HUMAN RESOURCES

Innovative Life Options

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Building strong teams

WHY ARE STRONG TEAMS IMPORTANT?

When teams work well together, workplaces are enjoyable and energetic. Team members feel valued and that their contributions matter. Team building provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships, resulting in loyalty and dedication. Strong and successful teams recognize and use each employee's unique skills to help the team work toward a shared goal. Building a strong team is well worth the time invested.

When a team is strong, employees support and help each other. They help each other when a member is overwhelmed or when a member needs help learning a task. Strong teams ensure time is taken to acknowledge contributions. They understand the importance of connecting and make meeting with one another a priority.

When a team is strong, employees are able to give constructive criticism to and accept it from one another without becoming resentful. They remain united in the larger goal even when there are disagreements on how to get there. When there are disagreements, strong teams have members that support each other around others.

Team building exercises provides time for people to get acquainted and become familiar with each other's skills and talents. Team building exercises can be done in ten minutes at the beginning of a staff meeting. Finding ways for employees to connect with each other on a deeper level fosters understanding and respect.

TEAMWORK

Teamwork is the ability to work well with others. This is an essential skill in any workplace. Teamwork requires balancing personal achievement and group goals. It requires mutual respect and a cooperative spirit among team members. Team members need to be reliable thereby creating trust in one another.

Teamwork flourishes when employees collaborate with one another. To promote good collaboration, encourage employees to listen to one another and consider each other's ideas. Encourage employees to share responsibility and recognition.

Creating an environment where employees work as a team is a thoughtful process. As the employer, it is critical to be thinking about teamwork consistently. Be intentional with actions, language, and plans to foster team work at all times. Set out clear roles and expectations to minimize confusion. Manage time effectively to ensure time is not wasted and goals are met. Manage conflict as it arises using the larger team goal as the backdrop for the conversations. Encourage collaboration, but take charge with firm decisions as needed to keep things moving forward so that momentum is not lost. Hold everyone accountable to their commitments.

COMMUNICATION, TRUST AND RESPECT

Communication is very important in the employer/employee relationship. Research has shown that the number one reason for conflict and low morale in the workplace is the way people communicate with one another. Open and honest communication is vital to creating a good working atmosphere. It is important to explain levels of accountability and outline communication processes for when issues arise with employees. This establishes a supportive and positive work environment. It creates a process where employees feel heard and know where to go for advice or information.

Hold individual meetings with employees where listening is the main goal. When employees feel heard, it is less likely for resentment to build. Employers can learn a lot from employees about what is working and ideas on how to improve things.

Employers and employees alike have the right to be treated with respect. Foster an understanding and kind working environment by using respectful words and tone when communicating. Have activities at meetings to promote diversity and understanding. Employers guide their employees to complete tasks as per their wishes. Doing so respectfully will be more successful and will result in better communication and relationships.

Trust in a workplace is known to create good working conditions. When trust isn't present in a workplace it can result in low morale, disengagement, resentment, and high tension. In order to foster trust some ideas are:

- Be sure to stand by what is said. Do not say it, schedule it, or promise it if it cannot be held to account or fulfilled
- Communicate respectfully. Use respectful language and tone
- Do not tolerate gossip. Gossip is a sure way to create unease and mistrust in a work environment
- Treat each employee consistently. Do not show favoritism to a particular employee with praise, time, or promotions. Ensure processes and treatment are fair
- Have open communication in meetings. Ensure employees feel comfortable speaking up freely without fear of angry, snide, sarcastic, cynical, and dismissive remarks or facial expressions

Supervision Basics

ADMINISTRATION

There are many components to overseeing employees. Being organized administratively is a great way to keep on top of what is required and when. It is recommended to keep an employee file for each of your workers including all pertinent information such as:

- Job description
- Resume
- References
- Prerequisites
- Signed employment agreement
- Completed government and tax related forms
- Feedback documentation
- Employee evaluations
- Any other documentation related to specific employees.

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO EMPLOYEES

New employees may not always know what to do and require guidance at the beginning of their employment. Take time to set short-term, attainable goals with them to help build their confidence one step at a time. Plan time to observe their performance and provide feedback. Lack of support may leave an employee with no direction and may result in mistakes that could have been avoided.

On-going support to employees is equally important. Checking in with employees periodically provides opportunity for informal discussion. Holding staff meetings ensures all employees are on the same page. Showing up during difficult moments helps employees to feel supported.

