# CONCEPT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organization's goals, objectives and values, encouraged to contribute to organizational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being.

Here it is believed that all the three components - **attitudes, behaviors** and **outcomes** are a part of the engagement story. There is a virtual ground, when the pre-conditions of engagement are met. These three aspects of engagement trigger and reinforce one another.

Involved organizations have strong and authentic values, with clear evidence of trust and fairness based on mutual understanding, where two way promises and commitments – between employers and staff – are understood and are achieved.

Despite there being some debate about the precise definition of employee engagement, there are three things we know about it –

- It is measurable.
- It can be correlated with performance.
- It varies from poor to great.

Most importantly, employers can have a great impact on people's level of engagement through appreciation, healthy interactions, brainstorming, group discussions, common games etc. That is what makes employee engagement so essential as a tool for business success.

## Rules of Employee Engagement

Every HR is bound to follow a set of rules in order to maintain the ethics and justify the role of HR. The following rules must be followed to engage the employees in an organization.

**Don't Sweat Over Reviews**

Don't judge people on the basis of what others say about them. Instead, judge a person on his/her abilities and performance.

**Discover Your Company's Purpose**

Invent the purpose or object of the company, discover the new objectives or target points that can be set for the company.

**Survey, But Keep It Short and Follow Up**

When asked about an update, try to keep it to the point and short; be specific. There is no point in explaining unnecessary details, which are not relevant to the topic.

**There Is Only So Much You Can Do**

Give yourself a break. Don't try to complete all the work at the same time; analyze your potential and work accordingly.

**Don't Worry About Engagement**

Don't worry about always fitting into the group; show what you are. Rules are fine, but simply having actual conversations and asking employees what we can do better is much more valuable.

If employees can't sit down with their boss and talk about things, then it can be detrimental for the company in the long run — doesn't matter how many stringent rules are put in place.

# Grievance

In every company employees do have grievances of one kind or the other. These grievances may be real or imaginary, valid or invalid, genuine or false. A grievance creates unhappiness, dissatisfaction, negative attitude, low morale and frustration, etc. Finally, it affects employees' concentration, efficiency and productivity.

Many of the industrial disputes that result in grave repercussions originate from minor grievances. If such grievances are settled amicably in time, many of the disputes could be prevented. It is the rationale of the mutual acceptability of the grievance procedure. Grievance procedure is expected to be effective tool in the tool kit of corporate managers handling manpower as well as human relations in the Indian industry. The grievance denotes any dissatisfaction expressed or unvoiced, valid or invalid, arising out of anything connected with the company an employee considers, believes and feels is unfair, unjust or inequitable.

A grievance may be expressed or implied. Expressed grievances are comparatively easy to recognize and are manifested in gossiping, envy, criticism, argumentation, enhanced labor turnover, recklessness in the use of tools and materials, untidy housekeeping, poor workmanship, etc.

When a grievance of an employee comes to the knowledge of the management it cannot be ignored as irrational or false. Grievances of all shorts have to be addressed by the management similarly as rational grievances. We know that our behavior is largely irrational. This may be due to our distorted perception. Emotional grievances are based upon sentiments (like love. hatred. Resentment, anger, envy, fear etc.), misconceptions and lack of thinking are examples of our irrational behavior. These grievances are the most difficult to handle.

## Features of Grievances

The grievances are characterized by the following:

- Grievances emerge out of the perceived injustice or unfair treatment the aggrieved employee feels.
- It is the feeling discontent or dissatisfaction about any aspect of an organization
- The grievance may be real or imaginary, genuine or fake, legitimate or irrational.

- A grievance may be expressed or unexpressed, expressed normally in a written form.
- It must arise out of the job of the employee

## Sources of Grievances

Different sources of grievances can be grouped under the five categories as management policies and practices, working conditions supervision, collective bargaining agreements and work-adjustment difficulties.

**Management Policies and Practices:** Basic wages and salary scale, provision for general wage rise and overtime allowance; Employee benefits and incentive schemes; Promotion and transfer criteria; Leave of absence and holidays; Fines, punishment and penalties; Attitude towards labor union.

