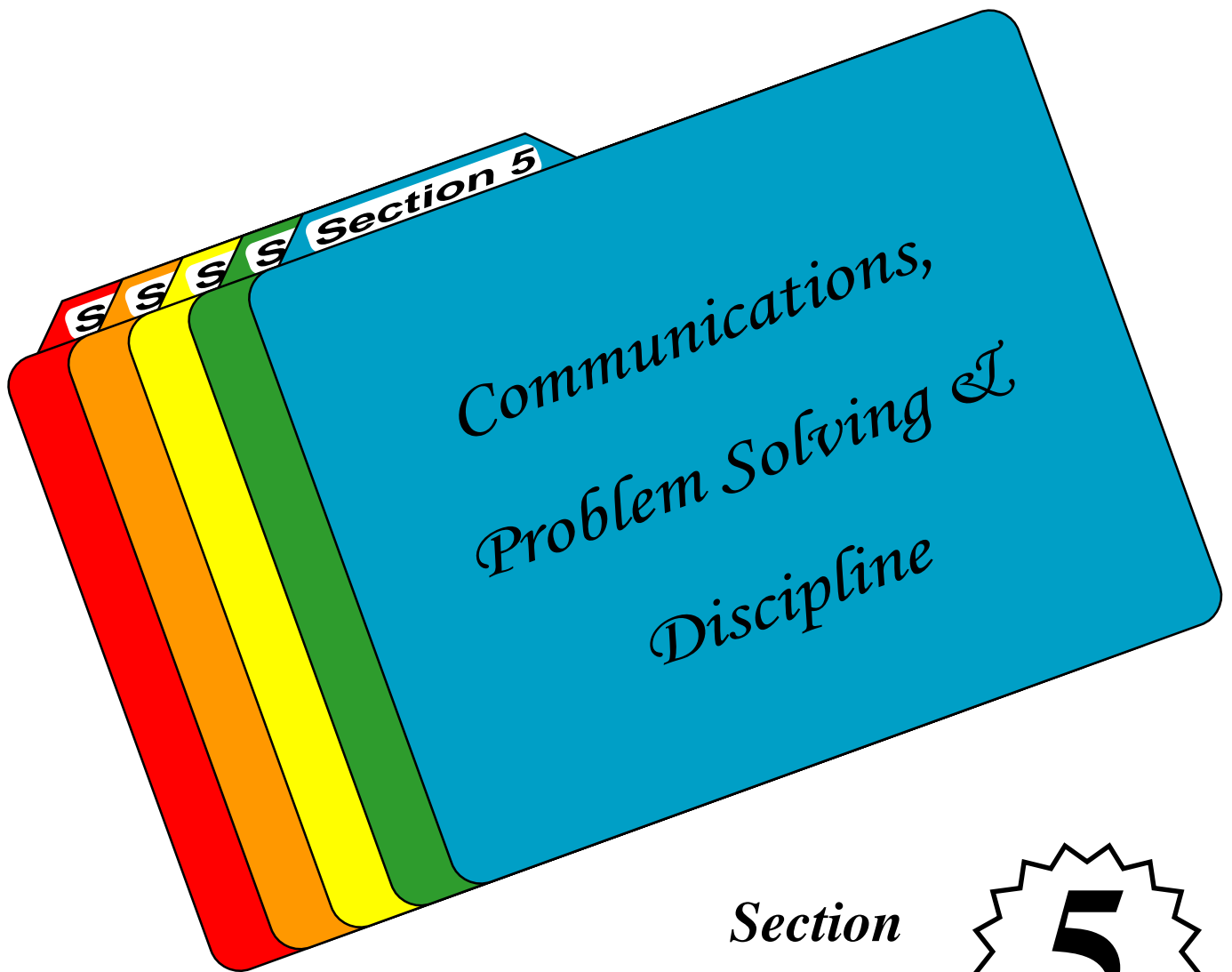


EMPLOYERS' HANDBOOK

for Agriculture & Horticulture



Section

5

Introduction

The *Employers' Handbook* is written as a guide to owners, managers and supervisors in agricultural and horticultural operations. This handbook will help you to:

- recruit better employees
- supervise, motivate and train your employees to reach desired performance
- discipline and dismiss employees should that be required.

Use this handbook to help you achieve sound human resource management practises which can result in increased productivity, reduced staff turnover, and satisfied employees and managers.

This handbook is divided into five sections. You should familiarize yourself with the contents of each section and place the handbook where it can be easily found. Make sure you refer to it when you need specific information. At the end of some sections are working copies of worksheets you may find useful.

Section Five

Communications, Problem Solving & Disciplining is Section Five.

Good communications can avoid many problems, but when conflict or the need to discipline does arise, you must deal with it. Also discussed is how to approach that dreaded task of dismissing an employee. Conflict and problems are a normal part of managing employees. **You probably can't avoid problems, but you can manage them.**



REMEMBER

A TV icon, like the one you see in the left margin, tells you that information in the text is supported by extra information in the video available from CFBMC (Canadian Farm Business Management Council). A brief description of the content you will see in the video will be given in the left margin under the TV icon.

Communications

Communication Skills

Communication plays a major role in most aspects of the working relationship between you, the employer, and your employees. The manager's communication skill is critical to successful hiring and training processes, maintenance of employee motivation, and employee willingness to provide information. Most fundamentally, you must be able to send understandable messages to your employees if they are to be able to do what you want.