Some challenges that may occur if too little support is provided to employees:

- Employees may feel their work is not valued
- Employees are less likely to develop loyalty to their employer
- Employees may deviate from person centered supports
- Unethical behaviors may occur from employees
- Decreased employee effort due to lack of support
- High turnover rate

Supervision Basics

Some challenges that may occur if too much support is provided to employees:

- Employees don't feel respected or trusted
- Increased tension
- Decreased overall employee morale
- Displeasure at work
- Resentment
- High turnover rate

STAFF MEETINGS

Staff meetings are an important part of supervising a team of employees. Regular staff meetings provide an opportunity for discussion and to ensure all employees are on the same page regarding tasks. It also provides the opportunity to follow-up on what commitments were made by staff members at the last meeting. A good tip is to have someone take meeting minutes and distribute them amongst team members. This ensures everyone has the same information.

Staff meetings play a large role in building a sense of team. Providing time for informal talk, food to share, and team building activities can help nurture good relationships between staff members. A few times a year, have meetings will little to no business, just fun and connecting. This will help build good working relationships filled with respect, collaboration, listening, and team work.

One on one meetings with employees are a great way to get to know each individual employee better. It also provides an opportunity for the employee to share ideas or concerns. While meeting one on one, plan time for informal discussions about performance and goal setting.

Supervision Basics

FEEDBACK

Feedback is offering thoughts and perspective on how an employee is performing their duties. When given effectively, feedback can be a valuable tool for both the employee and employer. Formal feedback (such as a performance review), and informal feedback are equally important. Feedback on what employees are doing well and how to improve their performance are also equally important.

ometimes feedback is great to hear, but sometimes, it can be hard for an employee to hear and that is okay. Employers have the right to tell employees if they would like them to do something in a different way and have those decisions respected. It takes time and practice to become skilled at offering feedback. Some tips for offering feedback:

- Be specific by providing examples to help the employee understand what they can do differently
- Offer suggestions on ways to improve. Agree on any “next steps” and be sure to follow up and provide ongoing feedback in relation to these steps.
- Base feedback on actual information and observations, not second hand information
- Focus on the action rather than personality
- Provide feedback in a timely manner
- Be objective, calm, honest and respectful
- Provide balanced feedback – include what is going well and what requires improvement
- Praise in public, but provide any recommendations for change in private.
- Focus on one or two specific areas only so that the person is not overwhelmed
- Use a tone that reflects emotional intent. Discuss feedback in a helpful, supportive manner, not an attacking and belittling manner

Sometimes feedback is required when there are serious performance concerns. This can be more challenging to do. Surprising people with negative feedback can cause unintended issues. For more complex matters, let the person know that a meeting is required and what the meeting will be about.

Supervision Basics

- At the beginning of the meeting, be clear that there are concerns that need to be addressed
- Focus on trying to help the employee improve his or her performance
- Provide honest feedback and document the feedback
- Talk about the employee's strengths and challenges. Complement them on positive performance and provide examples
- Be very clear about the problem and the impact. Provide a recent example of the employee's performance problem and examples of how it could have been handled differently
- Listen to the employee's perspective
- Explain why it is important that the problem be handled differently
- Be clear about what will happen if the problem continues. If this is a problem that could result in dismissal, say so. Make sure the employee understands the need to change
- Offer whatever help is appropriate and make sure to follow up on any commitments
- Document the discussion in a memo or letter to the employee. This is especially important if the employee needs to be dismissed further down the road. Dismissing someone for just cause over a performance problem, requires documentation that the employee was given the chance to correct their performance

Performance Reviews

WHY ARE PERFOMANCE REVIEWS IMPORTANT?

A performance review is a meeting that allows the employer to evaluate the employee's performance. They are not mandatory; the employer decides whether to implement them or not. Performance reviews provide a formal opportunity to discuss the employee's performance, what is going well, and what areas need improvement. Done effectively, it boosts communication, understanding, and work ethic.

During a performance review, employers should:

- Recognize the strengths and contributions of the employees
- Acknowledge them for their hard work and efforts
- Review current duties and responsibilities
- Address any concerns in performance
- Set future goals and plan the employee's development and create a timeline
- During a performance review, employees can expect to:
- Learn whether or not they are completing their responsibilities to standard.
- Hear what they are doing well and what requires improvement
- Brainstorm on how to improve their performance
- Provide clarity on their roles and responsibilities

PREPARING FOR THE PERFOMANCE REVIEW

Being prepared to conduct a performance review will create a better atmosphere for learning and growing. Take time to review documentation, think about the employee's performance, and what to communicate. Plan an evaluation after the employee's probationary period and every year thereafter. Prepare a written review with the following:

- Evaluate employees based on the responsibilities outlined in their job description
- Use specific examples of the employee's performance
- For areas the employee is doing well, offer praise
- For areas where improvements are needed, explain the action, the result of the action, and what needs to improve
- Indicate options for improvement such as further training, coaching, or education
- Develop an action plan with recommendations for growth and development
- Schedule a time to meet with lots of time to allow for thoughtful discussion
- Ask the employee to think about their performance before the meeting

See Appendix A for a performance review template.

