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*Making the workplace a better place to be
with Donna Obstfeld (Chartered FCIPD)*



WORKPLACE DISPUTES

I have long held the mantra that you spend too much of your life at work not to enjoy what you are doing, going to work on a daily basis to an environment which is hostile takes its toll on everyone. That means the employee, their colleagues, managers and the business itself can be affected. The question is how do businesses deal with the impact of friction, arguments, bickering and more seriously, bullying

in the workplace?

Despite some often childlike behaviour, employers cannot use the tactics adopted by teachers; lines, detentions and exclusions are just not appropriate options for an office or other place of work.

It's important that employers create a culture in which everyone understands the

standard of behaviour which is expected and what will not be tolerated. This culture needs to be communicated to employees in clear policy format and demonstrated through the examples set by managers.

Inappropriate behaviour must be treated with a zero tolerance approach and an open door policy for reporting problems. Employers have a duty of care to all employees and are required to ensure the physical and mental well-being of their staff.

So how do employers deal with problems? The answer

is really it's child's play! Listen, talk and then listen some more.

If necessary, get the people involved around a table to discuss their concerns, this is where an independent facilitator may be a useful in some circumstances. Make sure that outcomes are mutually agreed and clear expectations and deadlines are set. If there is

a case of bullying or harassment, this will need to be dealt with through the company disciplinary policy. If an employee raises a formal grievance, then the company is legally obliged to deal with it as such and fully investigate any claims.

The workplace should be productive and conducive to business and the atmosphere and environment

should support that. Hostility, backstabbing and aggression have no place in a modern workplace. It is only on TV that shouting "You're Fired" is acceptable and even then, that is debatable. Shouting "You're Fired" in your place of business will result in an Employment Tribunal.

For assistance with workplace disputes, or the development of any of the policies mentioned in this article, please contact DOHR on 01923 504100 or email enquiries@dohr.co.uk.



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