



CLIENT INFORMATION GUIDE

Section: Employment Practices

Topic: Effective Disciplinary Conferences

This guide on holding productive and positive disciplinary, or corrective action, conferences is designed to serve as a supplement to the Client Information Guide entitled "Corrective Action".

1. Determine whether discipline is called for. Is the problem an isolated infraction or part of a pattern?
2. Have clear goals for the discussion with the poor performer. By the end of the meeting, the employee should have a clear idea of the manager's expectations for improvement. Managers need to be specific; they should not rely on indirect comments.
3. Hold the discussion in private. A public reprimand embarrasses the employee and his/her coworkers. The manager often loses the trust and respect of all who observe the public reprimand.
4. Be calm. A calm manager is more likely to remain objective and undistracted by irrelevant problems.
5. Time the discussion carefully. Don't let the employee spend time worrying about what is wrong or preparing defensive arguments.
6. Prepare effective opening remarks. Think about and rehearse the opening remarks in advance.
7. Avoid beating around the bush. Too much small talk at the beginning will actually raise the employee's anxiety level.
8. Ensure two-way communication. The most helpful disciplinary meeting is a discussion, not a lecture. The objective of the meeting is to come up with a solution, not to berate the employee.
9. Establish a follow-up plan with time frames for improvement.
10. End on a positive note. Emphasize the employee's strengths, so that the employee can leave the meeting believing that the manager and the company want him/her to succeed. However, do not leave the employee with the false impression that a serious problem is somehow "not serious".

Adapted from Luis R. Gomez-Mejia, David B. Balkin, and Robert Cardy. *Managing Human Resources*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1995 as cited in *Module Two: General Employment Practices, The SHRM Learning System*. Society for Human Resource Management, 2000.