Three Critical Communications Skills for Supervisors

1. Say only what you observe.
2. Ask open questions.
3. Listen actively.

Communication between two people is effective when both understand a message the same way. In a situation of work being assigned, it is desirable for both parties involved to come away knowing clearly what needs to be done and feeling good about the process. It is said that 90 per cent of conflicts at work arise because of miscommunication.

In one-to-one communication, three types of skills are required. These are listening skills, speaking skills and silent communication skills (often called body language).

Listening Skills

1. **Stop talking.** You cannot listen while talking.
2. **Concentrate on what the other person is saying**
 - look past the words to meaning
 - watch hands, facial expressions, eyes
 - control your emotions; they impede understanding
 - react to ideas, not the person
 - make no value judgements
 - allow employees time to think and respond
3. **Respond.** If you understand, say so.
If you don't, ask for clarification.
4. **Listen** for feelings as well as content.
5. **Good listening is essential to communication**—only part of the responsibility rests with the speaker. If you are a good listener, you will be a good supervisor.

Speaking Skills

*“Listen to understand.
Speak to be understood.”*
- Steven Covey



Good communication skills—
what they are and how to
practise them—are discussed
in the video on
"Supervising"
in the labour management series.

*Remember the
effectiveness of
the 5 W's and H*

- *Who*
- *What*
- *Where*
- *When*
- *Why*
and
- *How*

1. **Assigning tasks**

- give clear, concise, positive directions as opposed to wishy-washy instructions
- have confidence as opposed to cockiness
- make instructions detailed enough to be understood
- follow up
- ask questions designed to make sure the listener understood
- invite participation and discussion

2. **Voicing complaints, objections, disapproval**

- both employer and employee should have this right
- for both, there are proper times and places
- a constructive criticizer is an asset
- a chronic complainer is a liability

3. **Communicating unfavourable news**

- don't pass the buck
- do it orally
- do not delay or avoid the issue
- start favourably
- present possible benefits
- justify unfavourable information
- allow for freedom of discussion
- pick the best time for the employee
- talk directly to the person involved

4. **Speaking jargon and common expressions can be confusing**

- for example, "Take the blue goose over to the Gerken place and pick up the green cattle." What the new employee may not know is that the Gerken place is where the Browns now live, the blue goose is the trailer that was painted red last year, and green cattle have nothing to do with colour.

5. **Seeking information**

- use open-ended questions which get you more than a "yes" or "no" answer. For example: "What parts would you like me to further explain?" is better than "Do you understand?" Or ask, "When do you think this job will be done?" instead of "Will you do that now?"
- allow for free information flow between you and your employee

Silent Communication Skills

1. **Body language.** A smile, a frown or some other gesture may communicate more than the accompanying words. It is said that when speaking, only 7 per cent of the message is in the words; 93 per cent is in body language.
2. **Actions** speak louder than words.
3. **Don't say one thing and do another.**
"Do as I say, not as I do" seldom works in business.

Tips on Communication

Effective communication starts with you having a positive attitude towards yourself and others.

Try following these tips.

Communication Tips

- When expressing feelings, "I am upset about..." is more effective than "You make me mad..."
- When asking for help, "Let's do..." is more effective than "You help me do..."
- When assigning work, request; don't order. "Would you please...?" is more effective than "You go do..."
- Make sure your body and words give the same message. Body language gives strong messages. It can enrich and emphasize our words. However, if you do not mean what your words say, your body will give a conflicting message. If you say "I'm not angry" with your face flaming red and your teeth clenched, no one is likely to believe you.

How Well Do You Communicate With Your Employees?

Be honest as you rate yourself. Circle the best answer.

	All/most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely or never
Listening			
I listen to all members of my staff as one person who respects another.	3	2	1
I obtain necessary details from each conversation.	3	2	1
I refrain from making value judgements while listening.	3	2	1
I allow enough time to listen.	3	2	1
I reply as soon as possible when a reply is required.	3	2	1
I provide follow-up.	3	2	1
Informing			
I know the value of keeping employees informed.	3	2	1
I give equal information to everyone who needs to know.	3	2	1
I create time to inform.	3	2	1
I make a point of updating those who are absent.	3	2	1
I informally share information to help others on a regular basis.	3	2	1
I withhold no more information than is necessary.	3	2	1

Look back at your scoring. On items you scored 2 or less, consider if your communications could be more effective.

Giving Advice

Many managers feel uncomfortable about giving advice when an employee has come to them for help in solving a personal problem.

Find a quiet private setting where you can listen to your employee. Help them in coming up with a possible solution and getting the help they need. Do not tell them what to do.

Work together with your employee in coming up with a solution.

The keys for success in offering advice are being compassionate, warm and sincere.

1. Ask the employee to write down a list of possible solutions to the problem.
2. While the employee writes, you also list what you think may be solutions.
3. The employee presents his or her solutions first.
4. You add only those solutions the employee did not mention.
5. The employee rates the various solutions as good, bad or indifferent.
6. You then assist the employee to choose the best solution.

Making Criticism Positive

No one enjoys criticism. Most people don't enjoy criticizing someone else either, so they often put it off. But criticism can be positive and productive. It all depends on how you do it.

1. **Think carefully before you say anything.**
Stop and ask yourself - what do I want to change and why?
- what is the best way and time for me to approach the other person?
Remember, be quick to praise but slow to criticize.
2. **Remember that the purpose of criticism should be to help the person improve performance.** You should never criticize to hurt, embarrass, shame or insult. You should never criticize to make yourself feel superior or powerful.
3. **Show concern and desire to help.** Make it clear that they will have a chance to improve. Offer specific solutions and directions. It does little good to tell people to do better if they don't know how.
4. **Try your best to affirm and strengthen the person's self-esteem.** Don't say, "That was a stupid move." Say instead, "I know you want to do your best. Have you considered doing it in other ways?" Go over the advantages and disadvantages of doing a job in different ways.