**Working Conditions**: Occupational health and safety measures; Physical conditions of the workplace; Changes in production schedules and standards; Shortage or required raw material, tools and machines and equipment; improper allocation of work, duties and responsibilities of workers

**Supervision**: Style of supervision; a misunderstanding between the supervisor and the workers; Rigidity in the interpretation of rules and regulations; Discouraging the complaints and representation of the workers; Ambiguous job instructions

**Collective Bargaining**: Agreements Vague and unclear language and clauses in the agreements; Violation and/ nonfulfillment of the terms of agreement; an emphasis on a legalistic approach to the employees' problems without considering the social and economic dimensions that may have a bearing on these problems.

**Work-adjustment Difficulties**: Basic attitude towards job and company; Excessive self-esteem and pride; Introverted personality; Grumbling and fault-finding mindset

## Techniques of Grievance Identification

An organization must have the ability to diagnose, detect, recognize and resolve the grievances at an earlier stage. The major techniques to identify grievances include exit interview, gripe box system, opinion survey, open door policy and observations.

**Exit Interview**: When employees quit an organization for any reason, an exit interview may be conducted to obtain information about the job-related matters. At this time those quitting their jobs speak freely and frankly about their experience and observations on the job. This can provide the employer with an invaluable insight into the simmering problems and anxieties concerning the employees.

**Gripe box System**: Employees can drop their written complaints in the boxes kept by the organization to provide an outlet to the employees to secretly express their complaints and apprehensions without the fear of being victimized.

**Opinion Surveys**: Opinion survey is the direct and personal means of gathering information from the employees about their existing grievances.

**Open – door Policy**: The workers are encouraged to call on the relevant manager at any time, to freely share their opinions, feelings and complaints with him. Open door policy is workable only in very small organizations. In big organizations when management by exception is practiced, the top management does not have the time to attend to innumerable routine grievances daily that is the work of lower-level managers.

**Observation** The manager or the immediate supervisor constantly tracks the behavior of the employees working under him.

