

SMART WORKPLACES BY HR TO GO, INC - SEPTEMBER 2004

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Two Employees Went After Each Other with Coffee Mugs; Does Aggressor Get Comp?

The screams brought Supervisor Larry Dillon running - and he couldn't believe what he saw. Brenda Sharp and Candice Wells were fighting. Brenda had Candice's hair in her hand and was whacking her forearm with a coffee mug.

Larry caught Brenda's arm as she was about to deliver another blow. "Hey, hey!" Larry shouted as he forced himself between the two. As things settled down, Candice was carted off to the hospital to get some stitches in her forearm.

"They've been at each other for months," Larry later explained to the HR Director. "But I never thought it would come to this." "I wish I'd know that sooner," the HR Director advised. "We might have been able to intervene somehow and head this problem off."

Larry conducted a thorough investigation into the fighting incident. Larry was surprised to learn from his interviews with co-workers who witnessed the fight that Brenda, who'd gotten the worst of it, had thrown the first punch. That discovery came in handy when Brenda filed for workers' comp.

She claimed her injury was work related and the company had done nothing to ease the brewing tension between her and Candice. The company contested the claim, saying the fighting stemmed from a personal matter, and Brenda started it.

Decision: A judge denied the employee's comp request. The court found the injury was, in fact, work related. But since Brenda was the aggressor, she didn't deserve compensation.

Key: Workplace violence is on the rise. Mounting tension between employees shouldn't be ignored. It's best to deal with these issues before they get worse.

A Streamlined Recruiting Tool

With all the electronic resumes today, sometimes it is hard to sort out the potential stars from people who really aren't a fit for you.

Some applicants look OK on the generic resume forms they fill out, but then when you talk to them, you learn they aren't qualified or don't have a high level of interest in the job. Finding out who is good and who isn't can be a time consuming task for a staff that doesn't have a lot of time in the first place.

Since you have most applicants' e-mail addresses, you might be able to pre-qualify them by contacting them via e-mail. Try working up an e-mail form that asks some deeper questions about the applicant's training and experience. As soon as you get a resume from

someone who looks like a possibility, send the pre-qualifying email.

By doing that, you can more easily weed out people who don't fit your organization's needs. The ones who provide the answers you're looking for then get contacted for an in-person interview. Plus, some people don't bother responding to the e-mail, which gives you a clue right away that they're really not interested in the job.



Logging in Early or Late

Technology, such as hand scanners make timekeeping easier, but there are still those pesky issues about clocking in early or out late. Employees who voluntarily clock in before their regular hours to have coffee with the gang, or stay late talking sports, do not have to be paid for such periods unless they are also working. Clearly communicate to employees that they should clock in only when they are ready to begin work. Stress that deliberately giving an incorrect time recording is considered to be grounds for termination. Enforce this rule even-handedly and across the board to prevent discrimination claims.

Healthy Hints

- * If you wear contact lenses, clean your case often. A dirty lens case can be the culprit behind a corneal ulcer, a painful and potentially dangerous eye condition.
- * Contrary to what your mother told you, you can go swimming right after you eat. Fact is, marathon swimmers often eat high-carbohydrate meals before swimming.
- * Whenever possible, stand up to swallow medicine. Pills taken lying down can lodge in the throat and dissolve there, producing inflammation or injury.

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