not able to perform.

And then, they come to their, you know, during the process of disciplining, you may think, it is discipline for the employee, it may just be a feedback session. You call the employee, and say, what is going on. And, that time, the employee opens up and says, you know, what i am, i do not think, that i am trained to use this particular software package, or i know, how to do x, etcetera.

So, training needs are revealed. Lack of clarity of job requirements. Sometimes, employees do not know, what is expected of them. Many times, actually, especially in the management field, especially, the higher, you go, the more vague, you become. You know, the higher the, or the, lower the, lack of clarity, regarding job requirements. And so, in the process of asking the employee, what is going on, why the employee is not performing up to potential.

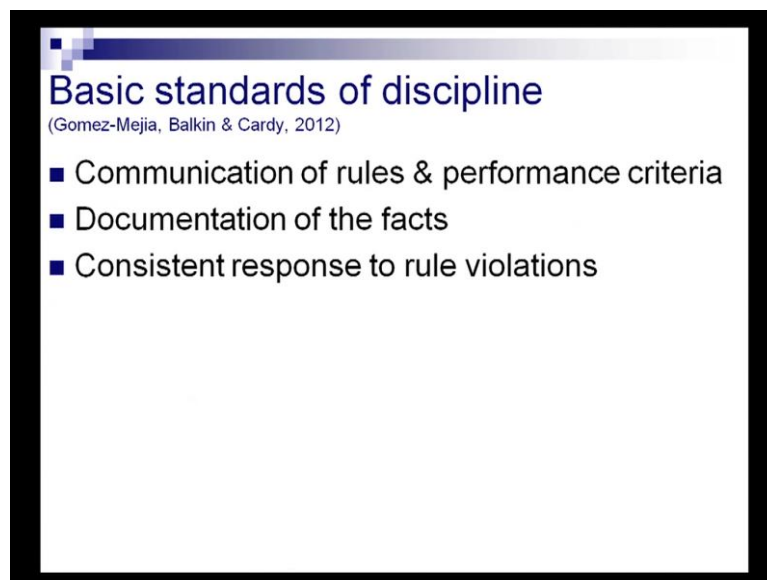
You may realize, that there is lack of, clarity of job requirements. There is, maybe, the employee needs additional support, maybe, the employee needs some flexibility, etcetera. Okay. Then, as an opportunity, to agree to suitable goals and time scales, for improvement in an individual's performance or conduct. So, okay. As an opportunity, to agree to suitable goals and time scales, for improvement in an individual's performance or conduct.

Sometimes, you just need the employees to, you need to give the employees, the chance to improve, whatever they are doing. You know, just by telling them, that you are not performing up to the mark. You need to give them, some chance to improve. As a point of

reference, for an employment tribunal, should someone make a complaint about the way, they have been dismissed.

I mean, you may take various forms of feedback, from the employees. But, it is only during, the disciplinary procedures. When, we sit down, and we evaluate. What is going on. Why things have not gone on the way, they should. Do we realize, what is required, what is not required, especially in a progressive disciplinary procedure? We actually note down, everything.

And, if we want to dismiss somebody, because of poor performance, because of unethical, illegal behavior, various things, we have some documentation, that we can, fall back upon.