from blocks or hindrances. Unfortunately, in many organisations there is a notion among superiors that a negative content generates dissatisfaction on the part of higher-ups, and gives a negative feeling about the concerned department. Hence, an endeavour is made for suppressing the grievances and individuals are prevented from 'speaking out.' To overcome the barriers of upward communication some experts have suggested an 'Open-door policy' which requires effort and willingness from the individual's superior. In other words, there should be a general invitation to all employees to walk-in at any time and speak over their grievances. However, this policy is workable only in small organisations. Since the principle of management by exception is practised in large organisations, the top level managements have neither time to look after the innumerable grievances of their employees nor familiarity with their work situation.
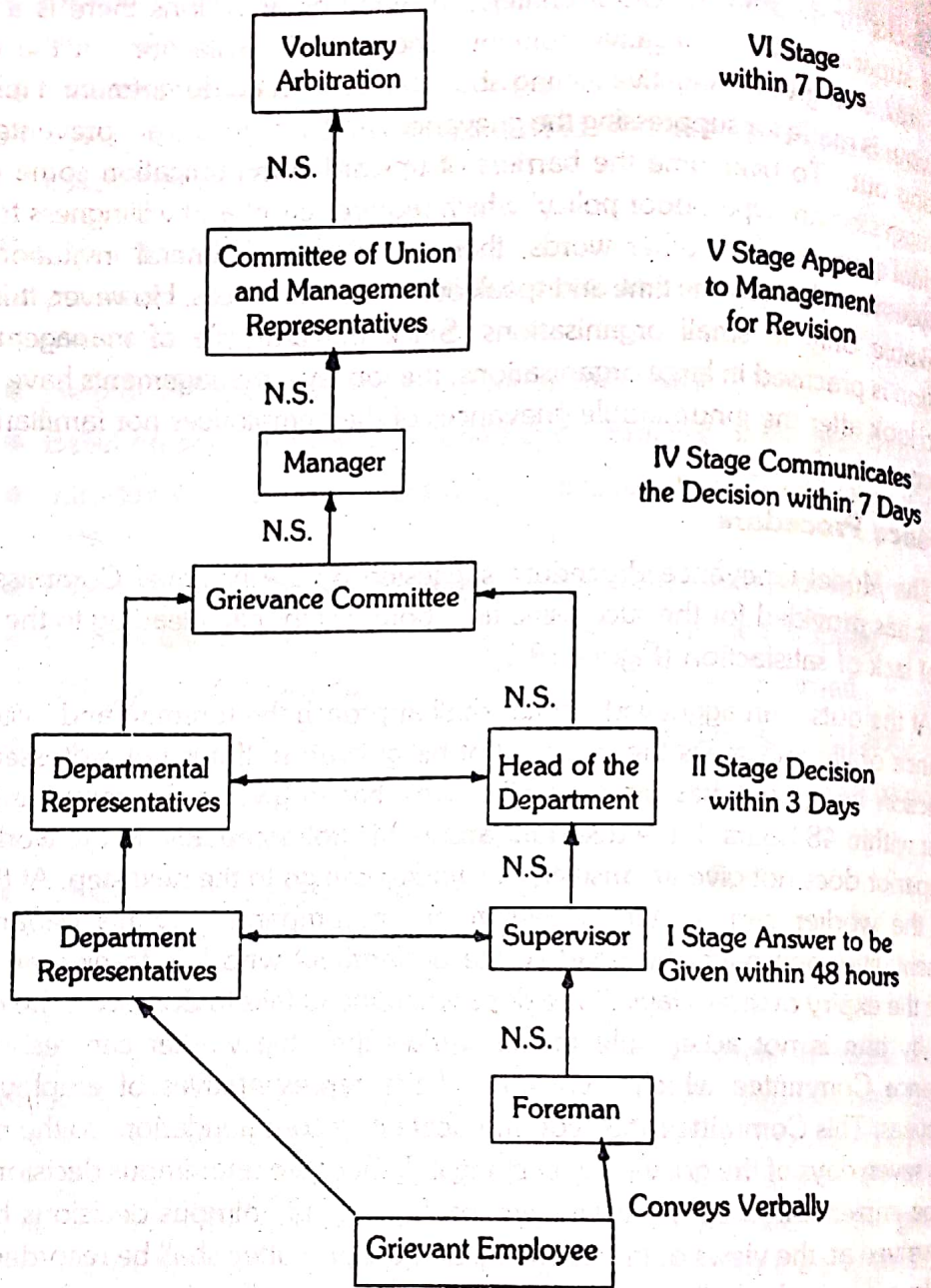
## Grievance Procedure

The Model Grievance Procedure suggested by the National Commission on Labour has provided for the successive time bound steps each leading to the next in case of lack of satisfaction (Figure 19.1).

At the outset an aggrieved worker shall approach the foreman and informs his grievance orally and seeks the redressal of his grievance. If it is not redressed to his satisfaction he approaches the supervisor who has to give to the complaint of the worker within 48 hours. If the decision (answer) is not acceptable to the worker or if the superior does not give an answer, the worker can go to the next step. At the third stage the worker can, either in person or accompanied by his departmental representative, approach the head of the department who has to give an answer before the expiry of three days. If the department head fails to do so or if the decision given by him is not acceptable to the worker then the worker can resort to the Grievance Committee which comprises of the representatives of employers and employees. This Committee shall communicate its recommendations to the manager within seven days of the grievance reaching it. If there are unanimous decisions, these shall be implemented by the management. In case, unanimous decisions have not been arrived at, the views of the members of the Committee shall be recorded and all the relevant records shall be placed before the manager for decision. The manager shall communicate his decision within three days. The worker has got a right to appeal against the manager's decision. These appeals shall be decided within a week. If the aggrieved desires, he can take along with him a union official for discussion with the authority. In case a decision has not been arrived at, at this stage, the union and management may refer the grievance to voluntary arbitration within a week of receipt of the management's decision by the worker.

All the above-mentioned steps may not be resorted to by a worker. In case the grievance arises on account of dismissal or discharge of the worker, he can resort to the second step. In the latter stage he can make an appeal to the dismissing authority designated by the management within a week from the date of dismissal or discharge.

