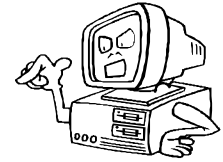


HILL ADVISORY NEWS

“Working with the human side of business”



Workplace Assessments *“ Managing Conflict in the Workplace ”*



Workplace Assessments are becoming a popular tool of the late 90's within proactive organizations. An Assessment is an effective method of measuring what is happening in your workplace. Problems can occur in a department, a division or throughout the entire organization. To maintain a positive working environment - care must be taken to ensure conflict is managed in an appropriate manner. Conflict is necessary - rather positive conflict is necessary - for creative growth! Therefore, how organizations handle conflict is important for the organization and the employees!

- * Does your organization allow conflict to escalate? Do you try to intervene early and address the issues in a conflict situation - so that harassment does not inevitably follow the situation or event? If there is intervention - is it successful or does it further escalate the conflict? How many situations occur in your workplace where co-workers don't speak to other co-workers? How many shifts are juggled to ensure that certain individuals are kept apart?
- * Workplace Assessments look at the working environment through the eyes of your employees. The Assessment captures 'the good, the bad and the ugly' about your working environment. It allows you the opportunity to fix the 'little' and 'not so little' problems that plague any organization and cause morale to spiral downwards. Once you determine *where* the Workplace Assessment needs to occur - the next step is to determine *how* it should be conducted and *who* should conduct it.

“Internal” Workplace Assessment

- * A team of Assessors from within the organization (Human Resource and possibly management/union staff) are selected. Interviews then occur with the staff from the unit, division or organization. Conclusions are drawn based on the information collected and an appropriate action plan is identified to assist with correcting the 'problems'.
- * The 'up' side to this is that your own staff participate, your cost is limited and everyone knows the people involved. The 'down' side is that since the Assessors are staff and everyone knows everyone - objectivity is difficult!! Also the content and approach to gathering the information and the confidentiality of the information received are all suspect. Trust or lack of trust can have major implications in the validity of an Assessment!

“External” Workplace Assessment

- * A team of Assessors from another organization is selected to conduct the interviews. These Assessors are not known to the employees. Recommendations are provided based on the information gathered.
- * The 'up' side to this is that the employees interviewed do not perceive any 'bias' and have confidence that an outside source provides more objectivity and confidentiality. The 'down' side of this approach is that the employees may feel more nervous initially about being interviewed. The costs for doing an Assessment can vary, as can the timeframe involved. Some 'Assessors' aren't necessarily skilled in the product they are selling - and the end result can be less meaningful or practical for your organization to deal with!

To Ensure Success With Your Workplace Assessment - Always Remember:

- * Conduct interviews with all or as many of the 'affected' staff as possible. (Do not just interview 'volunteers' as that increases the division within the 'affected' group.) Conduct them over a short period of time before staff have the opportunity to compare notes and bring hidden agendas to the process.
- * Check out references when hiring outside organizations to conduct an Assessment.
- * Organizationally - keep an 'at arm's length' approach to increase the sense of confidentiality.
- * Do not begin a Workplace Assessment if you have no intention of following through with the results. An Assessment impacts on your employees in a dramatic manner increasing their belief that the organization wants to improve the environment in their particular work area. **FAILURE TO REACT TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL ONLY MAKE THE SITUATION WORSE !!**

Q. What is the reason for sharing statements between the Complainant and the Respondent in a harassment investigation?

- * After you have developed the statements, it is appropriate to share them because you have recorded the facts and hopefully have not included any comments that are slanderous.
- * The Respondent needs to be aware of the entire allegations. If you have misinterpreted the allegations, that would leave the Respondent wondering what you'd missed and what might surface later against him/her, etc.
- * The Respondent needs to have due process, and that does not occur unless the full statement is shared. The reason you share the Respondent's statement with the Complainant is, so again, the full information is shared between the parties. If resolution becomes something obtainable later on, having the full story on both sides helps.



* Sometimes, misunderstandings are at the root of a complaint. If the other side can be viewed in written form (which tends to be less personal), it allows time for reflection, and a person's viewpoint may change.

* * * * *

Q. What do you do in a harassment investigation if a witness doesn't want to sign their statement?

- * See if you can find out what the reason is. Did the witness say something to you he/she now regrets and now doesn't want to see it in print? If so, the evidence cannot and should not be changed. Is the witness fearful of repercussions? See if you can ease his/her concerns.

* If you simply can't find out what the reason is for the refusal - mark the statement "WITNESS REFUSED TO SIGN". Then document everything you did to try to obtain the witness's signature.

* * * * *

Q. What if a harassment investigation witness I want to interview is on sick leave? What do I do?

- * If it is crucial you speak to the witness, try and arrange approval from the doctor, psychiatrist, etc.
- * If a witness is away from work due to stress, ask the doctor, counsellor, etc. to attend the interview with the witness.
- * If a witness is too unwell to attend an interview (i.e. heart attack, etc.) and the doctor does not give approval, delay the investigation - if the person is a key witness.



Our appreciation goes out to the following clients for all their help and assistance with various events over the last few months!

* * * * *

Thank you to Donna Cargill at the Regina Health District for coordinating the Harassment Investigation workshops. We had a great time!

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We enjoyed our return visit to Correctional Services Canada (Atlantic Institute) in Miramichi, New Brunswick. Anna Gaston, once again, did a wonderful job of coordinating the Harassment Prevention and Conflict Resolution training for management and staff.

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It was a pleasure returning to Shilo, Manitoba to conduct our Harassment Investigation and Resolution workshops for the Department of National Defence. Special thanks go out to Major Gerry Johnson and Capt. Paddy Douglass. As usual, we had lots of fun with the staff at DND!

1999 Public Workshop Schedule (tentative)

"Harassment Investigation" (3 days)
"Harassment Resolution" (2 days)

Jan.	11 - 15	St. John's	Nfld
Feb.	22 - 26	Edmonton	AB
April	26 - 30	Saskatoon	SK
June	14 - 18	Yellowknife	NT
Sept.	13 - 17	Calgary	AB
Oct.	25 - 29	Halifax	NS
Nov.	15 - 19	Whitehorse	YK

"Resolving Workplace Conflict" (2 days)

Feb.	15 & 16	Edmonton	AB
May	3 & 4	Saskatoon	SK

(Register early and save \$\$\$)



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A direct quote from the Boss



"We passed over a lot of good people to get the ones we hired!"

On the Move



Even though *Cam Hill & Associates* are constantly on the move - you can always get in touch with us!!

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Editor's Corner



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