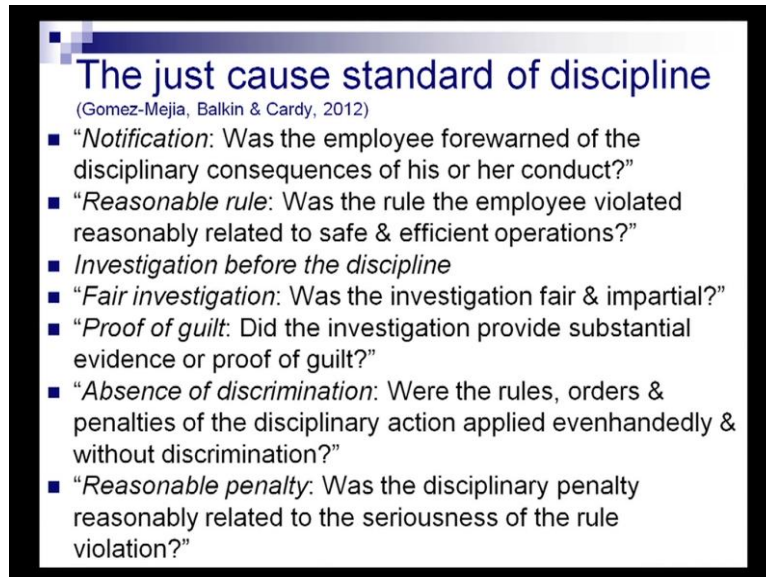


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Basic standards of discipline. Some standards, that are followed in discipline are, one is communication of rules and performance criteria. So, these need to be absolutely clear. Documentation of the facts, is absolutely necessary. And, consistent response to rule violations. Every employee should be treated, the exact same way by the administration.

And, if you keep records of your disciplining procedures, you can ensure consistency in the way, violations are treated by the organization. So, that is why, these procedures are necessary. And, these are some of the standards, that you follow. You do not treat employees, unfairly. You do not treat employees, differently. You treat them, at par with each other.

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The just cause standard of discipline
(Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 2012)

- *“Notification:* Was the employee forewarned of the disciplinary consequences of his or her conduct?”
- *“Reasonable rule:* Was the rule the employee violated reasonably related to safe & efficient operations?”
- *Investigation before the discipline*
- *“Fair investigation:* Was the investigation fair & impartial?”
- *“Proof of guilt:* Did the investigation provide substantial evidence or proof of guilt?”
- *“Absence of discrimination:* Were the rules, orders & penalties of the disciplinary action applied evenhandedly & without discrimination?”
- *“Reasonable penalty:* Was the disciplinary penalty reasonably related to the seriousness of the rule violation?”

Okay. The just cause standard of discipline. So, one of the ways in ensuring, that the basic minimum standards of discipline, are adhered to. You know, when we talk about disciplining employees, we talk about the power, we have as human resources personnel, over the employees, that are in the organization. So, we say, okay.

You are not doing this. And, this is how, i can discipline you. This is what, i can do to you, if you do not do, what is expected. But, with that power, we also shoulder a very, very, big responsibility, of being fair, of appearing to be fair, to all our employees, of giving them, some enough chance to succeed in their work. So, in order to, when we say, just cause, we mean that, we are doing everything within our capacities, to be as ethical as possible, while ensuring discipline in the workplace.

And, the just cause standard of discipline states that, various things need to be adhered to, when you are trying to ensure discipline. One is notification. Was the employee, fore-warned of the disciplinary consequences, of his or her conduct. Did the employee know, what was going to happen, if the employee did not perform, up to the mark? If the employees, do not know, then you are not being fair to the employee.

Okay. Reasonable rule. Was the rule, the employee violated, reasonably related to, safe and efficient operations. If the employee, i mean, you know, overreaction should not be a reason,

for disciplining somebody. You do not like the way, somebody does something. That should not be a reason, for firing an employee, for disciplining an employee.

But, if the employee's actions, genuinely and truly affect the operations of the organization, then definitely, you have just cause. And, the employee knows, how much these things, affect the organization. So, the punishment, the discipline, should not be too less. It should not be too much, you know. It should be, just right.

And, it should be reasonable. Investigation, before the discipline. Before you take any action, against the employee, please give the employee a fair chance, to defend himself or herself. Give the employee a chance, to present his or her point of view. You say, okay, we know that, you have been doing something. We have enough proof.

Give the employee, enough chance to defend, to present her or his side of the story, and explain to you, why the employee did, whatever she or he did. Nobody wants to do, something wrong, consciously. Everybody has a reason to do, whatever they are doing. So, and again, many of you, might contest that. But, i am a firm believer, in the old adage of not guilty, unless proved otherwise. And, the law follows that, you are not guilty, unless you are proven otherwise.