Thus, there is voluntariness in so far as the implementation of the Model Grievance Procedure is concerned. But, there is a great need for providing a statutory backing to the grievance machinery since voluntariness failed to get the desired result

**Fig. 19.1 Model Grievance Procedure.**

The figure shows the model grievance procedure flow:

- **Voluntary Arbitration** — VI Stage within 7 Days
  - ↑ N.S.
- **Committee of Union and Management Representatives** — V Stage Appeal to Management for Revision
  - ↑ N.S.
- **Manager** — IV Stage Communicates the Decision within 7 Days
  - ↑ N.S.
- **Grievance Committee**
  - ← connected from Departmental Representatives and Head of the Department (N.S.)
- **Departmental Representatives** ↔ **Head of the Department** — II Stage Decision within 3 Days
  - ↑ N.S.
- **Department Representatives** ↔ **Supervisor** — I Stage Answer to be Given within 48 hours
  - ↑ N.S.
- **Foreman** — Conveys Verbally
- **Grievant Employee**

*Note:* N.S. Not Satisfied

in a number of cases. Further, there is a need to introduce suggestion schemes which are helpful in overcoming the barriers in upward channels of communication. In the Western countries suggestion schemes have helped a lot in harmonising the relations between labour and management. In India also, suggestion schemes have been a success in some organisations due to monetary rewards, establishment of suggestion committees and dissemination of full information about the suggestions received. Hence, the importance of suggestion schemes should be recognised and measures should be initiated for the introduction of such schemes. Exhibit 19.1 shows certain Do's and Don'ts in handling grievances.

## (B) DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Maintenance of harmonious human relations in an organisation depends upon the promotion and maintenance of discipline. No organisation can prosper without discipline. Discipline has been a matter of utmost concern for all organisations. There are some people who believe and state that maintenance of discipline is concerned with only higher echelons of an organisation. But discipline is concerned with employees at all levels.

Maintenance of effective discipline in an organisation ensures the most economical and optimum utilisation of various resources including human resources. Thus, the objective of discipline in an organisation is to increase and maintain business efficiency.[14] Effective discipline is a sign of sound human and industrial relations and organisational health.

### Need for Disciplinary Measures

Rules and regulations are essential to maintain peace, prevent anarchy, regulate behaviour of people and to hold the pieces together. Moreover, most of the employees prefer to work under disciplined environment as fair rules protect the individuals and the organisation and enable the team work. Further, disciplinary measures ensure just and equal treatment to all employees, efficient two-way communication, encourages cooperation and builds team pride. Disciplinary rules regulate the behaviour of the employees in an organisation as the law regulates the behaviour of the people in the society.

### Meaning and Definitions

Discipline refers to a condition or attitude, prevailing among the employees, with respect to rules and regulations of an organisation. Discipline in the broadest sense means "... orderliness, the opposite of confusion. It does mean a strict and technical observance of rigid rules and regulations. It simply means working, cooperating and behaving in a normal and orderly way, as any responsible person would expect an employee to do."[15]

Discipline is defined as "... a force that prompts individuals or groups to observe the rules, regulations and procedures which are deemed to be necessary for the effective functioning of an organisation."[16]

According to Ordway Tead, discipline is "...the orderly conduct of affairs by the members of an organisation, who adhere to do necessary regulations because they desire to cooperate harmoniously in forwarding the end which the group has in view, and willingly recognise that. To do this their wishes must be brought into a reasonable unions with the requirements of groups in action."[17] Discipline is said to be good when employees willingly follow company's rules and it is said to be bad when employees follow rules unwillingly or actually disobey regulations.[18]

Webster's dictionary gives three meanings of the word 'Discipline', viz.,

*(i)* It is training that corrects, moulds, strengthens or perfects.

*(ii)* It is control gained by enforcing obedience, and

*(iii)* It is punishment or chastisement.[19]

This definition indicates the aspects of discipline, viz., Positive approach and Negative approach.

## Aspects of Discipline

There are two aspects of discipline, viz., Positive and Negative aspects.

*(1) Positive Aspect:* Employees believe in and support discipline and adhere to the rules, regulations and desired standards of behaviour. Discipline takes the form of positive support and reinforcement for approved actions and its aim is to help the individual in moulding his behaviour and developing him in a corrective and supportive manner. This type of approach is called positive approach or constructive discipline or self-discipline. Positive discipline takes place whenever the organisational climate is marked by aspects such as payment of adequate remuneration and incentives, appropriate avenues for career advancement, appreciation of proper performance and reinforcement of approved personnel behaviour or actions etc., which all motivate employees to adhere to certain rules and regulations or exercise self-control and work to the maximum possible extent.

