

COUNSEL BEFORE YOU FIRE

When an employee misbehaves, is late, or is simply never there, the first thought that comes to mind for the employer is to dismiss!

According to the Leslie-Anne Bennett of LABER, dismissal should be a last resort when all other avenues have been explored, and the employer is left with no alternatives.

"In my experience, counseling is a very effective and pro-active way of dealing with employment matters, and clearly sets the parameters without going through the time and hard feelings of a disciplinary enquiry."

A counseling session deals with the following:

- 1) What are the issues?
- 2) What the company standards are / what the company expects
- 3) What the company will do to assist the employee in reaching the required standards
- 4) A follow up date to assess progress

"This is the first step to effective performance management," says Bennett. "Should you wish to dismiss an employee for performance, you need to show that you have trained, monitored, guided and given the employee reasonable time to improve."

"Counseling does not carry a sanction, in other words, a written warning which should be told to the employee at the start of the counseling session. Rather begin on a positive note, explain that this is not a disciplinary enquiry and the purpose of the meeting is to give the employee a chance to succeed."

According to Bennett, all employees who go through counseling must also then be given enough time to improve and a follow up meeting (step 4) is critical. "All counseling sessions should also be documented and a copy given to the employee."

"Employee dismissal is a complex process that is often avoidable. There may be a valid reason at the root of a problem with an employee that can be solved – saving all parties unnecessary aggravation and stress. Retaining an employee, counseling them and solving issues retains skills within the organization that often take time and money to replace and also builds loyalty within staff," concludes Bennett.

For more information on counseling, call Leslie-Anne on 011 884 2725 or send a request for a counseling form to laber@telkomsa.net

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