5. **Don't attack the person.** You can't change a person's attitude no matter how much you might want to. Focus on performance. You might be able to change the person's behaviour.
6. **Always deliver criticism in private, in person.** Never reprimand or criticize an employee in front of other workers. Never issue a written criticism as a first exchange.

If people feel criticized, angry or threatened, you will find it difficult to get to the bottom of a problem or get the employee to respond to your complaint. If you are having problems

- expressing your frustrations to employees,
- stating limits with employees, or
- criticizing without putting people down,

you may be using red flag or trigger words.

Look at the following list of red flag words.

What happens inside of you when one of these words or phrases is said to you?

Red Flag Words

Check the words or phrases that are triggers for you. Add others that you have found that trigger emotions in you or others.

<input type="checkbox"/> You should	<input type="checkbox"/> Your weaknesses are
<input type="checkbox"/> You have to	<input type="checkbox"/> You never
<input type="checkbox"/> You must	<input type="checkbox"/> You always
<input type="checkbox"/> You are supposed to	<input type="checkbox"/> You don't understand
<input type="checkbox"/> You goofed	<input type="checkbox"/> You are confused
<input type="checkbox"/> Slow poke	<input type="checkbox"/> Wimpy
<input type="checkbox"/> Stupid, dumb	<input type="checkbox"/> Lazy
<input type="checkbox"/> I demand	<input type="checkbox"/> You have a bad attitude
<input type="checkbox"/> Every time you	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> You do this all the time	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

The following is a list of typical statements that tend to trigger workers. You will get better results if you talk only about specific actions and use “I” statements.

Instead of saying: You are a loudmouth.
Try: I noticed you talked loudly at our meeting.

Instead of saying: You fail to see what I mean.
Try: I don’t think I explained it well.

Instead of saying: You misinterpreted me.
Try: I think you see it differently than I meant.

Instead of saying: You didn’t do this right.
Try: This wasn’t finished the way I asked.

Positive criticism is a useful tool, not a heartless heavy hand.

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings give opportunities for you and your staff to do three things:

- report on the general status of the business
- discuss business goals and plans
- try to solve problems.

When to Conduct a Staff Meeting

- A regular meeting time needs to be set and respected. The meeting should start and end on time—this shows respect for the participants’ time.
- When a big change or crisis arises, it may be beneficial to hold meetings more often. During slow times when some staff members are on vacation, meetings can be cancelled.

How to Conduct a Staff Meeting

- Prepare an agenda and share it with the participants prior to the meeting. Participants presenting reports should be notified in advance. Try to eliminate surprises.
- Develop a feeling of respect for each participant in the staff meeting. Encourage their input. For a family business, all family members involved in the business should get together. Encourage their input and provide a comfortable setting for idea sharing.
- Encourage an open exchange of information and ideas but not an unproductive airing of beefs.
- Encourage teamwork.
- Use the staff meeting as an opportunity to establish a personal and earnest relationship with your employees. Promote caring, goodwill and trust.
- Keep minutes of the decisions made, responsibilities delegated and time-frame established.

Where to Hold a Staff Meeting

- A meeting of the **management team**, in an agricultural/horticultural business, could be over coffee in the staff room, kitchen or shop.
- A meeting of the **production team** might begin at the start of the day in the building or location where the work takes place or equipment is stored.
- A meeting of the **whole staff** should be held in a location that makes everyone feel that “this is important business”.

Written Documents

When something is written down, it is more clearly understood by all parties. It is a record that can be referred back to and it can serve as a benchmark for making changes.

Businesses and employees use many types of written documents to communicate, from memo to union contracts.

Some common written documents that a farm employer might use are:

- **Employment Understanding**
An understanding between the employer and employee that covers wages, hours, vacation time and benefits. See Section Two, “Hiring”, of this handbook for more details on an employment understanding.
- **Employee Handbook**
A document that states the purpose and goals of the business and gives details about the rights and responsibilities of all parties concerned.
- **Housing Contract**
Very important when housing is provided. Such a contract should spell out, among other things, who is responsible for repairs and maintenance.
- **Code of Behaviour**
Written rules about the standard of behaviour you expect from your employees. See Section Two, “Hiring”, of this handbook for more details on how to prepare a code of behaviour.

A word of caution:

Managers often fear, and with good reason, that when something is stated in writing it may come back to haunt them in the form of evidence in a lawsuit. This is a valid concern so leave out those items you are worried about or check with a lawyer. However, don't let legal concerns prevent you from using relevant documents and the advantages they provide.

Dealing with Conflict

Everyone experiences conflict as a daily reality. Some of these conflicts cause only minor irritation while others provoke more serious consequences.

You need a strategy to resolve conflicts successfully in order to prevent tension or lasting resentment. Both negatively affect employee morale and productivity.

You will be required to deal with two types of conflicts:

- conflict that may arise between or among your employees
- conflict between you and one of your employees.

Whatever the nature of conflict, certain characteristics about conflict seem to hold true.

Characteristics of Conflict

- When conflict arises, the “issue” is not always articulated or clearly understood.
- People in conflict don’t always take the time to understand one another’s positions.
- When people disagree, their discussions are frequently heated, tense and aggressive.
- Conflict situations are often avoided, not discussed and not resolved.
- Conflicts are sometimes resolved by one person “giving in”.
- The effect of conflict on a relationship is frequently negative.

