

## **Becoming an Employer of Choice: What Employees Really Want at Work**

Almost half of all workers are reported to be unhappy, and employers generally think that 89% of employees leave their jobs seeking more money. However, the reality is that only about 12% of employees leave their job for money, whilst 88% leave for other reasons. This raises the question, what do employees want at work, and how can employers meet these needs and become an employer of choice?

### **What is an employer of choice?**

An employer of choice is an employer which maximises the full potential of their employees through effective recruitment, engagement and retention. In general, the term usually refers to a 'good' employer, which attracts and retains high quality employees or is a leading place to work compared to others in the industry.

Additionally, the term refers to an employer which is externally recognised by a credible and nationally recognised program. This process involves applying to become an employer of choice and is awarded based on a merit-based process which relies on demonstration of evidence as a key part of the process.

### **What do employees want?**

Retailers must understand what their employees want in order to be able to implement processes which meet their needs. Although money has some influence on whether an employee decides to take a position in a business; job satisfaction is what keeps them motivated and committed. So, what factors influence job satisfaction?

Employee satisfaction is highly influenced by purpose, wellbeing and recognition. Employee's report that they have greater job satisfaction when they perceive that their job offers them autonomy, security, future and meaning. To expand on this, autonomy refers to worker's feeling valued, respected and that they can make a difference. Security doesn't just refer to having job security, but extends to feeling mentally, emotionally and physically safe and secure at work. The idea of security at work further extends to employees wanting to feel that their job offers them a future, including career development and opportunities for advancement.

Further to the desire for safety at work, is the concept of psychological safety. This term, which can be defined as a belief that one won't be punished for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes broadly encompasses physical safety, mental health, wellbeing, engagement and creativity. Research suggests that workplaces which foster psychological safety are more productive and have higher levels of employee satisfaction.

Psychological safety is a by-product of culture. Where people feel that their work is worthwhile, productive, challenging and offers learning opportunities and development, and that they have permission to try new things and take risks, engagement is improved.

### **What can employers do?**

Each business is different, however, in determining what employees want, employers can look at what is working well, what isn't working and what can be used as a benchmark.

It is important to understand that employees don't choose an employer just once, in fact, the employee chooses the business as a potential employer, chooses to accept or decline an offer of employment, chooses to stay with the business throughout their employment, and may choose to

promote the business as an employer of choice or refer friends, family and colleagues. Therefore, it is useful to utilise data from both past and present staff to assess what areas may need to be improved upon within the business.

Once a business has assessed what their employees want (often through a survey), and what areas need to be worked on to meet those needs, an action plan can be put in place to address the required changes. Strategies need to address the emotional needs that lead an employee to choose the business. Consistent measurement and assessment of the changes is necessary, and to become an employer of choice, demonstrated, quantified and proven changes are required.

**If you'd like more information on becoming an employer of choice, please call the VANA Workplace Relations Team on (03) 8540 7000.**

## **How to conduct a disciplinary meeting**

Conducting a disciplinary meeting is not always a straightforward process even for the most experienced business owner. Some businesses can feel really lost if it's a process that they're not familiar with and the whole process can feel daunting. This article will guide you through the process of conducting a disciplinary meeting to alleviate some of the stress when having those tough conversations with employees.

### **What is a disciplinary meeting?**

The purpose of a disciplinary meeting is to discuss an area of alleged misconduct with an employee with the objective of resolving the matter. At the end of the disciplinary meeting, the employee may be reprimanded through either a verbal or written warning, depending on the severity of their misconduct.

### **Setting up the meeting**

Before you consider conducting a disciplinary meeting, you need to make sure that you follow through with procedural fairness requirements. This means that prior to having this meeting you should:

- Invite the employee in writing to attend the meeting;
- Give the employee 24 hours' notice in advance of the meeting; and
- Invite the employee to bring a support person if they would like to.

### **Starting the meeting**

At the beginning of the meeting, it is always best practice to outline that the meeting and any discussions within the meeting are strictly confidential. This makes it clear that anything you and the employee discuss in the meeting is not to be discussed outside of the room, expect for the fact that the employee can discuss this with their immediate family and support person.

