

How to Reduce Employee Absenteeism...Cure Tardiness...and Build Employee Morale (Excerpts from SESCO’s Dartnell Management Guide)

Employers have always struggled with absenteeism and tardiness, which severely affects employee morale. It seems that this very costly issue is becoming more and more frequent because of the “I don’t care attitude” of today’s employee. Employers experience millions of losses due to the high frequency of absenteeism and lateness. The before and after weekends and holidays absences, one day off at a time or coming in or leaving early absences all eat away at organizational efficiency and profits.

One of the more severe results of absenteeism and lateness is the effect on employee morale. *“Why should I show up, work hard and do a good job if John Doe can come and go apparently as he pleases?”* Many direct supervisors as well as owners and general managers ignore absenteeism and lateness because they need a “warm” body to perform tasks. They also want to avoid separation and the time and cost of replacing the employee.

Mediocre behavior and rewarding poor attendance cannot be allowed. This behavior, as stated above, is extremely

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costly from a pure compensation standpoint. An organization is better off performing the work with nine (9) employees versus ten (10). The "10th" must go.

How does management address this systemic issue?

Four Factors in Improving Attendance

- 1. Example** – Management should start with himself and set an example by being on the job every day.
- 2. Information** – The supervisor should see that every employee understands the company’s position on attendance: each employee is expected to be at work every day he is scheduled to work. Any absence is undesirable. Frequent absence is unacceptable.

Employees are to be told to report all absences to their supervisors. If the supervisor is not available at the time the call is received, the supervisor is to call back and discuss the absence with the employee or the employee’s representative. The supervisor should, in a sympathetic but firm manner, get all the details concerning the nature of the illness and estimated duration of the absence.

It should be clear that minor indispositions or inconveniences are not valid reasons for absence.

Employees should know that attendance will be considered in rating for pay increases and promotions.

Each employee should understand his personal responsibility for good attendance.

The supervisor should explain the sickness benefit plan to every employee: payments are made to eligible employees who are ill and unable to work. It is wrong for any employee who is able to work to accept such payments.

- 3. Expectation** – Most employees have good attendance. Good attendance is not "exceptional" behavior; it is expected. This expectation should be communicated to all.

Each employee should recognize that a valid and reasonable explanation is expected in any case of unexcused absence.

- 4. Administration** – An effective absence control program calls for regular attention to attendance, and a critical examination of all cases of absence or tardiness by each supervisor including those where no payments are involved.

Supervisors should be consistent in their attitude toward attendance and in their treatment of absence problems. In dealing with absence, however, as in other parts of the job, they must use good judgment.

In Summary

Most employers are more than willing to accommodate employee lateness and absenteeism where there is a legitimate

ABSENTEEISM, TARDINESS, MORALE

need, but certainly not an ongoing trend no matter how legitimate the poor attendance may be. Employers cannot ignore the continual lates, leaving early, missing full or partial days. These employees are stealing time and negatively affecting the entire organization to include productivity, customer service, and employee morale. We've found over consulting with our clients that the more clients try

to work and be patient with this type of behavior and attitude that the employee continues to take advantage. Most employers will know the type of employee they have early on and subsequently should move that employee out sooner rather than later.

Of course, under **SESCO's Professional Service Agreement** clients can call to discuss absenteeism and lateness

problems, policies and solutions at no charge. Under the Agreement, SESCO conducts a free review of all policies to determine not only compliance but effectiveness. Finally, when consulting with clients, we will ensure that you comply with state sick/paid personal leave laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act and other related federal and state regulations that may protect the employee's absence.

Important Notice

For the first time, SESCO is allowing select advertising in our SESCO Report and SESCO Weekly Updates. Given the large volume of distribution to clients in all states, the requests have been high for advertising.

SESCO will be selective on the organizations who will advertise as we will ensure that it is meaningful, useful and a credible service. Please contact SESCO at 423-764-4127 or sesco@sescomgt.com if you are interested in advertising.

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SESCO clients interested in learning more about the 401(k) solutions provided by Fisher should contact Bill Ford at bill@sescomgt.com or 423-764-4127. If you contact Fisher directly, please let Fisher know that you have been referred by SESCO Management Consultants to ensure that you receive a substantial discount on fees.

SESCO recently engaged Fisher Investments 401(k) Solutions to provide our plan administrator and employees with professional investing and retirement support. We have been extremely pleased with not only the service but also the high level of professional investing advise as Fisher is one of the largest independent investment advisors in the country.

