

MANAGERS' GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS - DISCIPLINE

DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE APPLIED PROMPTLY, CONSISTENTLY, AND FAIRLY.

Many managers are uncomfortable with the discipline process and often wait until they have already determined that they cannot work with an employee to start the process. At this point it is probably too late to properly use this technique, which is designed to modify and correct a performance or behaviour issue.

When properly applied, progressive discipline benefits both management and employees by ensuring work is performed to standard, work is performed safely and unacceptable behavior is corrected promptly. Follow the steps below:



Investigate the Incident

Prior to any disciplinary action being taken, the manager should ensure that a full and fair investigation of the facts is conducted.

Document

Maintain a written record of your investigation, results of the investigation, and your discussions and meetings with your employees. Documentation should be factual and should clearly state the particulars of each meeting including the date, time, location, subject, follow-up schedule, and any other relevant details

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Develop a Plan of Action

There are three formal steps in the discipline approach. Typically each step is followed in sequence. Progressively more severe discipline is applied in order to reinforce management's concerns and provide the employee with time to improve.

Meet with your employee to explore options for correcting the problem and formally document with one of the following steps:

Verbal Warning

The verbal warning is the opportunity to constructively counsel your employee regarding an on-going performance or behaviour problem and provide an opportunity for the employee to improve before the problem becomes part of an official record.

Warning Letter

The warning letter is used where an incident occurs that warrants a formal response or as a follow up to a verbal warning when a performance or behaviour problem still exists after a reasonable timeframe for change.

Final Warning Letter

The final warning letter is used to signify the seriousness of an incident or is used in response to the persistence of a performance or behaviour problem. The final warning indicates that failure to meet the standard or a repeat of the inappropriate behavior could result in the employee's dismissal.

In some cases, the results of the incident investigation or unsuccessful attempts to correct a performance or behavior problem will lead the manager to decide termination of employment is the best option for the organization. For more information on Termination refer to the Fusion HR Toolkit - Managers Guide to the Termination Meeting.

Develop a Plan of Action

The Discipline Meeting - Tips

- Hold the meeting in a private location in an office or meeting room.
- Treat your employee fairly and respectfully at all times.
- Focus on the work related performance and behaviour.
- Be specific about what exactly your employee needs to improve / rule that needs to be followed.
- Advise the employee what the consequences will be for failure to improve or a repeated occurrence of the inappropriate behaviour.
- Be professional – don't use language that is judgmental or critical; don't comment on your employee's personality.
- Listen to feedback from the employee about the situation. Don't get into a debate with the employee.
- Be positive in your message about improving performance / behaviour.
- Document - keep a record of all meeting dates and notes.
- A copy of the discipline letter should be placed in the employee's file.
- Allow your employee sufficient time to improve.

Follow Up

- Meet with your employee regularly to review performance / conduct.
- Continue to offer assistance.
- Communicate and enforce the standards of performance and code of conduct in your workplace.
- Act promptly to all breaches of the standards and code of conduct.
- If the problem is resolved, continue to provide positive feedback and conduct regular performance meetings.
- Follow-up on your warnings - if the performance problem, behaviour or misconduct is repeated, impose a more severe disciplinary penalty, up to and including dismissal.

The information provided is an overview. Your situation is unique. Contact Fusion Career Services for advice.