



Criticism and Discipline

A good manager knows how to criticize appropriately. Thus, workers will learn from his remarks and will not feel offended.

92

Do not criticize your workers in the presence of their colleagues.

Public criticism misses its mark (unless it is intended to insult). The worker criticized may feel humiliated and his motivation to improve will be negatively affected in accordance with his feelings. His colleagues will also know the same treatment awaits them too one of these days. They will not admire you for this behavior. Therefore, comment to a worker about his poor performance privately, examine its causes, and offer constructive ways to improve.

If a worker performed successfully, praise him in front of his colleagues - this way, he will be rewarded for his good performance, and others will have an incentive to act likewise.

Being their superior lends you the authority to instruct your workers to carry out their missions. However, it does not grant you the right to treat anyone with disrespect. Your subordinates are humans just like you.

A branch manager says, “Don’t do to your workers what you’d hate to have done to you.” He remembers an occasion in which his own manager yelled at him over the phone and blamed him for being responsible for something that was simply not his fault. Other workers who were nearby heard the rebuke. The superior manager indeed apologized for his behavior, but the branch manager remembered that incident from years ago as a humiliating situation that adversely affected him and, of course, negatively affected his performance for a long time.



93

Do not take disciplinary measures before having thought out what you want to gain from doing so.

A punitive measure, as justified as it might be, could yield results totally contradictory to those you had planned, and you might lose more than you could gain.

Try to assess beforehand the ramifications of your decision on the worker's performance, on his colleagues' attitude, and the functioning of the unit as a whole, and then act accordingly.

A team leader in a company whose branches are spread all over the country did not get along with one of his workers, who was actually considered a good, professional individual. The section manager wanted to move her to a different team. He then found out that her team leader told the other team leader that he had better refuse to have her on his team.

The section manager was angry. The team leader acted contrary to his policy. Moreover, he took action to hurt a person - a coworker.

He decided, therefore, to punish him in what he considered to be an original way, by publishing the team

leader's name, to his shame, on the weekly inner update memo of the section where current events were publicized. Customarily, the only names mentioned are related to positive events, not negative ones, so as not to shame anybody. This time, however, unable to control his anger, the manager publicized the team leader's name prior to having fully examined the case.

Reactions were harsh on all sides, from workers and managers alike. No one approved of his deed and the fire was aimed at him, the section manager, rather than at the faulty team leader.

The manager realized his error. He hurried to gather his people, admitted his error publicly, and explained he acted on an angry impulse.

Ironically, his imprudent, uncalled for act was surprisingly similar to that of his team leader against whom he acted out.



94

A disciplinarian act or expressions of appreciation have to be proportionate to the conduct criticized or appreciated.

Ways of assessment and reward, much like disciplinarian acts, should be seen as reasonable and fair, not only by their targeted receivers, but mostly by the rest of the workers; otherwise, the general objective would be missed.

In a product marketing firm, a salesperson who persuaded a client to use the company's product rather than a competitive one won a positive comment at the team meeting and even a modest gift.

On the other hand, a salesperson whose sales rose by 10 percent won a generous bonus and a letter of appreciation signed by the directorate.

In the same unit, whenever a worker commits a professional error, his "reward" is a face-to-face comment from his manager. However, if he is regularly in conflict with

his friends and his manager, he is severely reprimanded orally and in writing.

The same holds true in case of a reduction in sales.

Nevertheless, it is still recommended to "err" on the positive side. It is better to award a worker by more rather than less than what he deserves. And conversely, a lighter than what is due penalty is preferable to a harsher one.



95

A negative comment to a worker who erred should be close in time to the deed.

Provide the individual with the motivation to correct his error and learn from it.

A negative or a positive comment on performance not given on time is taken as an off-handed comment, as if it suddenly occurred to the manager.

Recognizing that the manager is aware of a worker's performance and constantly checks it is a crucial motivator.

A worker at a bank branch committed a fundamental error. The branch manager explained the significance of the mistake to him, saying, "Try to correct the implications of your mistake by the end of the day. If you manage this, very well then. If not, pass the assignment on to me and I'll take care of it." This stimulated the worker to make the corrections himself. Thus, the manager taught the worker how to correct his mistake while strongly motivating him to do so in order to defend his professional pride.



96

Do not rush to blame your workers.

Always check first if the failure or fault is indeed the direct result of your workers' negligence or rather the outcome of erroneous procedures in your organization.

Check the quality of your instructions as well.