CONDUCTING THE PERFOMANCE REVIEW

The performance review shouldn't be a surprise to the employee. They should know about how they are doing from day-to-day feedback and support. The performance review is a time to confirm and discuss progress, concerns, and goals, as well as to plan for the future. When conducting the review:

- Set a positive tone. Make it known that the goal of the review is to improve performance and commend successes
- Ask for the employee's view of their performance. Listen carefully to what they have to say to learn more about their perspective
- Discuss what is in the written performance review. Be clear about how things should be in the future rather than talking about the past
- Review options for improvement and agree on a plan for moving forward
- Set goals for the upcoming year and agree on how they will be followed up on
- Ask the employee to provide feedback on how to best support them in their role
- Have the employee sign two copies of the written review, one for them to keep, and the other to keep on file
- Use the same process and standards for everyone you evaluate
- Be honest and fair

Once the performance review has been completed, there are a number of follow-up steps necessary. Enter training, supervision or goals into a calendar and follow-up in a timely manner. Set aside a time to answer any questions that came up during the review that did not get answered. Continue to encourage positive performance and offer feedback on growth or positive changes made by the employee.

JOB SATISFACTION AND MOTIVATION

Employee retention is how long employees are employed. Research shows that job satisfaction is one of the most important factors in employee longevity. There are a number of elements that contribute to contentedness in employment.

Good relationships with colleagues and superiors are extremely important for job satisfaction. Sharing a smile and a laugh, having things explained, having someone to turn to when things aren't going well make the work day more engaging.

Employees who are appreciated by employers or co-workers feel valued and respected. Without appreciation employees can feel dispirited. Fair monetary compensation, bonuses, benefits, and promotions go a long way in retaining employees.

Having a good work/life balance is paramount to job satisfaction. Having an employer that does not overwork employees, has reasonable expectations around deadlines and working hours, and has good boundaries during time off is very attractive.

Continued professional development is a way for employees to continue to feel motivated. Employers who encourage their employees to seek out education and training and provide paid development days show that they want to invest in employees.

Engaging employees with problem solving results in employees who feel valued and needed. Including employees in strategic planning and setting goals together fosters motivation and an investment in the future together.

APPRECIATION

Recognizing employees for the valuable contributions they make is an excellent way to increase staff morale. Finding ways to show gratitude is a positive communication tool that can be used at any time to create a positive work environment and engage employees. Employees can be recognized for their efforts publicly or privately. When people feel valued, supported, and appreciated they will be more invested in doing good work for their employer.

Employee recognition and appreciation can be simple, immediate, and powerful. It can be done through various acts of kindness. Recognition comes in many forms and doesn't need to be costly. There are many low-cost ways to show employees they are a valued team member.

- A bouquet of flowers or a plant
- A box of chocolates
- A thank-you card
- A fruit or treat basket
- Tickets to a sports game, theatre or special event
- Gift certificate to a restaurant or favorite store
- Movie passes
- A day off with pay
- Public appreciation at a staff meeting
- Take out for lunch or dinner
- Acknowledge the anniversary of the day they started working
- Recognize birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, etc.
- A phone call or special note
- Have a potluck dinner to bring people together
- Offering time for the team to get together just for fun
- Offer training and workshops to build on skills employees already have

Supervision Challenges

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Having conflict occur in the workplace is inevitable. People come from different backgrounds, have different values and belief systems, and will have opinions that differ from their co-workers. It is important to have clear processes in place for conflict that all members of the workplace are aware of. The process should be written in the employee handbook, and reviewing it should be part of the orientation process.

Good practices include having workers try to manage the conflict themselves. Set a time to meet where interruptions won't occur and preferably at a neutral place. Each person should take a turn discussing the conflict and desired changes. The use of "I" statements instead of "you" statements will help keep the focus on specific events and behaviors.

It is critical to listen actively instead of preparing a response. Restating or rephrasing what was said can ensure understanding. This is a good opportunity to ask further questions to understand better. Summarize the conflict and work towards consensus. Discuss options and solutions to the conflict and develop a plan for next steps that is agreeable.

