



Customized On-site Training Program

Positive Discipline: The Better Way to Manage Employee Performance Problems

Do your managers handle performance problems promptly and effectively?

Or do they let performance problems slide because they aren't comfortable with how to handle disciplinary meetings with employees?

GET STARTED!

Most managers don't enjoy doing disciplinary meetings.

As a result managers often postpone (or completely avoid) doing these meetings, and when they are done the employee's attitude often ends up worse than it was before.

The disciplinary approach commonly used in casinos has two main problems:

1. The **process is designed to be punitive.**
2. Managers and supervisors are often uncomfortable with the process, because they lack training on how to do it well, because **meetings with employees can be emotionally charged** and because the **situation with the employee often deteriorates** after the meeting.

Positive Discipline is a different approach that **lessens the emotional drama of the disciplinary meeting.** And by **training your managers in this process you give them confidence** that they know how to effectively handle these meetings without making a bad situation even worse.

Problems with the Punitive Approach to Progressive Discipline

Discipline programs in casinos are typically based on punishments – written warnings or suspensions – which increase with the frequency and severity of the infraction and are steps along the path that leads to getting fired.

In the disciplinary meeting the manager often takes on the role of the Critical Parent, which leads the employee to take on the role of the Defensive Child, making it a highly-charged emotional event.

The interaction and the punishment often lead to resentment on the part of the employee, which affects their job performance, interaction with customers and relationships with their managers and co-workers. Instead of making greater effort towards doing a good job, the employee does just enough to avoid getting disciplined again. Often, if they are upset with their treatment, their complaining and negativity to co-workers can spread and hurt team morale.

For all these reasons many managers and supervisors will avoid doing discipline because they don't want to make a small problem into a bigger one.

GET STARTED!

How Positive Discipline Works and Why It's Better

Positive Discipline involves a more effective approach to handling poor performance and rules violations. There are a number of **significant differences between Positive Discipline and the commonly used process of "giving a write-up."**

1. The meeting is about problem-solving. The tone of the meeting is one of problem identification and problem-solving, not personally criticizing, blaming or judging the employee. The tone is set by clearly defining the problem by comparing the organization's expectations to the employee's behavior. Because the meeting is less emotionally fraught, it creates less resentment and counter-productive responses from the employee. And it's easier on the manager, so **it's less likely that they put off doing the discipline.** Managers who postpone doing discipline meetings with employees allow the problem to get worse and make the eventual meeting harder on themselves because the employee can argue that if there was a problem the manager should have communicated it to them sooner. Another side-effect of not doing discipline promptly is that performance standards go down because other employees see that management is taking no action to correct the poor performer's behavior.

2. **Give the employee an opportunity to explain (and listen while they explain).** People are more willing to listen to you when you have first listened to them. The manager needs to be sure that they have their facts correct. No employee is going to consider discipline to be fair if the manager doesn't know what actually happened. If the facts about the issue are in question the manager can end the meeting and investigate further. Only when the manager is sure of the facts should they proceed with the discipline.

3. **Explain the business reasons for the policy or performance standard.**

Managers assume that employees understand the reasons for policies and procedures. Sometimes they do, but sometimes they don't understand why something matters so much. People are more likely to comply with a policy when they understand why it's important, why it matters to the business, the customers, and other employees. Taking the time to explain the business reasons helps the manager get the employee's real buy-in, which is more effective than coercing the employee's cooperation with threats of greater punishment in the future.

4. **Come to agreement on specifically what the employee will do differently and clearly communicate that it's the employee's responsibility to make that change.** Whatever the performance problem is, it will require different behaviors from the employee in the future. The goal for the manager is to have the employee identify what they'll do differently going forward that corrects the problem. The manager's role is to be clear about the organization's expectations and that it is the employee who is responsible for making the needed changes.

5. **Get the employee's commitment to make the changes.** This is an extremely important step that is usually not a part of the disciplinary process. It's much more powerful to have the employee agree to do something than to attempt to coerce them with the threat of future punishment, so this is the optimal way to close the meeting.

(In most cases employees will be willing to commit to make the changes that have been identified as solutions to the problem. But in some cases they do not. In cases where the employee refuses to make a commitment to meet the company's standards, there needs to be a process to involve either a higher level of management or HR, or both. If an employee isn't willing to make this commitment, the question is: Why should the company continue to employ the person and have them interact with customers and other employees? A second question is: Why would the employee want to continue working with a company if he or she doesn't want to commit to meeting its standards? This policy for handling employees who aren't willing to make a commitment needs to be developed based on each organization's culture and legal requirements and we can assist with that. What's clear is that sending an employee who is unwilling to make this commitment back to work is simply prolonging a problem that is better dealt with promptly, before their poor customer service or poor teamwork creates more problems for the manager and the organization.)



Positive Discipline is a process that can be used with your current discipline process. What is different is what happens in the meeting with the employee, so you don't need to change your existing policy.

This Positive Discipline training program is designed to get managers comfortable with the process of handling the most common discipline situations they face. The training includes multiple opportunities to practice common situations, so managers are ready to use the process when they go back to work.

Trainer – Dave Newton, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, MBA

Dave Newton has over twenty years' experience in Human Resources, including eleven at the VP level. Dave is President of CDC Gaming Seminars and a partner with Hospitality Resources, a company that uses employee surveys and assessments to help organizations increase employee engagement and performance.



Prior to his current position, Dave was VPHR at the Venetian Casino Resort in Las Vegas for six years, and led the creation and implementation of all HR policies at that very successful 4,000-employee property. The Venetian won two first-place awards among large employers for Workplace Excellence during Dave's time there.

Prior to that Dave was Corporate Director of HR for Station Casinos in Las Vegas and he held several positions (including VPHR and General Manager) during his eleven years with Accor North America, a division of Accor hotels.

Dave implemented Positive Discipline at each organization he worked for. It is a proven process and by making the discipline process more effective and more timely, it provides a stronger defense against lawsuits related to unfair termination.

Dave has an undergraduate degree from Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations and an MBA from Pace University in New York City. He holds the senior human resource certifications SPHR and SHRM-SCP.

Dave has taught on-line classes for UNLV, conducted webinars, and been an expert speaker on HR topics for a variety of organizations.

GET STARTED!

Satisfaction Guarantee

If you are not satisfied with the program, you will not be charged for the training.