A regiment commander gave orders to the regiment ordnance officer who was under his command operatively, though professionally under the command of the division ordnance officer and the regulations of ordnance corps. The regiment commander's order related to the operational activity of the regiment, but included a component that contradicted professional orders of ordnance corps. The ordnance officer contacted his headquarters to get their consent to carry out the irregular order. He did not get it, and therefore did not carry out the commander's order.

The commander could put him on trial, but having understood the reason, restrained himself. He grasped

the dual loyalty his ordnance officer found himself bound to and did not relate merely to his disobedience of the order.

This is true leadership. It entails not only guarding one's managerial ego and criticizing performance that does not fit the manager's views, but also shows restraint when needed, and understanding of the worker's motives.



97

Do not search for culprits, but rather take care of the causes of failure.

Finding culprits does not prevent failure. Instead of running campaigns to track down culprits, attempt to correct what is wrong and prevent future errors.

Your workers, the lesser among them as well, will appreciate your patience with them, which will raise their motivation to improve. It is best to get them to report their faults frankly, to analyze their mistakes, and to encourage them to correct them.

Notwithstanding, workers who keep failing repeatedly deserve special attention, and if there is no other choice, they should be sent out of the unit.

After 10,000 commercial brochures were printed for the sales unit, a serious printing error was discovered. They had to be discarded, even at the cost of the financial loss. Examination after the fact revealed the brochure was sent to the printers although the advertising manager had

spotted the mistake beforehand and ordered that it be corrected. He did it by phone to the graphics designer. She misunderstood him and sent out the incorrect version.

Nobody was rebuked for the failure, which led, as a consequence, to new work regulations. It was decided that in the future, approved versions will be signed by the advertising manager to ensure this kind of failure does not recur.



98

Every worker has aspirations, needs, wishes, and a worldview of his own. They do not have to be identical to yours.

Nevertheless, try to keep the rules of the game within the boundaries of common sense.

The computation unit of a bank employed an outside worker. He did not fit in the team socially: he dressed differently, wore an earring, read books at work, and left every now and then on his own personal business. However, his direct manager reconciled himself with his eccentricities since he was a competent computer worker and performed well.

One day he arrived at work wearing shorts. This time the manager commented. He said such an appearance might raise no problems in a closed computation unit, but since this one was located within the bank and the clients recognized its workers as bank workers, he forbid him to appear dressed like that again.



99

Worker conduct alone is to be appreciated by the manager, not his personality or his characteristics.

You are entitled to criticize the performance of the worker for which he is paid, and that alone. Not his character traits. His deeds you might change, but not his personality.

In addition, a worker will probably accept with understanding factual criticism relating to his conduct and functioning, but will be offended and develop antagonism toward you and the workplace if you criticize his personality.

A worker in a computer company used to treat his colleagues haughtily and respond cynically to their professional initiatives. His unbecoming behavior turned off his colleagues who refused to work with him. His managers had to transfer him to a different department, where he turned off his new colleagues too.

The manager of this department called him in for a talk. They agreed that after every professional discussion in

which other workers participated, the two of them, alone, would analyze his behavior.

The process of training was done as matter of fact without criticism. Results were evident: the worker was no longer haughty; he stopped supporting his own ideas only, and stopped automatically discarding his colleagues' suggestions. Instead, he started listening to them attentively and even contributed his own knowledge and experience to the discussions. Today he is considered a likable, popular worker.



100

When a worker gets angry, unjustly, in your opinion, do not explain to him how wrong he is.

Help him calm down, understand his motives, and only then explain your position.

A deputy manager of a branch of a nationwide marketing company instructed one of the cashiers to arrange the shelves toward the end of the day on a Friday. The cashier said she could not carry out the work as she had to leave. The deputy called the branch manager who ordered her to carry out the task that was part of the branch routine work. The cashier, who was considered a good worker, refused and insisted on leaving. In his anger, the manager told her not to come back.

The cashier went home weeping.

Later on, the manager felt he should have inquired why it was so important for her to leave early, and admitted, moreover, that he took an overly aggressive position in the dialogue. After the Sabbath, he called her and

apologized for not having asked why she wanted to leave early. She told him she was to go with her family on a holiday for the weekend, but because she was fired she was too upset and did not go; instead, she sent her husband and children without her.

The manager was moved and admitted his reaction was wrong. He apologized for not having inquired about her motives and firing her in a moment of anger. At the end of their conversation, he asked her to come back to work. She agreed willingly. She appreciated the manager's ability to admit a mistake. Her colleagues shared her appreciation.

The incident enhanced the manager's leadership and his workers' faith in his fairness and honesty.

