

Three Key Employee Relations Strategies

Employee relations has a major impact on performance and productivity. It affects everything, such as, motivation, energy, performance, collaboration and the overall work environment.

Positive workplaces have lower absenteeism, higher productivity, higher retention rates, fewer problems and are simply more efficient. Don't do it because it's nice, do it because it's cheaper!

The Magic Formula is...(not a surprise!) Common Sense-Commitment-Consistency

More specifically, **three key strategies** combine to build effective employee relations.

1-A Proactive Preventive Approach (preventing problems is always easier)

A strategy of **informing and educating** Employees on policies, practices, guidelines, their rights and the rights of others, and reinforcing those messages so that all understand *“the way we do things here!”* Many Employers already have clear policies & guidelines, but these need to be communicated & reinforced consistently by,

- Effective Employee Orientations & education to clearly set the tone and expected norms of behaviour, then reinforcement to confirm the message,
- Clearly communicated policies & practices (e.g. public postings, employee handbooks, training, performance guidance & feedback, all reinforcing a consistent approach)
- Trained, knowledgeable Managers who model & enforce policies consistently, through fair, balanced & transparent practices. Actions speak louder than words!

2-Positive Problem Solving (when issues do arise)

Train Managers to take a positive, open, non-accusatory approach to resolving issues. You earn trust with Employees who have erred, but have the potential to step up and contribute. They are more committed to the solution. A non-judgmental inquiry often simplifies the next step.

3-Counseling/Discipline (when 1 & 2 haven't worked!)

When needed, a strategy to legally, fairly and assertively address and resolve issues. A few Employees pose continuing problems, where a stronger approach is needed, such as counseling, warnings, reprimands, suspension and, if necessary, termination of employment.

Here, an assertive, but a balanced approach can not only resolve the issue, but also confirm the Employers' effective approach for others to see. Consistency & reinforcement have impacts.

These three approaches are key parts in a comprehensive employee relations strategy providing,

- fair and equitable processes, balance and consistency, that,
- work within laws, policies, collective agreements and the principles of natural justice.