If you are involved in a conflict, keep the following strategies in mind:

- **Remain calm.** Don't argue or make accusations.
- **Listen actively.** Check your understanding of what is being said. Try to learn what is important to the other person.
- **Use direct communication.** State your feelings and what you mean honestly. Avoid manipulating or withdrawing. Deal with issues and behaviour, not personalities.
- **Be persistent and consistent in your behaviour.** This communicates that you mean what you say.
- **Be confident** in yourself and in your ability to deal with others. Remember your assertive rights.

The following steps will help you resolve conflicts as effectively as possible.

Steps to Resolving Conflict		
Step #	Method	Specific Actions
Step 1	Problem Identification	Identify each person's reasons or motives for the conflict.
Step 2	Problem Diagnosis	Look at all the factors in the conflict. Look at personality styles of the people involved.
Step 3	Generate Alternatives	Come up with different ideas to improve or change the behaviours that caused the conflict.
Step 4	Decision-Making	Compare the ideas and decide which style provides the best alternative.
Step 5	Tactical Planning	Brainstorm and write a specific action plan to go with the decision made in Step 4.
Step 6	Implementation	Carry out the plan and follow up regularly.

While these steps should lead to a solution for most conflicts, there may be times when the conflict isn't resolved. If that occurs, here are your alternatives:

If conflict isn't resolved and you have authority:

- acknowledge the person's right to differ
- explain your decision and outline what you expect to happen.

If conflict isn't resolved and authority is equal or shared:

- thank the person
- ask, "Who might help us?"
- end the discussion.

Conflict Management Styles

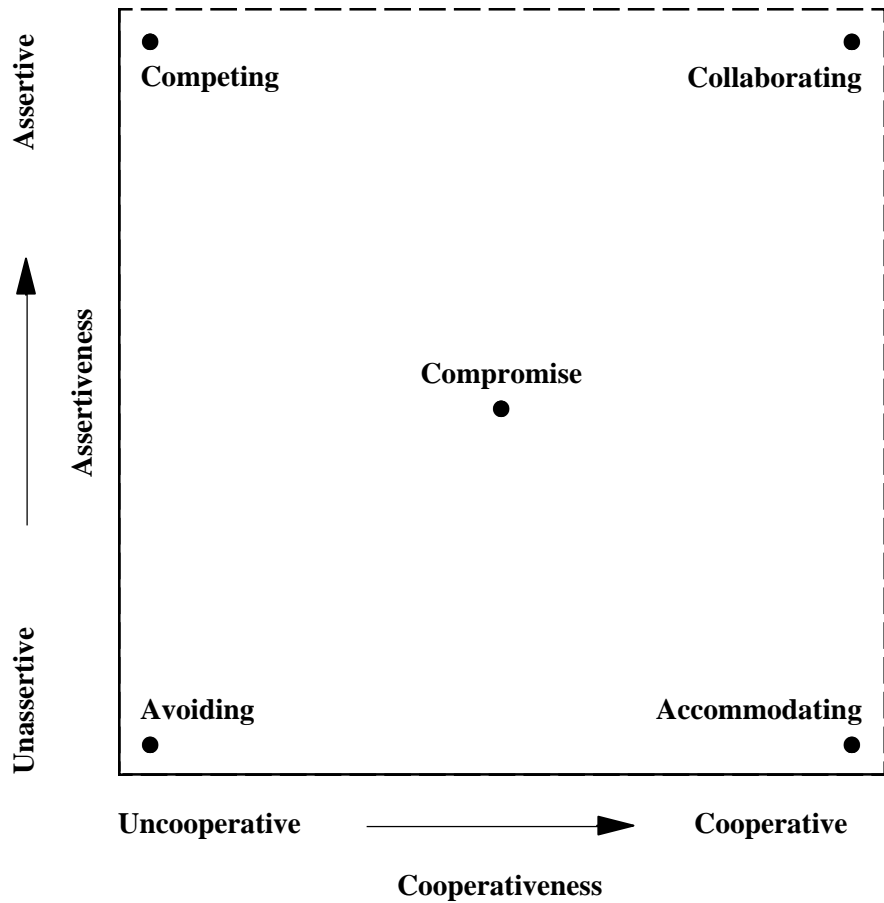
The ability to cope successfully with conflict is an important skill for a manager to have. Your success really depends on the people involved and the situation.

Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann have developed a conflict management framework.

When the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible, Thomas and Kilmann say you can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions:

1. Assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns
2. Cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns

On the next page, these two dimensions have been put on a graph to point out the possible conflict-handling modes.



The five modes of handling conflict are described as follows:

- **Avoidance:** You do not pursue your own or the others' concerns.
- **Accommodation:** You have a high concern for others' needs and give in to them.
- **Competition:** You are concerned with your own satisfaction only and pursue your concerns at the expense of others. The mode is power-oriented.
- **Compromise:** This is in the centre of the graph and shows a mode in which you are equally concerned with your needs and the others' needs. Compromise never fully takes care of anyone's needs.
- **Collaboration:** You have high concern for both your needs and the others' needs. Using this mode, you would work with the other person or people to find a solution that is acceptable to all.

No single mode is necessarily better than the others given particular circumstances, but collaboration and, to a lesser extent, compromise are considered to be the most constructive methods of conflict resolution.

