A "Love or Hate" Employment Relationship – How Do Your Employees Feel?

Insights

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It comes as no surprise that an unhappy employee is more likely to file a complaint or lawsuit. We often tell managers and supervisors that employees file complaints when they "get their feelings hurt." Sometimes this is because the employee thinks no one is listening, or it may be that the employee does not feel respected. Whatever the underlying reason may be, it's as true now as it ever was that a little bit of employee relations goes a long way toward preventing employee complaints and legal actions.

Even if your managers technically comply with all legal requirements, employees who are not properly managed and motivated may become unhappy. An unhappy employee is less productive and more likely to cause problems at work. So it is worth asking the question: "What makes employees happy at work?"

Gallup To The Rescue

Gallup conducts an annual Work and Education Poll to survey employees about how they feel about various aspects of their work. In 2005, this Gallup Poll found that most workers were positive about their jobs. About one-third of workers surveyed said they actually loved their work, while less than 10% of workers said they disliked or hated their work.

Employees giving positive response cited that they liked what they were doing and liked their co-workers. Wages were far down the list of things that made people like or love their work. This confirms what we have known for many years: People go to work to make money, but they like or dislike their work for reasons other than the money.

In the 2011 Gallup Work and Education Poll, the greatest increases in dissatisfaction as compared to the 2008 poll were in the areas of health insurance benefits, chances for promotion, on-the-job stress and job security. Employees again expressed a high degree of satisfaction in the area of liking their co-workers.

The Top Ten "Most-Hated" Jobs

A 2011 CNBC report on a survey by CareerBliss listed the top ten "most-hated" jobs. Note that these are not the workers people most hate to deal with, like traffic cop or aggressive salesperson, but

instead these are jobs people hate to do.

The reasons cited by employees who hate their work include lack of direction, lack of opportunities for advancement, hostility from peers and lack of respect. And the list of these most-hated jobs includes primarily white-collar or management positions:

1. Director of Information Technology
2. Director of Sales and Marketing
3. Product Manager
4. Senior Web Developer
5. Technical Specialist
6. Electronics Technician
7. Law Clerk
8. Technical Support Analyst
9. CNC Machinist (a machine that operates a lathe or mill)
10. Marketing Manager

Putting Love And Hate Together
It's clear that when employees like what they do and like who they work with (including their supervisor), they are happy at work. It is also clear that when employees are treated with disrespect or lack direction, they are unhappy at work.

So we will say again what we have said for many years: to succeed effectively at employee relations and minimize the risk of employee complaints and lawsuits, management must "EMPOWER" employees by:

- **E**ngaging – encouraging employees to express opinions and ideas;
- **M**entoring – developing, motivating and fostering harmony;
- **P**raising – giving positive reinforcement;
- **O**bserving – listening to what employees have to say;
- **W**alking Around – making yourself available to employees naturally without appearing to be a threat;
- **E**mpathizing – understanding each employee's perspective; and
- **R**especting – treating employees in a professional and courteous manner.

None of these suggestions costs an employer any significant amount of money; yet all pay enormous dividends in employee morale.

For more information, contact the author at cwright@laborlawyers.com or (404) 231-1400.

Related People

C. R. Wright
Partner
404.240.4263
Email