*(2) Negative Aspect:* Employees sometimes do not believe in and support discipline. As such, they do not adhere to rules, regulations and desired standard of behaviour. As such, disciplinary programme forces and constraints the employees to obey orders and function in accordance with set rules and regulations through warnings, penalties and other forms of punishment. This approach to discipline is called negative approach or corrective approach or punitive approach. This approach is also called autocratic approach as the subordinates are given no role in formulating the rules and they are not told why they are punished.[20] Negative or enforced discipline connotes that personnel are forced to observe rules and regulations on account of fear or reprimand, fine, demotion, or transfer. But these are helpful in extracting just minimum standard of work from the employees since they work on account of fear they have got. In fact, punishment, penalties, demotions and transfers provide or establish a climate which demotivate and delead employees. Hence, such climate is not helpful for the accomplishment of group goals and for enhancing the morale on the part of employees. Therefore, "where the end is not accepted as necessary or desirable, where there is no common aim between the discipliners and disciplined, discipline becomes a mere frustration of human purpose, stunts development of human personality, embitters human relation, for it is then a denial of freedom to the individuals."[31]

But it has been felt that, "if employment relationship is good in other respects, most employees can be counted on the exercise of a considerable degree of self-discipline. They will respond to positive leadership and need not be threatened or punished."[22] In contrast, if the authority is exercised arbitrarily, or if rules of conduct are unreasonable or if employees do not have sense of adhering to the rules and regulations, discipline is threatened and if it is prolonged, it affects the organisational health. Any programme of discipline will be effective and successful only when it is used to supplement and strengthen self-discipline.

## Objectives of Discipline

The objectives of discipline are:[23]

(i) To obtain a willing acceptance of the rules, regulations and procedures of an organisation so that organisational goals may be attained;

(ii) To impart an element of certainty despite several differences in informal behaviours patterns and other related changes in an organisation;

(iii) To develop among the employees a spirit of tolerance and a desire to make adjustments;

(iv) To give and seek direction and responsibility;

(v) To create an atmosphere of respect for the human personality and human relations; and

(vi) To increase the working efficiency and morale of the employees so that their productivity is stepped up the cost of production improved.

## Constructive Programme of Discipline

Some of the employees, for various reasons, deviate from the expected standards of behaviour. Hence, it becomes essential to have constructive programme of discipline to deal with these violations.

According to Walkins, Dodd, McNaughton and Prasow, a constructive programme of discipline to promote harmonious industrial relations should be developed around the following essential elements:[24]

— Formulation of a set of clear and reasonable rules, carefully publicised and administered.

— Impartial enforcement of these rules by means of announced warnings and penalties, corrective in purpose, proportionate and uniform in their application.

— Supervisory leadership that is uniformed on disciplinary rules and procedures, but firm in the handling of disciplinary matters, and itself, a good example for employee behaviour.

— An impartial and uniform procedure for investigation of apparent infractions, whose procedure is subject to review by higher levels of management and includes a system of appeal against disciplinary decisions that are considered unjust.

## The Red Hot Stove Rule

Without the continual support and regard of the subordinates, no manager can get the things done. But disciplinary action against a delinquent employee is painful and generates resentment on his part. Hence, a question arises as to how to impose discipline without generating resentment? This is possible through what Douglas McGregor called the "Red Hot Stove Rules", which draws an analogy between touching a hot stove and undergoing discipline, when one touches a hot stove undergoing discipline, when one touches a hot stove —

(a) The burn is immediate.

(b) He had warning. When the stove was red hot, he knew what would happen if he touched it.

(c) The effect is consistent. Everyone who touches a red hot stove gets burned.

(d) The effect is impersonal. A person is burned not because of who he is but because he touched the hot stove.

The same thing is true with discipline. The disciplinary procedure should start immediately after an omission is noticed. It should give a clearcut warning regarding the extent or punishment for an offence. The same punishment should be consistently given for the same type of offence. Irrespective of status, different punishment should be imposed, i.e., it should be impersonal.