Uses for the Conflict-Management Modes

Avoiding

- when an issue is trivial, of only passing importance or when other more important issues are pressing
- when you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns, e.g., when you have no power to change something (someone's personality, national politics)
- when the potential damage of confronting a conflict outweighs the benefits of its resolution
- when time is needed to let people cool down
- when you need more time to gather information
- when others can resolve the conflict more effectively.

Accommodating

- when you realize you are wrong—to allow a better position to be heard, to learn from others, and to show that you are reasonable
- when the issue is much more important to the other person than to you—to satisfy the needs of others and as a goodwill gesture to help maintain a cooperative relationship
- when preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important
- when the issue could aid in the development of subordinates by allowing them to experiment and learn from their mistakes.

Competing

- when quick, decisive action is vital, e.g., emergencies
- when unpopular courses of action are needed on important issues, e.g., cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline
- when the issues are vital to the welfare of your business and you know you're right.

Compromising

- when goals are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes
- when two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals
- when temporary settlements must be achieved for complex issues
- to arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.

Collaborating

- to gain commitment by incorporating other's concerns into a consensual decision
- to find a satisfactory solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised
- to learn how to understand the views of others and test your own assumptions
- to merge insights from people with different perspectives on a problem
- to work through hard feelings which have been interfering with an interpersonal relationship.

Conflict Resolution Example

Betty has a problem with Bob, a field supervisor who constantly interrupts her work with chit-chat and personal problems when he comes to the main office to hand in daily time sheets and pick up customer orders. As a result, this past week she was two hours late getting out the weekly payroll. Betty has a track record of doing fast and accurate work but usually likes to work alone, while Bob enjoys leading his work crews and talking with fellow employees. You also note that Bob and Betty generally enjoy working together. When you call her in to discuss the problem, she becomes angry and accuses Bob of "making her" too slow.

Contact with Betty

1. *Listen to Betty; acknowledge her anger without judging her. Don't rush her; she needs time to let off steam.*
2. *Stay calm and ask questions designed to collect the facts. Avoid using "why" questions which may elevate her defensiveness. Communicate that you are concerned. Summarize and repeat what she has said to make sure that you have understood her correctly and have been listening.*
3. *Let her know you have to be objective and that this problem needs to be solved.*
4. *Ask her if she would mind meeting with Bob to discuss and work out ways that they can help each other to ensure the payroll gets out on time. Also mention that you plan on meeting with Bob to discuss the issue and ask whether she wants you to speak to Bob about the two of them meeting.*

Preparation for Contact

1. *Review Bob's performance record.*
2. *Plan for meeting with Bob and try to anticipate his concerns.*

**Meeting
with Bob**

1. *Start on a positive note; "I sure appreciate the long hours you are putting in during the harvest time."*
2. *Clearly explain the problem without judging. Nobody responds well to scolding.*
3. *Listen to Bob's assessment of the situation. You note that Bob is under a lot of stress at harvest time and feels he needs some time to get away from staff periodically throughout the day. Acknowledge his concerns.*
4. *Indicate that you would like Betty and him to get together to work this out. Let him know that Betty will be getting in touch with him to arrange a meeting and that you will be getting in touch with both of them by the end of the week to see how things worked out.*

**After Meeting
with Bob**

1. *Confirm with Betty that Bob is expecting her to contact him and let her know that you will be checking with both of them after the meeting.*

**After Bob
and Betty Have
Met**

1. *Check to see how the problem has been resolved by speaking to both Betty and Bob.*
2. *If Bob and Betty have not been able to resolve this problem, you will have to arrange a joint meeting to help them develop a solution.*

Disciplining

Disciplining is one of the least satisfying aspects of human resource management. You should therefore strive for self-discipline among your employees. If there has been careful recruitment of employees, followed by a sound training program and proper attention to human needs, discipline problems should be minimal. Nevertheless, disciplining an employee is needed on occasion.

The Goal of Discipline

Effective discipline is designed to prevent problems and encourage productive performance and behaviour, not to punish employees for making mistakes. Stress the use of discipline to produce positive changes.

In a typical week, you may encounter several situations requiring some kind of discipline. Your actions will be more effective if you know why you are disciplining your employee.

Look at the following examples.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Situation	Discipline	Goal
A worker forgets to treat a sick cow; the cow dies.	Verbal <i>and</i> written warning	To convey the importance of the need for intensive care of sick cows.
A young picker starts a fruit-throwing fight after already receiving one warning.	Suspension/ Dismissal	To encourage responsible behaviour by the pickers.
A bookkeeper releases confidential information to a competitor.	Written warning	To stress the need for company loyalty.

Progressive Discipline

The progressive discipline approach defines exactly what actions occur as a result of unacceptable performance or behaviour. These actions escalate, depending on the number and severity of the offenses.

Howard Rosenberg who is an extension specialist from the University of California discusses the following story.

Ben Chavez was enraged. Not since his recent promotion from mechanic to shop foreman had he faced a situation quite like this, and he was not about to let it endanger his hard-earned reputation.

“Alright, Sleeping Beauty,” shouted Chavez at a startled George Walston, “get up and get out—for good. I should have figured you were grabbing a regular siesta back here just by looking at how little work you’ve been getting done out front. You’ll have plenty of time to sleep now.”

*Discipline means not
always having to say
“You’re fired.”*

Howard Rosenberg

This examples raises the following questions:

- Was Ben’s reaction valid?
- Was it in the best interest of the business to fire Walston?
- What is Walston’s record with the company?
- Is this the first time that Walston has stepped out of line?
- Has anybody else in the business ever been caught napping, and what happened to him/her?
- Is there an explicit disciplinary policy that reflects rules and penalties for violations that happen?