Which means, an organization must take all steps necessary, to investigate an issue before, enforcing any discipline techniques. Okay. Fair investigation needs to be conducted, and the investigation needs to be impartial, it should not be biased, in favor of, or against the employee. Proof of guilt. Did the investigation provide, substantial evidence, or proof of guilt? Again, like i said, not guilty, unless proved otherwise.

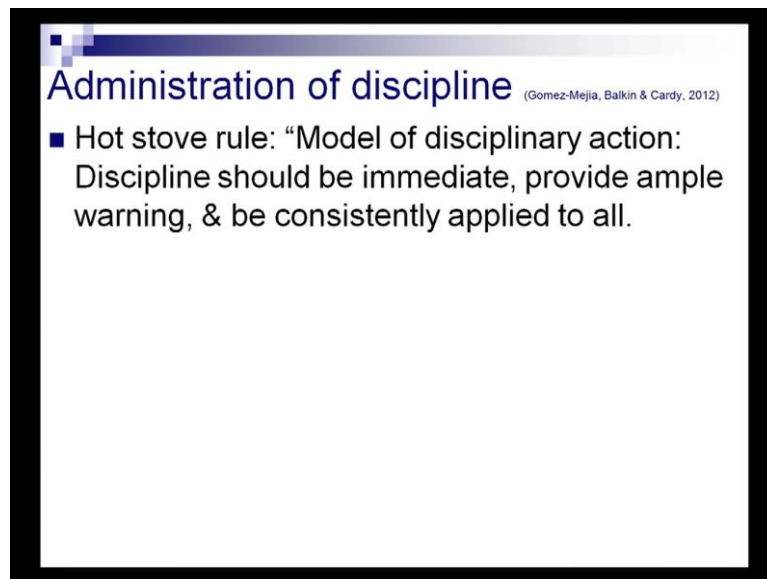
Disciplining procedures, can be very detrimental to an employee's morale. Can be very detrimental, to the way the employees, to the employee's productivity. Can be detrimental, to the overall climate, of the organization. So, proper documentation is required. Fair procedures are required. Absence of discrimination. Where the rules, orders, and penalties, of the disciplinary action, applied evenhandedly, and without discrimination.

Ask yourself, this question. Have i discriminated, against the employee, in any way, either through the way, the employee was treated, or through the end result. We discussed

discrimination, in a previous lecture. So, i will not go into it, again. Reasonable penalty. Was the disciplinary penalty, reasonably related to the seriousness of the rule violation.

Okay. So, is the violation, serious enough. And, is the punishment, you are giving, much more than it should be, or much less than it should be, or is it just right, is it even warranted.

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Administration of discipline. A way in which, you can administer discipline, is the hot stove rule. Model of disciplinary action. Discipline should be immediate. It should provide ample warning, and be consistently applied to all, like a hot stove. We all know, what a stove is. And, when you go to the stove, it is like, you know, you strike, when the iron is hot.

So, you must discipline, according to this rule. The disciplining procedure must take place, when the unlawful or unexpected act has been committed. When the destructive action has been committed, there should not be too much of a gap, between, the time that the disruptive activity was committed, and the action was taken. So, investigation should start, immediately. And, the employee should be counselled, or the process should be started, immediately. Okay. (Refer Slide Time: 16:23)

Mistakes to avoid when administering discipline

(Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 2012)

- Losing your temper
- Avoiding disciplinary action entirely
- Playing therapist
- Making excuses for an employee
- Using a nonprogressive approach to discipline
 - avoid immediate punishment