SESCO Client Feedback

"Jamie, I was unable to attend the webinar on the 20th and finished it earlier today. I just needed to tell you how much I appreciated the depth and breadth of information you covered. This information is very timely, and you delivered it extremely well. It will help me coach my clients on several aspects of this material and know they always have SESCO to turn to when needed. Thank you for our working relationship with Elite Worldwide." ~ Randy Pickering, A.M.A.M., Certified Business Development Coach - Elite Top Shop 360 - Elite

"Joel, I cannot thank the two of you enough. Adam was incredible, his presence I believe, greatly smoothed the process. Thanks." ~ David Grace, Paramount Center for the Arts Executive Committee - Paramount Center for the Arts

May an Employee Be Disciplined for Social Media Use?



1. Consider whether employee discipline may be appropriate for unlawful social media posts. From Facebook to Twitter to LinkedIn, social media platforms are widely used by employees, both within and outside the workplace. From time to time, the nature of the content posted on social media platforms is not simply innocuous; indeed, it can be harmful or destructive for the individuals or businesses to which the content relates. When employees post objectionable or offensive content online, employers should take into account the following considerations before imposing discipline. Because regulation of employee social media activity is constantly evolving, it is imperative before acting to consult with SESCO to determine that any employer action complies with pertinent federal, state, and local laws.

2. Analyze the content of the objectionable social media post. As a starting point, carefully analyze the nature of the content and the reasoning behind potentially imposing disciplinary action against the employee. For example, does the content constitute an unauthorized disclosure of confidential, intellectual property, or trade secret information? Or is the content false and defamatory, harassing, or offensive? Does the content amount to a violation of the employer's social media policy, anti-harassment policy, or standards of conduct? Clarify the type of content that has been posted to determine if, and what type of, discipline may be imposed.

3. Determine whether a violation of the employer's social media policy occurred. Social media policies and procedures will be key in determining

whether an employee has acted inappropriately and whether discipline or otherwise may be appropriate. Thus, it is necessary to determine whether the employer has written social media policies or procedures. In reviewing any formal social media policy, consider the following factors:

- Was the policy disseminated to all employees?
- Is the policy readily available to employees?
- Were employees aware of the policy?
- Has the employer trained employees on social media practices in the workplace?
- Does the policy provide for specific disciplinary actions if violated?
- Did the offending employee acknowledge receiving the policy in writing or electronically?
- Is the policy regularly and uniformly enforced by the employer?

A well-drafted social media policy will be tailored to the unique business objectives and legal needs of the employer.

4. Evaluate prior situations involving objectionable social media content; impose uniform response. Determine whether other employees have engaged in similar conduct on social media and assess how the employer handled each prior situation. Confirm that the employer responds to all such instances involving misconduct on social media in a uniform manner in order to minimize risk of discrimination claims.

5. Weigh the pros and cons of imposing discipline. Before imposing discipline on an employee for an objectionable post, analyze whether the content implicates considerations under federal anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, and whistleblower laws. For example, does the post contain information about unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation? Such content may warrant

an internal investigation to address these concerns prior to any discipline being imposed. A social media post may put an employer on notice of potentially harassing conduct in the workplace, and an employer's failure to address such a concern can trigger liability.

6. Evaluate potential avenues for removing the objectionable post. When an employee posts objectionable content on social media, the employer's natural inclination is to react immediately. If the employer elects to require that the objectionable post be removed, consider the different options for removal. Depending upon the relationship between the employer and the employee, the employer may elect to simply request that the employee remove the post. If the employer's simple request is unsuccessful or if the employer elects to take a stronger course of action, for example in a situation where trade secrets have been disclosed, the employer may send a cease-and-desist letter demanding that the post be removed. Finally, the employer may initiate legal action, either through injunctive relief or claims for damages against the employee.

Special Thanks to New SESCO Clients!

Eldridge Family Funeral Homes
Paullina, IA

Lee Bank & Trust Company
Pennington Gap, VA

Healing Hands Health
Bristol, TN

Sweetieboy Transportation
Richmond, VA

Eagle Alloys Corporation
Talbott, TN

Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc.
Big Stone Gap, VA

Blevins, Inc.
Nashville, TN

Client Highlight



Carolina Turkey was founded in 1985 by Maxwell Farms and Carroll's Foods. Smithfield purchased Carroll's Foods interest in Carolina Turkey in 1999.

The company operates a turkey plant covering more than 1 million square feet in Mt. Olive. It is the world's largest turkey processing facility. Carolina Turkey employs 2,500 people. The Mt. Olive plant can process more than 80,000 turkeys a day. Its ovens can produce 10,000 pounds of turkey an hour.

Combined with Butterball, Carolina Turkey will vault past Jennie-O Turkey Store and Cargill Turkey Products to take over the number one spot. Sales of the combined turkey operations is about 600 million.

SESCO is proud to call Carolina Turkey and Butterball valued clients providing labor relations and leadership training.