If consensus cannot be reached or the conflict not solved, involve a manager or the employer to mediate the conflict.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Bullying and harassment in the workplace can occur to anyone at any time. It is when a person takes an action that he or she knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause harm. It is usually considered a pattern of behavior and always intentional. It can have wide ranging negative such as feelings of frustration or helplessness, anger, loss of confidence, inability to sleep, loss of appetite, headaches, stomach pains, panic or anxiety about going to work, inability to concentrate or an increased sense of vulnerability.

Supervision Challenges

Bullying and Harassment can take many forms. Examples include:

- Personal attacks or insults
- Verbal aggression, yelling, or using profanity
- Intimidation or humiliation
- Spreading vicious rumors
- Vandalizing personal belongings or work equipment
- Excluding someone socially· Intruding on a person's privacy
- Calling someone derogatory names
- Removing areas of responsibilities without cause
- Constantly changing work guidelines or establishing impossible deadlines
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information

It is important for employers to set up and implement a written policy for incidents of bullying and harassment in the workplace. Having a written policy ensures all staff are aware of the potential for it to happen and what to do in the event it occurs. A written policy can help employees feel confident that bullying and harassment won't be tolerated.

A written policy should apply to all members of the workplace and include:

- Clear terms of the workplace's view on bullying and harassment and that all workers are entitled to a bullying and harassment free workplace
- Commitment to the prevention of workplace bullying and harassment
- Definition of workplace bullying and harassment in language that is concrete and not easily interpretable
- The consequences of workplace bullying or harassment
- The confidential process of making a complaint. This should include how to report and who to provide the report to. Provide assurance that no reprisals will be made against employees who report a complaint
- The procedure for investigating and resolving the complaint

As an employer, there are many benefits of preventing workplace bullying and harassment. It can strengthen employee retention, increase morale, and reduce absenteeism.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Disciplinary action is a corrective action or reprimand in response to misconduct, poor performance or rule violation. Rule-breaking, misconduct, and poor performance inevitably show up in workplaces. Disciplinary action can take on different forms depending on the severity of the situation.

Most workplaces use progressive disciplinary action which typically include verbal warnings, written warnings, final warnings, poor performance reviews, and as a last result termination. A progressive discipline process raises the severity of the corrective action if the employee fails to correct the issue. Other methods include retraining, reassignment, or suspension. No matter the method, document everything to ensure protection should the employee file a wrongful dismissal suit.

The best way to avoid having to terminate an employee is to deal with an issue when it first arises before it becomes a habit. Set aside time to address concerns immediately and make sure the employee understands the concerns clearly. It is important to document concerns and provide a timeline to correct them. As the employee, it is critical to provide appropriate direction and support to improve on the concern.

There are many behaviors that can warrant disciplinary action. The unacceptable behavior should be outlined in an employee handbook as well as the disciplinary action process.

Behavior that may warrant disciplinary action can include:

- Misconduct
- Harassment or violence
- Insubordination
- Failure to perform job responsibilities
- Illegal actions
- Inappropriate behavior
- Attendance issues
- Dishonesty or theft
- Discrimination

Supervision Challenges

Verbal warnings should be given in a firm and clear manner when the issue first occurs. Explain why the behavior was wrong and state the expectation that it does not occur again, or how it should be done instead. Verbal warnings should be documented on paper, signed by both employee and employer, and put in the employee's file.

A written warning should be detailed outlining what the issue is and how the employee is expected to remedy the issue. It should also include the consequence that will occur if the issue is not remedied. Multiple written warnings can be issued before progressing to a final warning. Written warnings should be documented on paper, signed by both employee and employer, and put in the employee's file.

The final warning should be provided in writing stating all the times the employee was warned and the actions that were or were not taken to remedy the issue. The final warning should clearly state that termination will follow if there is no improvement.

Reassignment or suspension are used when the issue is severe but termination is not appropriate. Reassigning an employee requires retraining and support. Suspension requires that certain conditions are met before the employee can be reinstated.

Depending on the severity of the behavior, immediate termination may be required. Anytime an employee is being terminating, consult with Employment Standards to ensure the termination is lawful.

https://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/standards/index.html or 204-945-3352 or 1-800-821-4307.

See Appendix B for a sample letter of disciplinary action.

Ending Employment

WHEN AN EMPLOYEE DECIDES TO LEAVE

From time to time an employee may decide to leave their position which can be a result of many reasons, some of which could possibly be remedied and some of which cannot. For example, a raise might keep the employee, but if they are moving, not much can be done. If the person is a valuable employee, listen to their reasons and consider options that may change their decision.

·Is the employee underpaid? Can a bonus or wage increase be offered? Are there alternate ways to show appreciation?