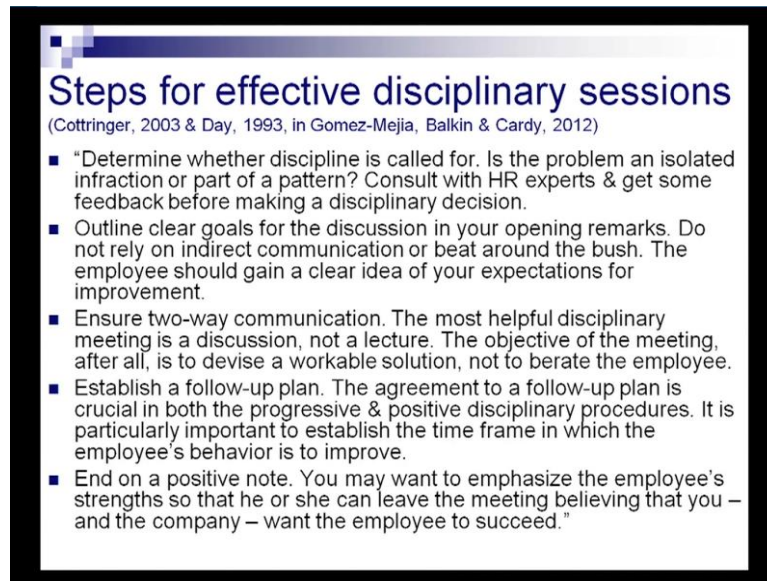
Some mistakes to avoid. When administering discipline, you should not lose your temper. Whenever, you are trying to administer discipline, please do not, lose your temper. Do things, in an evenhanded manner. Do things, you know, take stock of the situation, and be very careful about, how you handle the situation. Okay. Avoid disciplinary action, entirely. So, do not avoid the disciplinary action, completely.

Play therapist. Playing therapist is another thing, that you should not do. You are not a therapist. You are an administration authority. So, you should not, try to play the role of a therapist, and go into counselling. Counselling the employee, regarding what is expected, what is not expected, is good. But, playing the role of a therapist, really puts you in danger, of being perceived as somebody, who can be swayed. And, that should not be done.

Okay. Making excuses, for an employee. It is nice to see, the employee's perspective. But, it is not very nice to be swayed by, whatever the employee says completely, till you have enough proof. Using a non-progressive approach to discipline. So, avoiding immediate punishment, a progress. You must avoid, immediate punishment. Do not jump to conclusions. Do not be swayed, by whatever is said.

Please do, whatever you needs to do, in the manner, it is supposed to be done. Follow the series of procedures, that is laid down. Give a verbal warning. A written warning. Maybe, suspension and discharge. Or, have a counselling session. Have a feedback session. And then,

give a warning. And then, finally, discharge the employee. But, do follow, the series of steps.



Steps for effective disciplinary sessions

(Cottringer, 2003 & Day, 1993, in Gomez-Mejia, Balkin & Cardy, 2012)

- "Determine whether discipline is called for. Is the problem an isolated infraction or part of a pattern? Consult with HR experts & get some feedback before making a disciplinary decision.
- Outline clear goals for the discussion in your opening remarks. Do not rely on indirect communication or beat around the bush. The employee should gain a clear idea of your expectations for improvement.
- Ensure two-way communication. The most helpful disciplinary meeting is a discussion, not a lecture. The objective of the meeting, after all, is to devise a workable solution, not to berate the employee.
- Establish a follow-up plan. The agreement to a follow-up plan is crucial in both the progressive & positive disciplinary procedures. It is particularly important to establish the time frame in which the employee's behavior is to improve.
- End on a positive note. You may want to emphasize the employee's strengths so that he or she can leave the meeting believing that you – and the company – want the employee to succeed."

Okay. (Refer Slide Time: 18:28)

Some steps for effective disciplinary sessions are, determine, whether the discipline is called for. Find out, whether the discipline is, actually required. Is the problem, an isolated infraction, or part of a pattern. Did this happen, because of an exigency, or is the employee, repeatedly engaging in unreasonable behavior. If it is, just because of an exigency, you may not need, to take any disciplinary action.

