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PLAIN TALK ABOUT PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

Articulates a perspective about personnel administration as a bridge between the company and the employee.

PLAIN TALK ABOUT PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

Today's business and industry is definitely on a brink of extensive transformation in many directions, but, especially that of employee relations. The philosophy and its implications are changing. For years, the greater majority of administrative policies concerning personnel handling were for the most part quite routine and most restrictive. The procedures for its operations being laid down by managements has less professional expertise in employee relations than any other of their business phases. Such operations have resulted in economic difficulties for the company as too much emphasis was given the "we" and the "they" syndrome under the title of labor relations. It seems the relations factor has been only in one direction.

Society must enjoy harmony to be cooperative. The sincere interest and concern for one another does not exist without effort and understanding. Although some of our managements have recognized the importance of a unified family atmosphere work force others viewed it with skepticism. The current epidemic of disloyalty and dissension shows symptoms of the disease in a variety of ways which are all destructive over a longer or shorter period, depending upon managements' failures to recognize the symptoms and treat the problems. Untreated, the conditions become worse and sometimes beyond correction which, of course, results in complete breakdowns that even major surgery will not restore.

There are no quick-cure procedures nor magic potions that can be introduced at any stage of disagreement arising within the personnel sector. The professionalism of personnel administration arising is, therefore, of the utmost importance when considering its affects on profits and production. The personnel administrator must be answering to someone as astute and knowledgeable of all phases of employee relations as he or she. Far too much time is frittered away by far too many inexperienced and non-professionals directing the personnel administrative courses before the discovery is evident that a problem exists. The supervisor's supervisor is less efficient in the profession than those he or she is supervising. Personnel administration is divided into segments of varied functions all directly or indirectly concerning better employee relations development.

One of these segments of their operations, about which least is known, and therefore, the least attention given, is employee services. Although some companies have introduced employee services in their personnel structure, there is less standardization of the

operation than other phases of personnel. Those who have been most successful are the companies that have employee services. They are also the ones in Fortune's 500 who have had no or little union confrontations. They also seemingly have the better quality product lines and far less employment turnover. As one company stated, "Our success can be traced to the people we keep," and the concluding line of that quote should be, "what successes the employee has had with that company".

Much of the success of employee services lies directly with the staff selected to administer the program and how it is integrated with the total personnel operations. The essential elements concerning employee services function revolves around the attention given in selecting the director of the services. The person chosen for this position must first understand the objectives and purposes of the total personnel operation. They must be good counselors and highly trained in communicative methods and procedures. As their involvements will be with groups, as well as individuals, it is mandated that they relate favorably and effectively with all levels of employees.

Wages alone are not the answer to the Utopia of good employee relations. Studies have proven time and again, that the work place environment rates highly. To achieve this creditability takes serious management considerations and practices that extend over a long period of time. Fluctuation of attitudes are a result of incompetence on the part of management's direction and frequent employment turnovers in personnel. It seems ironic that industry is often more concerned about training sales personnel, and other departmental personnel than providing the training required to successfully administer the personnel functions so very vital to their profits and losses. It is not enough to proclaim that employees are "our most vital asset," but again only actions, not words can confirm that statement and make it a reality. Unfortunately, business courses offered fail to emphasize the importance of personnel administration in the proper perspective. Therefore, the academic sources from which direction should emulate fail to update their knowledge and experiences in this area. It is evident in so many situations that people with other than personnel expertise are often placed in a position to direct it. We can only compare this with letting a novice pilot operate a commercial airliner. The relationship between business and all personnel operations may be just as critical. When the work force is piloted in the wrong manner, the eventual circumstances can only lead to business failures.

Personnel operations to be most effective, therefore, requires carefully selected administrators, and management must realize their involvement to constantly evaluate the effectiveness. In so many businesses, the personnel function is out in left field when it should be in the pitcher's box. The theory that communicating with employees is a one channel link with management through immediate supervisors is sheer folly. To by-pass one's supervisor or foreman may only be possible when employees seek outsiders to intervene for them. Either there becomes ways and means to improve this communicative process through management's insenuity, or the only recourse is by outside representation that assures job protection and an understanding of their problems without recourse.

If employee relations is the fundamental assignment of personnel administration then there is a desperate need to realign it towards that direction. The department should be more than a place to be hired and a last stop before termination. It should be one of the most serviceable and employee frequented areas in the establishment. Only through consistent contact with employees can any personnel operation serve its purpose. To accomplish this many or more functions providing employee services must be established and monitored. Every aspect of personnel must be directed toward employee involvement and consideration. Regardless of what activities are involved, there must always be purposeful objectives relating to mutual benefits, both of which affect the bottom line profits for the company and its employees.