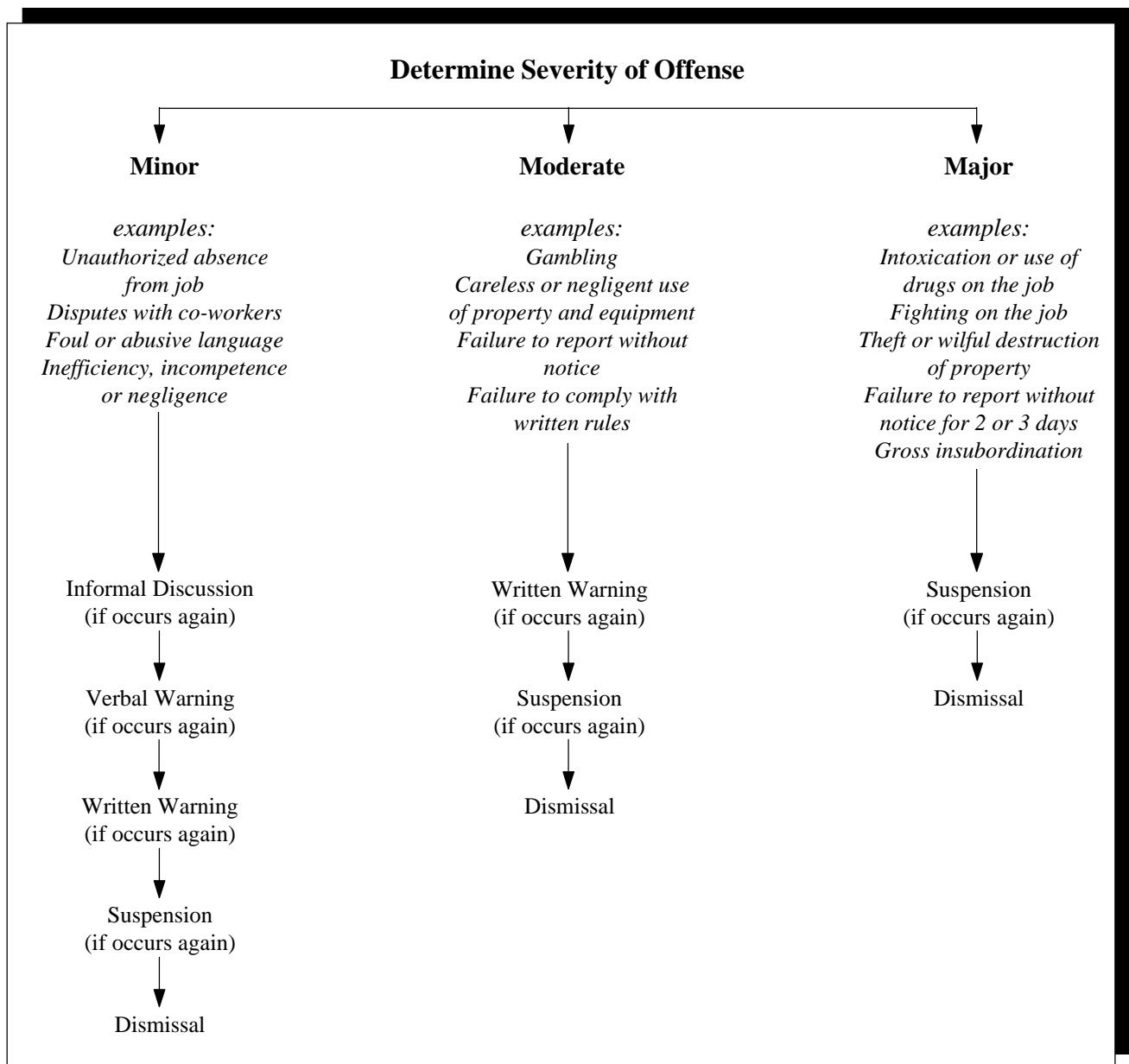
While Chavez intended to rid himself of a problem employee, his troubles may have been only beginning. This dismissal may prompt:

- the general manager to doubt Chavez’s judgement
- other shop employees to retaliate in subtle ways on Walston’s behalf
- Walston himself to file a legal complaint against the business.

Chavez’s position would be far less uncertain if his decision in this case were based on a written disciplinary procedure that had been clearly communicated to employees and consistently carried out in the past.

By imposing a systematic approach to discipline, you eliminate snap decisions made out of frustration. In this way, each employee receives fair treatment. For the progressive discipline approach to work smoothly, each employee should receive written notice of the discipline levels prior to working for you.

Sample Procedure for Progressive Discipline



Communication with the Employee



How to conduct a disciplinary interview is demonstrated by a greenhouse owner in the video "Disciplining".

When a discipline infraction occurs, action should be taken as quickly as possible. This should be done by the employee's immediate supervisor. Ensure that it is done in private, and in a reasonable and calm manner.

Let's suppose you've just found Joe Martin asleep on a bale of hay when he should have been grooming the horses. This is the second time you've caught him sleeping on the job. Last time he was informed that the next occurrence of this infraction would result in suspension.

Here's how you might handle it.