Maybe, because of some emergency, the employee behaved irrationally. Employee behaved in a manner, that was not expected. So, please find that out. Be a little more compassionate, towards your employees. Consult with human resources experts, and get some feedback, before making a disciplinary decision. Consult with your lawyers, if necessary.

Outline clear goals for the discussion, in your opening remarks. Whenever, you write up a disciplinary report, please make sure, that your goals are clearly outlined. Do not rely on indirect communication, or beat about the bush. The employee should gain a clear idea, of your expectations, for improvement. Employee should know, what is expected, in future.

Yes, you told the employee, what was required. You went ahead. The employee did, whatever she or he did. You call the employee. Counsel them. But then, when you are writing up a report, when you are talking to the employee, make sure, that the employee understands,

clearly, what is expected, and by when. And, what will happen, if these expectations are not met.

Ensure a two-way communication. Like i told you, many times, employees do not realize, what is expected of them. They find out, about it, in the disciplinary session. Then they realize, that they are being targeted. They feel, that they have been mocked at. They feel, that they have been put down. And, then there, that further adds to the, lack of productivity, lack of morale, in them.

So, our job, as HR professionals, is not to put, people down. It is to help them, succeed, at whatever cost. So, not at whatever cost, but in as fair a manner, as possible. So, what we can do is, we must make sure, that the employee feels comfortable, coming to us. And, of course, we need to keep records. And, we need to be safe. But, we must also have the employee realized, that we are there to support the employee, not to pull the employee down.

So, make sure, that the channel of two-way communication, is open down. Establish a follow-up plan. The agreement to a follow-up plan, is crucial in both the progressive and positive disciplinary procedures. Whatever procedure you adopt, the employee must know, that you will be closely monitoring, what the employee does. And, you will intervene, if whatever is expected, is not being done.

And, in that case, you know, you really, the employee needs to know, when you will intervene, how you will intervene, what the consequences of the expectations not being met are. How the employee can reach you, if the employee needs some support, while doing, what is expected of her or him. And, what kind of support, can the employee, hope to get from you.

So, all these things, should be clearly defined. And, the timelines should be clearly defined, for the employee, to have a fair chance, at improving her or his performance. End on a positive note. Never ever, end a disciplinary session, on a negative note, and say, you are bad, you are this. Do not ever, do that.

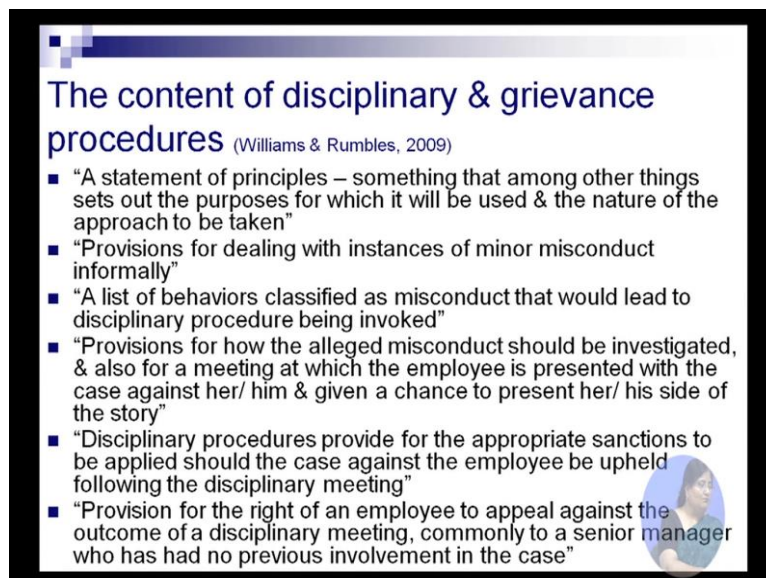
Do not ever, use your finger, and say, you are absolutely, you know, useless, nothing can happen to you, nothing can be done. I mean, we will talk more about this, when we talk

about, workplace bullying. Something like this, can really pull, an employee's morale, down. You know, of course, the financial aspect of it is, that the cost of hiring a new employee is, can be very high.

