

The Discontentment of Workers

There is a misguided view that the discontentment exhibited by workers at the workplace, is primarily related to issues of pay, pay raises, conditions of work and occupational safety and health issues. The challenges that many workers face that cause them to become incense, can more often than not, be attributed to the stress they encounter due to dissatisfaction with their job. Job dissatisfaction can invariably be linked to issues with management, or personal issues that an individual employee or group of employees may have. All of these factors combine to create a negative work environment.

For the most part, much of what gives rise to a contentious issue that is experienced by employees, is grounded in poor workplace relations and communications. It is sometimes easy to pitch the blame at management for the degenerating workplace climate. In bringing a sense of balance to bear, it cannot be ruled out that there are negative work attitudes and the lack of cooperation by workers, which contribute to unwarranted tensions. A conducive, positive and productive workplace, can be compromised by the mere pressures that are brought to bear through the lack of effective communication, consultation, engagement and participation by workers in the life of the enterprise or organization.

The hierarchical management structure which enables the top -down approach to be practiced, can account for the restlessness and tensions which exists. Those in leadership and managerial position can sometimes act without demonstrating that they have a humane side to them. They treat their subordinates with disdain, and appear to take pleasure in imposing and abusing their authority. There are those who constantly threaten employees with termination, or bringing some form of disciplinary action against them.

Accusations have been made that management openly engages in subtle forms of discrimination, favouritism, victimization, intimidation and harassment. The giving of preferential treatment to select employees and engaging in the practice of nepotism in the recruitment, hiring and promotion process, are two negative traits that are ascribed to management. Additionally, management fails to provide the equipment and resources needed to enable their employees to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. With limited equipment and the understaffing of the enterprise, the demands being placed on workers can become excessive.

All of these contribute to building pressure and anxiety, with the end result that workers are forced to strategize, mobilize and plan courses of action to demonstrate their frustrations, and to arouse the attention of management in the hope that they would taking positive action to address issues.

Management personnel should be aware that indirectly or indirectly, they contribute to discontentment of their employees. First and foremost, workers have an expectation that they

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have job security, will receive a pension at the end of their work life or the payment of a gratuity. Workers who contribute to the National Insurance Scheme, have an expectation based on eligibility, that they would receive benefits to which they are entitled. It cannot be fair to employees that employers do not meet their obligation in paying their portion of the NIS contributions.

Management should take note that the usual warning signs of workers' discontentment could include, a declining level of productivity, low staff morale, increasing incidence of absenteeism by employees, early retirement of employees and the high turnover of staff. A key indicator that points to the fact that all is not well, would be the constant complaints which are brought to management's attention by employees, customers and clients.

Very often than not, management pays more attention to the bottom-line, by concentrating on targets, goals and output. It is for management to ensure that its employees are properly remunerated, have good working conditions, and operate in a conducive and safe working environment. It is in management's interest to promote team work and develop a workplace culture that lends to such. Finally, since workers are essential to any operation, paying attention to their work life balance, can go a long way in reducing the stress, anxiety and burnout of workers. Management by paying attention to the things that matters, through listening and responding with a sense of haste in addressing the concerns and problems of employees, would be a decisive step in maintaining a contented body of employees.

It is for management to understand and appreciate that the discontentment of workers is not an overnight thing. Like a cancer, if it there is no early diagnosis and ready treatment administered, it can become a life threatening illness. Linking this to a business, it would be folly not to realize that a discontented group of employees, can pose a serious threat to the stability, image and success of business or organization