Once you have made reference to the confidential nature of the meeting, it's now time to move into what the meeting is about. This is where you take the opportunity to outline the purpose of the meeting and to put your concerns forward to the employee. It's really in this stage you need to convey what the misconduct is and why this is considered misconduct.

### **Encourage a response**

Once you have outlined your concerns to the employee, it's important to give the employee the opportunity to respond to these concerns. Sometimes things may not always be as it seems and there may be a completely appropriate reason why the employee engaged in the alleged misconduct.

Once the employee has given you a response to the matters you have raised in the meeting it's then always best practice to take a break in the meeting to consider the employee's responses. Depending on the severity of the matter, this break could be as little as 15 minutes or extend to a full day if necessary.

### **Return with a decision**

Depending on the employee's response, you now have to determine what the outcome will be. The consequence could be a verbal warning, a written warning, a first and final warning or alternatively no consequence at all if this is warranted.

When you reconvene the meeting, you will communicate your decision to the employee. If you decide that a formal written warning is appropriate in the circumstances, you don't need to provide the employee with the written warning on the same day. Simply communicate to the employee that the warning will be provided to them shortly.

It is always best to prepare the warning after an outcome has been determined in the meeting to not only ensure that the warning letter truly reflects what was discussed in the meeting but also to demonstrate that you didn't enter the meeting with a predetermined outcome in mind.

Conducting a disciplinary process is not always an easy task, but if you make sure you follow the steps outlined above, you'll be assured that you are at the very least following the proper procedural requirements.

**If you'd like more information please call the VANA Workplace Relations Team on (03) 8540 7000.**

## Rostering Principles – Ensuring employees receive appropriate breaks and days off

It is critical employees receive the breaks they are entitled to under the applicable Award, or Enterprise Agreement. This is important not only to avoid breaches of the industrial instrument, but ensure employees remain productive and motivated. While some breaks can be negotiated between employer and employee, there are important guidelines to be followed.

### **All Employees: Breaks**

Most Awards and Enterprise Agreements will provide for rest and meal breaks. These should be taken at times which provide a meaningful rest. If breaks are not taken in line with the Award or Enterprise Agreement, significant penalties may apply. Further, it may be considered a breach of workplace health and safety obligations.

**Rest breaks are paid breaks** while **meal breaks (except for shift workers) are unpaid breaks**. Rest breaks are usually 10 minutes, while meal breaks can be 30 to 60 minutes. The breaks employees are entitled to, and the time they are to be taken, will depend on the number of hours worked.

Under the *General Retail Industry Award* the following applies.

Hours worked	Rest break	Meal Break
Work less than 4 hours	No rest break	No meal break
Work 4 hours or more but no more than 5 hours	One 10 minute rest break	No meal break
Work more than 5 hours but less than 7 hours	One 10 minute rest break	One meal break of at least 30 minutes but not more than 60 minutes.
Work 7 hours or more but less than 10 hours	Two 10 minute rest breaks, with one taken in the first half of the work hours and the second taken in the second half of the work hours.	One meal break of at least 30 minutes but not more than 60 minutes.
Work 10 hours or more	Two 10 minute rest breaks, with one taken in the first half of the work hours and the second taken in the second half of the work hours.	Two meal breaks each of at least 30 minutes but not more than 60 minutes.

While the Award flexibility clause may be utilised within some Awards, to permit variations to break clauses by agreement between employer and employee through an Individual Flexibility Agreement, it is important to ensure that it results in the employee being **better off overall** than if the agreement had not been made.

### **All Employees: Breaks Between Periods**

Some Awards require employees to have a certain amount of time off between completion of work on one day and commencement of work on the next.

For example, the *General Retail Industry Award* requires a **12-hour rest period** be granted. This can be reduced to not less than 10 hours by agreement between employer and employee. **If this break is**

**not granted, employees will be paid at double time** until released from duty for a period of 12 consecutive hours (without loss of pay for ordinary hours occurring during the period of such absence).

**If you would like assistance with break provisions for specific employees, or under Awards or Enterprise Agreements, please call the VANA Workplace Relations Team on (03) 8540 7000.**