And, if you fire an employee, without giving her or him a proper chance, you could be liable for loss wages. But, even as a human being, we are all humans. We are here, to support, each other. So, make sure, that the employee realizes that, this is the process, that the organization is not comfortable, with the employee not doing, what is expected.

But, the organization, wants to help the employee, succeed. And, give the employee, as many resources as possible, and help the employee, succeed. So, you should always help on a, sorry, end on a positive note. And, give the employee, hope of moving ahead of, overcoming the problems, that she or he may have faced in the past.

And, if still the employee does not improve, then of course, you may have to take, the very difficult decision of, firing her or him. Okay.



The content of disciplinary & grievance procedures (Williams & Rumbles, 2009)

- "A statement of principles – something that among other things sets out the purposes for which it will be used & the nature of the approach to be taken"
- "Provisions for dealing with instances of minor misconduct informally"
- "A list of behaviors classified as misconduct that would lead to disciplinary procedure being invoked"
- "Provisions for how the alleged misconduct should be investigated, & also for a meeting at which the employee is presented with the case against her/ him & given a chance to present her/ his side of the story"
- "Disciplinary procedures provide for the appropriate sanctions to be applied should the case against the employee be upheld following the disciplinary meeting"
- "Provision for the right of an employee to appeal against the outcome of a disciplinary meeting, commonly to a senior manager who has had no previous involvement in the case"

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The content of disciplinary and grievance procedures, should contain, again, these are suggestions, given by, you know, by Williams and Rumbles, in this paper. So, they suggest, that the disciplinary and grievance procedures should contain, a statement of principles.

Something, that among other things, sets out the purposes for which it will be used, and the nature of approach to be taken.

So, what do you want, from the employee. How do you think, the employee can achieve it? Provisions for dealing, with instances of minor misconduct, informally. Let the employee know, that minor misconduct, on the one hand, will not be ignored. But, on the other hand, it may not be. It may not warrant something, very serious.

So, the employees feel free. They feel comfortable, coming to the organization. And, they realize that, honest mistakes, are going to be taken, in their stride. Provisions for, how the alleged misconduct, should be investigated. And, also for a meeting, sorry, a list of behaviors, classified as misconduct, that would lead to disciplinary procedure, being invoked.

So, the employee must know, what is going to be taken, how seriously. And, that should be crystal clear. So, you and employee, both can use this list, for your reference, anytime, a mistake has been made. Provisions for, how the alleged misconduct, should be investigated. And, also for a meeting at which, the employees presented with the case, against her or him, and given a chance to present, her or his side of the story.

So, the employee should know, that disciplinary action will not be taken, immediately. The employee, will be given a chance, a fair chance, to improve her or his work. Disciplinary procedures, provide for the appropriate sanctions, to be applied. Should the case against the employee, be upheld, following the disciplinary meeting.

So, the employee should know, what will be done to the employee, if it is proven that the, employee engaged in, unreasonable behavior. So, you know, so all that should be, listed clearly. Provision for the right of an employee, to appeal against the outcome of a disciplinary meeting, commonly to a senior manager, who has had no previous involvement, in the case.

So, the employee should know that, one decision will not be, you know, that the employee has a right to appeal the decision, that is taken, even after due investigation. We must give the employee, every possible chance to defend, herself or himself. And, if the employee fails, then so be it. Too bad. Okay.

So, that is all i have, for you in this lecture. We will continue, with some more details, regarding how you can deal with difficult employees, in the workplace. And, we will end with, what you can do in your capacity as human resources managers, to avoid, the problems that you encounter, or to minimize the chances of disciplining employees. So, thank you, very much, for listening. And, i will talk to you, some more, in the following lecture.