Supervisor's Role	Specific Action
1. Match the behaviour to the discipline required. Review Joe's record and determine what outcome you expect.	Decide that you will remind Joe of the written warning and that suspension for three days is imminent.
2. Ask Joe to meet with you privately. Adopt a non-judgmental attitude and begin with a question. Allow Joe to explain his position.	"I'm worried about your sleeping in the barn. Can you tell me more about it?"
3. Inform Joe that the corrective action required is suspension.	"Because you've already had one warning, I have to suspend you for three days. You know we just can't have the horses neglected."
4. As soon as possible, shift the discussion from the reprimand to positive suggestions for change.	"Can we think of a way of lightening your load? How about reducing your work hours and just have you do grooming? Sue could take over some of the other duties. Then you'll have more time for your show jumping. Of course with fewer hours, you'll receive less pay."
5. Provide Joe with a written record of the incident. Include a description of the behaviour change expected and the consequences of another violation.	Ask Joe to sign the record to acknowledge the discussion and his awareness of future consequences.

Response to Performance Problems

There are a number of different approaches to disciplining, some of which are listed below. Remember that what works well in one situation may not work in another. As well, a combination of these approaches may work better than using only one.

Of the responses presented in the following chart, **the first four (penalty, warning, threat, authority) are typically one-way communications.** They don't encourage discussion or feedback. These responses tend to maintain or increase the distance felt between the supervisor and worker. They often provoke defensiveness, anger and alienation.

The **last four types of responses, humour** (if used when appropriate), **explanation, appeal and problem solving, tend to invite two-way communication and constructive results.** By using them, the supervisor is more likely to get the message across and to gain useful information.

Different Ways to Respond to Performance Problems			
Response	Example	Advantages	Disadvantages
Penalty Imposition	"You are suspended for 3 working days."	Makes clear to offended certain behaviour is unacceptable; sends strong message to other workers.	May alienate or terminate employees whose contributions to the operation outweigh the trouble they caused.
Specific Warning	"If you can't keep up with the other pruners, I'll put you back on the rock moving crew."	Expresses strong concern about unacceptable behaviour while giving employee chance to improve. Supervisory follow-up is required if credibility is to be maintained.	Warnings may antagonize and the worker may try to "gain face" at the expense of the supervisor.
Vague Threat	"If you keep butchering these trees and leaving such a mess, I'll assume you don't want piece rate."	Can inspire fear, a powerful motivator. The more vague the threat, the less follow-up needed.	Conveys no technical information so worker has no direct information about how to improve performance.
Emphasis on Authority	"I am supposed to suspend you for coming back to work in this condition. You know the rules."	Helpful reality therapy for some workers.	The "I'm the boss" attitude is a direct invitation to ego battles and subterfuge.

Different Ways to Respond to Performance Problems (cont'd)

Response	Example	Advantages	Disadvantages
Avoidance	“Humpf; gee what time is it anyway?”	Easy to do and workers given a break may develop a loyalty to their supervisor.	Ignoring misconduct may send a message to the offender and other workers that such conduct is acceptable. Avoidance foregoes communication about problem behaviours and results.
Humouring	“Surely someone with your good looks and obvious genius can figure out how to get along with people.”	Comes off as friendly and can diffuse tension. Can pave way for constructive discussion.	Can imply supervisory weakness or lack of seriousness. If used without sensitivity or finesse, humour can be destructive.
Explanation	You have to leave the hulls on the strawberries. They don't keep as well if the hulls get pulled off.”	Expresses respect and opens discussion. Can be a simple fix for problems which arise from lack of know-how.	Explanations that are not needed can be taken as condescending. If needed, but are ineffective, can frustrate both worker and supervisor.
Appeal to Value	“The better quality job we do, the more demand there will be for our birds and the more hours of work you will have in the long run.”	Is usually experienced by worker as being helpful and supportive. Can clarify for workers how to achieve important rewards.	Supervisors need to understand what employees really value, otherwise appeal will have no effect.
Problem Solving	“The spray rig has to be cleaned now or the work won't get started early enough tomorrow morning. Why won't you give me a hand?”	Shows respect and initiates conversation likely to produce ideas and commitment. Puts supervisors and worker on same side of things.	Can consume much time. Won't work if relationship is so deteriorated that constructive dialogue isn't possible.

Information in this chart was drawn from a paper by Howard Rosenberg, presented at the workshop, “Agricultural Personnel Management for Extension Educators,” held in Napa, California, February, 1992.

Dismissal and Termination

Handling Dismissal in a Professional Way

Dismissal is the “capital punishment” of labour relations. It is the highest level of corrective action or punishment a company can impose on an employee, and it must be approached carefully.

In recent years, managers considering dismissal of an employee are faced with the possibility of legal action if they do not handle the dismissal in a professional and fair manner.

Clear, written records provide your first defence against legal action. Document all the incidents leading to a dismissal and ensure they relate to your progressive discipline system.

Before you dismiss an employee, evaluate the situation against the following checklist.

Dismissal Checklist		
	Yes	No
Is the reason for dismissal work related?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a policy or management order which sets standards of performance and behaviour?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the employee have knowledge of the policy and consequences? (The employer must be able to prove policies were communicated to employees, preferably in writing, and personally acknowledged by the employee.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the investigation of the infraction done fairly and impartially?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there evidence or proof of the employee’s wrong doing? (Performance appraisals, record of discipline and witnesses to wrong doing are important.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the business applied its policies uniformly to all employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the employee have written notice that such an offense would result in dismissal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the corrective action related to the seriousness of the offense? (The employee spinning tires in the driveway is not cause for dismissal.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has there been a balance between consistency and flexibility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has corrective and not punitive action been used?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A “no” answer to any of these questions may mean you have not followed proper personnel procedures. Remember, the burden of proof is on the employer.		

