

**STEPWISE DISCIPLINE/ A SUPERVISOR'S CHECKLIST**  
**CONSIDER THE ITEMS ON THIS PAGE BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH THE FACT-FINDING INTERVIEW AND BEFORE DECIDING UPON ULTIMATE DISCIPLINARY ACTION TO BE TAKEN:**

A supervisor should keep in mind the RULE OF REASON and the RULE OF JUST CAUSE in approaching stepwise corrective discipline.

**THE RULE OF REASON:** What would a responsible, prudent supervisor do under the production, operational, or personnel circumstances then prevailing? (If the supervisor does not take steps to satisfy this rule before taking disciplinary action, the supervisor will most likely have to back up and consider the rule later on, after the fact, in either the grievance procedure or in arbitration, or both.)

**STANDARD OF JUST CAUSE:** The following questions should be answered according to Arbitrator Jules Justin before a supervisor is justified in disciplining an employee.<sup>1</sup>

- Did the employee violate the rule or commit the offense or misconduct charged against him?
- Did the employee's act or misconduct warrant corrective action?
- Is the disciplinary action taken just and appropriate to the act or the offense and to the particular employee as a corrective measure?
- Review the "Seven Tests of Just Cause"/Just-Cause Checklist D-2.

Except for the most violent or serious violations or misconduct, job performance counseling and training should precede corrective stepwise discipline, with emphasis on one-to-one contact between the immediate supervisor and the employee. The intent should be to help the employee and to make the employee a valuable contributing member of the company's personnel team by providing opportunity for improvement.

Supervisors may experience difficulty in administering disciplinary action or corrective training if they:

- 1) Overreact, lose their cool, react in anger, react in haste.
- 2) Fail to listen to what the employee has to say.
- 3) Engage in name-calling, react abusively, attack individual in degrading manner, make a "show" of discipline rather than maintaining privacy.
- 4) Make an effort to punish or retaliate, as if the employee had won something "personal" against the supervisor.
- 5) Act inconsistently, overreact to the situation when similar situations have been overlooked in the past, or act in a manner different from past actions toward other employees for the same or similar misconduct, over discipline.
- 6) Fail to look at the big picture, remember to maintain perspective and remember there are always extenuating circumstances.
- 7) Overlook facts that turn up after disciplining. (Remember the tool of "temporary relief of duties pending investigation.")

<sup>1</sup> Cite/Reference

Jules Justin, HOW TO MANAGE WITH A UNION, Book one, 1987, page 366, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa.

A supervisor should adhere to the "Cardinal Rule of Discipline," which is: Never discipline an employee without first conducting a fact-finding interview, in person, with the employee involved. If it has been determined that the employee did indeed engage in the misconduct or poor performance, the supervisor should ask the employee, "What is the reason for your conduct/behavior?"

