Discipline and Documentation, Part II
By L. Douglas Mault

In this, the second of four articles, we’ll examine two key aspects of the discipline process. The first of these can be viewed as a checklist prior to, and while in the process of, administering discipline.

- Be aware of laws, rules or union contract requirements/limitations.
- Be aware of company policies or accepted past practices.
- Keep good written records.
- Document employee infractions or misconduct.
- Investigate infractions or misconduct and the surrounding circumstances.
- Keep the employee informed.
- Keep other managers and/or the union informed as appropriate.
- Plan to apply the discipline as soon as possible after the event.
- Precede formal discipline with a warning when appropriate.
- Be consistent with your past administration of discipline.
- Plan to relate the discipline to the event, not the person.
- Arrange to administer all discipline in private if at all possible.
- Plan to advise the employee of the consequences of repeated offenses.

Here are some basic steps to be taken when engaged in administering discipline. Although this is not an enjoyable process, it is necessary and part of your ownership and management responsibilities.

- Secure specific and relevant facts related to the infraction or misconduct.
- Be sure to obtain and have verifiable information.
- Check your sources for reliability, accuracy and documentation.
- Review and analyse the facts obtained.
- Determine if the evidence is sufficient and be sure evidence is valid.
- Hold formal meeting with employee.
- Be sure the employee understands the reason for the meeting.
- Discuss the infraction or misconduct.
- Be clear and specific.
- Get the employee’s point of view.
- Determine corrective action.
- Consider severity of the infraction or misconduct.
- Consider previous behavior and performance of the employee.
- Select appropriate (or prescribed) discipline.
- Be sure that it conforms to policy.
- Be sure that it conforms to contractual stipulations.
- Apply the selected discipline.
- It is wise to cover this in a memorandum or as prescribed.
- Develop an improvement plan.
- Develop appropriate timing and components.
- Ensure that the employee’s behavior is in compliance with the plan.
- Monitor progress and provide on-going feedback to the employee.
- Reflect on your performance as a supervisor.
- Did your words or actions aid or abet the infraction or misconduct?
- If so, develop a self-improvement program or seek further training.

About the Author
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