- Are there issues in the workplace that can be addressed (communication, personnel, etc.)?
- Is this setting a precedent? Is this something worth doing?

Once all options have been considered, discuss what can and cannot be offered to encourage them to stay. Ensure any offers can be fulfilled long term. If the employee still decides to leave, it is important to be respectful of their decision.

Of note: when an employee provides notice of his/her decision to leave, it is a good idea to take some time and think things over. Taking action too quickly may lead to undesirable breakdown in communication or relationship.

TERMINATING EMPLOYMENT

When an employee gives notice at work, there are two options:

- Allow them to work for a specified period of time
- Pay them their wages for a specified time without them working the hours

It is important to follow regulations set out by Employment Standards when making this decision. There are many factors to consider including: comfort level with the person, safety, and whether or not it is likely that they will continue to meet expectations for the notice period. Once an employee decides to leave, an employer has legal responsibilities that are outlined in the Payroll Functions booklet.

Ending Employment

There may be times when a worker needs to be terminated immediately due to theft, threatening or abusive behavior, or the use of drugs or alcohol while on shift. In these circumstances, often a termination without a notice period is possible.
Anytime an employee is being terminating, consult with Employment Standards to ensure the termination is lawful.

https://www.gov.mb.ca/labour/standards/index.html or 204-945-3352 or 1-800-821-4307.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Exit interviews are an excellent opportunity to learn from employees. They are typically conducted prior to the employee leaving their position and take roughly 30 minutes. Prior to the interview, decide on what questions would be important to ask the out-going employee. If work place concerns are expressed, exit interviews provide an opportunity to learn what improvements would benefit the remaining employees.

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Employee Performance Review

Employee Information

Employee Name		Position Held	
Hire Date		Date of Review	

Employee Qualities

Quality	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Works to Full Potential				
Quality of Work				
Work Consistency				
Communication				
Independent Work				
Takes Initiative				
Group Work				
Productivity				
Creativity				
Honesty				
Integrity				
Supervisor Relations				
Co-worker Relations				
Technical Skills				
Dependability				
Punctuality				
Attendance				

Appendix

Employee Strengths / Training Needs

Detail Employee's Greatest Strengths
Detail Aspects Requiring Improvement

Employee Goals

Achieved Goals Set In Previous Review?
Goals For Next Review Period

Comments

Employee Comments		Reviewer Comments	
Employee Signature		Reviewer Signature	

APPENDIX B – SAMPLE DISCIPLINARY ACTION

To: _____

From: _____

Date: _____

Re: Letter of Reprimand

This is an official written reprimand for your failure to perform the functions of your position appropriately to safeguard the confidential knowledge you have acquired about the employees who report to you. Revealing information, that was shared with you in confidence by an employee, to other employees, is a violation of the confidentiality rights of the employee.

It is also a breach of your expected and entrusted managerial role. In fact, even if the employee had not specified that the information shared with you was confidential, discussing employee business with another employee, under any circumstances, is a failure on your part to perform your expected management role. The severity of your actions justifies the disciplinary action that could lead to employment termination.

You have received verbal counseling for an earlier offense in which you revealed confidential information entrusted to you by an employee. With this letter of reprimand, I am reminding you of the critical importance of safeguarding confidential information that your role requires.

I am also reminding you of the critical importance that your exercise of dependable good judgment as an employee entrusted with management responsibilities requires. Because of your position, further diligence in carrying out your responsibilities is required for the future.

Another breach of our confidence in your ability to carry out any of your expected managerial roles will result in additional disciplinary action up to and including the possibility of employment termination.

A copy of this reprimand will be placed in your official personnel file.

Signature: _____

Supervisor Name: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgment of Receipt:

I acknowledge receipt of this written reprimand. My acknowledgment does not necessarily signify my agreement with its content. I understand that a copy of this reprimand will be placed in my official personnel file and that I have the right to prepare a written response that will be attached to the original letter of reprimand.

Signature: _____

Employee Name: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C – SAMPLE EXIT INTERVIEW

Exit Interview	
Interviewer:	Name of Employee:
Date:	Duration of the interview:

Questions:

1. What is your primary reason for leaving?
2. Did anything trigger your decision to leave?
3. What was most/least satisfying about your job?
4. What would you change about your job?
5. Did your job duties turn out to be as you expected?
6. Did you receive enough training and support to do your job effectively?
7. Did you receive sufficient feedback about your performance?
8. Were you happy with your pay, benefits and other incentives?
9. What was the quality of the supervision you received?
10. What outstanding information should be passed on to other employees?
11. What would you suggest to make our workplace better?
12. Would you consider working again in the future?

HUMAN RESOURCES

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