

## **The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Discipline!**

In our last article we discussed the first three of the “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Discipline” in organisations, with apologies to any copyright! In this, we complete the discussion and pose a few provocative ideas around setting the right path forward.

You may remember that the first three issues were:

- ✓ Discipline should not start when things go wrong
- ✓ Focus on required Standards rather than Rules in managing staff
- ✓ Direct your discipline structures towards standards

The discussion focussed on moving away from traditional rigid, rule-based discipline, to a more progressive structure and process that encourages the right behaviours rather than discourages the wrong ones. The difference is subtle but immense. Now we continue:

Four: No discipline works at all, if it is taken when a manager has already given up on the employee. How often our intervention is called for by a manager who is rightfully agitated by an employee’s attitude or behaviours (contribution), but has allowed the deviation to exist until the tolerance is over, before action is taken. If we agree that discipline is a process to ensure that people are doing the right stuff, then we must equally agree that discipline must be taken before the organisational tolerance is exhausted – and so much easier! Often by the time we are called in to advise, we are compelled to advise caution – the process only starts now!

Five: The organisation must have a clear mission or set of market goals that dictate the quality and intensity of behaviours of all its people. This includes a clearly defined set of Values that will drive the behaviours. We have been delighted by the results of Disciplinary Codes that focus on the organisational values, rather than on the do’s and don’ts of behaviour. Acceptable behaviours then focus on organisational factors rather than who’s in charge (power again!).

Six: Set your performance management processes, formal or informal as they may be, to focus likewise on these standards and the values that underpin them. The organisational conversation must constantly revert to these demands.

Seven: And when all else fails, understand that an organisation needs to have the right people to meet the standards you have – never to find the right standards to use the people you have. Discipline is never personal; it is always designed to make the organisation effective. Therefore discipline is not about punishment, but about enabling and remediation. Don’t make it personal.

Work with the stakeholders to redraft your disciplinary culture around your brand and competitive edge. Rewrite the code of conduct to express the standards demanded for excellence, and not the rules to be avoid punishment. Refocus the disciplinary process on setting standards and solving problems, and not around a legalistic checklist of actions. Good discipline is vital in any organisation – don't let personal or power issues mess it up!

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