## Indiscipline

Indiscipline means disorderliness, insubordination and not following the rules and regulations of an organisation. The symptoms of indiscipline are change in the normal behaviour, absenteeism, apathy, go-slow at work, increase in number and severity of grievances, persistent and continuous demand for overtime allowance, lack of concern for performance etc. The parties responsible for indiscipline in Indian industries are Trade Unions and management. Politicised Trade Union leadership in India encouraged and instigated indiscipline. Intra-union rivalry and inter-union rivalry are also major causes of indiscipline. Similarly, management tactics like deliberate delay in discipline procedure, concealed penalties such as transfer to an inconvenient place at a short notice, maintenance of confidential reports, withholding of pay and the level of sincerity, honesty and commitment of superiors are also responsible for indiscipline in India.

## Causes of Indiscipline

The main causes of indiscipline are as follows:[25]

(i) Non-placement of the right person on the right job which is suitable for his qualifications, experience and training;

(ii) Undesirable behaviour of senior officials, who may have set a pattern of behaviour which they expect their subordinates to follow; but their expectations are often belied, and an infringement of rules follows;

(iii) Faulty evaluations of persons and situations by executives leads to favouritism, which generates undisciplined behaviour;

(iv) Lack of upward communication, as a result of which the thoughts, feelings and reactions of employees cannot be conveyed to the top management. This may lead to aggressive or rebellious behaviour;

(v) Leadership which is weak, flexible, incompetent and distrustful of subordinates is often an instrument which makes for the creation of indiscipline among the employees, particularly when a decision is taken in haste and withdrawn under pressure;

(vi) Defective supervision and an absence of good supervisors who know good techniques, who are in a position to appreciate critically the efforts or their subordinates, who can listen patiently to them who are capable of giving definite and specific instructions, and who believe in correcting their men rather than in uprooting them:

(vii) Lack of properly drawn rules and regulations, or the existence of rules and regulations which are so impracticable that they cannot be observed; and the absence of service manuals and a code of behaviour;

(viii) The "divide and rule" policy of the management, as a result of which friction and misunderstanding are created among the employees which destroy their team spirit;

(ix) Illiteracy and the low intellectual level of workers as well as their social background; for example, there may be indebtedness, drinking habits, casteism and other social evils from which an employee may suffer;

(x) Workers' reactions to the rigidity and multiplicity of rules and their improper interpretation;

(xi) Workers' personal problems; their fears, apprehensions, hopes and aspirations; and their lack of confidence in, and their inability to adjust with, their superiors and equals;

(xii) Intolerably bad working conditions;

(xiii) Inborn tendencies to flout rules;

(xiv) Absence of enlightened, sympathetic and scientific management;

(xv) Errors of judgement on the part of the supervisor or the top management;

(xvi) Discrimination based on caste, colour, creed, sex, language, and place in matters of selection, promotion, transfer, placement and discrimination in imposing penalties and handling out rewards;

(xvii) Undesirable management practices, policies and activities aiming at the control of workers; e.g., employment of spies, undue harassment of workers with a view to creating a fear complex among them, and the autocratic attitude of supervisors towards their subordinates;

(xviii) Improper co-ordination, delegation of authority and fixing of responsibility; and

(xix) Psychological and sociological reasons, including misunderstanding, rivalry and distrust among workers and supervisors, an absence of fellow-feeling, a widespread sense of injustice, or apathy on the part of the management.

## Approaches to Discipline

The different approaches to discipline include, *(i)* human relations approach, *(ii)* human resources approach, *(iii)* group discipline approach, *(iv)* the leadership approach, and *(v)* the judicial approach.

The employee is treated as human being and his acts of indiscipline will be dealt from the viewpoint of values, aspirations, problems, needs, goals behaviour etc. Under human relations approach the employee is helped to correct his deviations. The employee is treated as a resource and the acts of indiscipline are dealt by considering the failure in the areas of development, maintenance and utilisation of human resources under the human resources approach. The group as a whole, sets the standards of discipline, and punishments for the deviations. The individual employees are awarded punishments for their violation under the group discipline approach.