To dismiss an employee without providing required written reasonable notice or termination pay, employers must show just cause. Grounds for termination occur when an employee is guilty of willful misconduct, disobedience, or willful neglect about which the employee has been warned.

The Exit Interview

Sooner or later every employee will exit your operation. There are three types of exits.

Type #1 is when a long-time trusted **employee retires**. Such a termination is usually based on the mutual agreement between you and your employee.

Type #2 is one that is **employee initiated**. When this is due to a better opportunity for the employee, it usually results in excitement for the employee and disappointment for you. On the other hand, if the employee is terminating because of dissatisfaction with the job, both the employee and you may feel angry.

Type #3 is where **you initiate dismissal**. Usually when an employee is fired, both parties harbour strong feelings of anger.

An exit interview, properly conducted, can give you information about company morale and the attitude of employees toward their supervisors, management and fellow employees.

Exit interviews are recommended for both seasonal and full-time employees. One employer who has a large number of seasonal employees does the exit interview in a group setting.

A properly conducted exit interview accomplishes four things:

- 1. It provides information** about how the job can be carried out more effectively. An employee usually has good ideas about how to improve things.
- 2. It provides suggestions** for improved employee relations. An employee who is leaving is apt to be willing to talk about problems and concerns he or she saw in the workplace and may make suggestions for improvement.
- 3. It clears up misconceptions.** Regardless of whether the termination is voluntary or forced, it is important that both parties clearly understand why the termination is taking place.
- 4. It reduces anger.** An employee who is hostile toward a previous employer can be very costly to the business. First, there is the chance of the employee badmouthing the firm. Second, there is the chance of legal action based on wrongful dismissal or labour-law violation. Third, there is the chance of vandalism to your business. Try to learn why the employee is angry and reduce it if possible.

Exit Interview Guide

Ask non-threatening questions such as the following:

1. Which responsibilities did you like most about the job? Which responsibilities did you like the least?
2. What did you like most about the responsibilities you were assigned?
3. What did you think about the way the manager handled complaints?
4. What type of working conditions are most conducive to your best productivity?
5. What do you see as the future of this operation?
6. What impressed you about this operation when you first accepted your position? Has this impression changed? If so, how? Why?
7. When you first joined the operation, was your training helpful for what you were actually doing six months later?
8. What type of job are you going to? What are you looking for in that position that you feel is not present in this operation?
9. What kind of work do you like to do best? Were you doing that kind of work in your job here?
10. What points would you want to make if you could tell top management how you felt about this organization?
11. How do you feel about the contribution you have made to this organization?
12. What are your feelings about the benefit program offered by this organization?

Use these answers to help you to select a new employee and improve organizational and human resource areas in your operation.

WARNING: Don't be surprised if you get some very negative comments.

Exit Interview Questionnaire

Confidential

To be destroyed when summarized and analysed

Name	Job Title
Department	Date of Hire
Date of Termination	

1. Reason for termination? (check one)

(a) Leaving for another position

(b) Retirement

(c) Maternity Leave

Are you planning to return when your leave expires?

Yes No

(d) Return to school

(e) Other (briefly explain) _____

2. In general, were working conditions satisfactory?
(Circle best answer)

Almost
Never

Some of
the time

Most of
the time

All of
the time

1

2

3

4

If your answer was (1), (2), or (3), please explain briefly: _____

3. Did you find that your supervisor
was fair in his/her requirements
of you? (Circle best answer)

Almost
Never

Some of
the time

Most of
the time

All of
the time

1

2

3

4

If your answer was (1), (2), or (3), please explain briefly: _____

4. Did you find your overall treatment
by the ABC Company was fair?
(Circle best answer)

Almost
Never

Some of
the time

Most of
the time

All of
the time

1

2

3

4

If your answer was (1), (2), or (3), please explain briefly: _____

5. Did you receive adequate instruction on how to perform your duties? Yes No
If No, what improvements would you recommend? _____

6. How would you rate your salary? Too high Fair Too low
(Circle best answer) 1 2 3
If your answer was (1) or (3), please explain briefly and state what you are using for a comparison.

7. Would you consider seeking employment in the future with the ABC Company? Yes No
If Yes, in what capacity? _____
If No, why not? _____

8. Do you feel that the ABC Company provides sufficient advancement and promotional opportunities for its employees? Yes No
If No, do you have any thoughts on how this situation could be rectified? _____

9. Would you recommend the ABC Company as a possible source of employment? Yes No
If No, explain briefly: _____

10. Please use this space for any additional comments you have: _____

Thank you for your assistance in completing this questionnaire.

A working copy of this questionnaire is found at the end of this section.

*Employers'
Handbook*

Worksheets

Section 5

Exit Interview Questionnaire

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To be destroyed when summarized and analysed

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Department	Date of Hire
Date of Termination	

1. Reason for termination? (check one)

- (a) Leaving for another position
- (b) Retirement
- (c) Maternity Leave
- Are you planning to return when your leave expires? Yes No
- (d) Return to school
- (e) Other (briefly explain) _____

2. In general, were working conditions satisfactory? Almost Some of Most of All of
 (Circle best answer) Never the time the time the time
1 2 3 4

If your answer was (1), (2), or (3), please explain briefly: _____

3. Did you find that your supervisor Almost Some of Most of All of
 was fair in his/her requirements Never the time the time the time
 of you? (Circle best answer) 1 2 3 4

If your answer was (1), (2), or (3), please explain briefly: _____

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