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WHEN IT’S TIME FOR A CHANGE.

NAVIGATING HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE ACADEMIC WORLD
MY STORY

- Small business owner and arts management
- Hired six month temporary contract, have now stayed five years
- Dean recognized management skills from business background
- Access Services Librarian position created
- Inherited a number of performance issues
LIBRARY SCHOOL

• Library Schools lack situational management training

• Service based profession

• No customer service classes

• No instruction on Human Resource (HR) issues specific to libraries
FIRST DAY ON THE JOB...

TIME TO MEET THE STAFF
FIRST DAY

• Be warm, welcoming and open

• Allow staff to explain position and tasks

• Open door policy...emotional intelligence

• Do not allow preconceived notions from others to affect initial evaluation
EVALUATION - GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

- Observe, observe, observe
- Spend time getting to know workflow
- Work alongside the employees to get a sense of how they perform under pressure
- No drastic changes right away
- Review past work evaluations to provide history of employee performance
IDENTIFY ISSUES

- Verbally discuss issues and expectations
- Write down position expectations and share with employees
- Address these first glance issues informally by sharing guidelines for better outcomes
EXAMPLES

- Not being able to say no...to anyone...ever
- Leaving work without notice
- Sleeping on the job
- Poor communication skills
- Inability to manage technical projects
- Outbursts of anger directed at other employees or patrons
- Belief that job caused health issues
- Mental health challenges
COMMUNICATING WITH HR

• Open up a dialogue with HR manager

• Water Cooler in office talk

• Lay out steps being taken to address performance issues
BUILDING A RECORD OF PERFORMANCE

• After speaking with an employee in office, send a follow up email

• After speaking with an employee in circulation area send follow up email

• Set up recurring biweekly meetings. Ask employee to contribute to discussion, save agenda in a file on computer
BUILDING A RECORD OF PERFORMANCE

• Evaluations done on an annual basis. DO NOT only evaluate the employee when performing poorly.

• Be specific.

• Maintain the privacy of the employee under all circumstances.
THE MEMO TRAIN

• Write official memo that requires signatures and will go in employee HR record

• Include action items with roadmap for improved performance

• Situation may require consecutive memos to address. One and done may not work.

• Expect a written response from the employee. This is when things get real.
THE HR CONNECTION

• Suggest the HR EAP (Employee Assistance Program) program if it applies.

• Things that require disciplinary action should be dealt with immediately with memo, meeting with HR, employee, and supervisor.
WHEN CUSTOMER SERVICE BEGINS TO SUFFER

• Work beside employee on occasion to monitor service desk performance

• Be aware of “innocence by deflection”

• Walk away from conversation that should NOT be had in front of patrons.

• Do not try to explain in the public arena
NAVIGATING UNFRIENDLY WATERS

• Do not personalize negative feedback

• Set boundaries about how and when employees can “vent”

• Continue to create a record of every interaction
NAVIGATING UNFRIENDLY WATERS

• Everyone talks. Do not fall prey to office gossip. REMEMBER, privacy of the employee is of utmost importance.

• HR’s main priority is to protect the school from liability, not to protect you.

• Protected classes

• Resignation or firing
THE FINAL DAY

• Coordinate the cleaning of the office with HR. Many do this during off times to avoid contact.

• If you detect elevated hostility communicate with HR and security immediately.

• Set positive tone for remaining staff.

• DO NOT speak about the employee after they are gone. This is a violation of employee privacy. Learn the smile and nod.
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