



# Positive Culture – Injuries, Illness & Absence

 **VENICE SOLUTIONS GROUP**

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**SAFETY COUNCIL  
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# Source of Today's Advice

- ✓ Attorney in Prosecutor's Office Civil division (EEOC, comp, collective bargaining)
- ✓ Attorney in private law firm – EEOC, comp, collective bargaining
- ✓ Litigation experience in complex civil litigation cases
- ✓ Workers' compensation Hearing Officer (Ohio Industrial Commission)
- ✓ Director of Risk for Ohio Turnpike & Infrastructure Commission – self insured workers' compensation
- ✓ Appointed by Governor to Ohio Self Insured Employer Evaluation Board
- ✓ County Commissioner
- ✓ Managed in house leave & comp programs and trainings for global manufacturer (based in Ohio)
- ✓ Board Member – Ohio Self Insured Association
- ✓ Parent – so I am well acquainted with criticism

# Roadmap for Today's Discussion

1. Define culture
2. Break down communication techniques
3. Policy vs Procedures
4. Best practices for injuries & absence
5. Practice scenarios



# What is workplace culture?

**“The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization” - Webster definition**



## Culture – in the news...

What does work or organizational culture truly mean? It refers to “the practice or method by which things get done” in a social environment. It encompasses the values, practices and procedures based on policies of the organization. In sum, it is individuals as a team agreeing upon the common values that bind them.

-Forbes December 2021

# Communication at Work

- Email
- Letter
- Instant message
- Memo
- Mission/Strategy Statement
- Post-it Note
- Telephone
- Zoom or Teams
- Conversation



# Communication at Work

## All of these:

- Email
- Letter
- Instant message
- Memo
- Mission/Strategy Statement
- Post-it Note
- Telephone
- Zoom or Teams
- Conversation

## And also these:

- Body language
- Facial expression
- Tone
- Glance
- Silence
- Laughter/Tears
- Appearance



# What are they communicating?





**Culture eats strategy for  
breakfast.  
-Peter Drucker  
(management consultant  
1909-2005)**

# Policy vs Practice



# What is the Difference?

## Policy

- Formal written directive to employees
- Could be in employee handbook/manual
- Could be in an email
- Could be posted on bulletin board
- This is what SHOULD happen according to the employer/supervisor

## Practice

- This is what actually happens at the employer
- Policy and practice may be the same, similar, or very different
- It is the way things occur in actual practice
- If we asked employees – what would they say?

# Injury, Illness and Absence Management 101

- ✓ Establish written procedure to report work related injuries and illnesses
- ✓ Ensure human contact with workers injured at work
- ✓ Written procedure for all call offs to work – specify medical rules/criteria
- ✓ Remember FMLA may cover illness (federal job protection after one year + 1,250 hours; 50 employees within 75 miles and all public agencies and educational entities, regardless of size)
- ✓ Track all absences and be consistent in discipline and enforcement
- ✓ Check in with employees often about return to work – when is next appointment, do they have written restrictions
- ✓ Assign a person to stay in touch during absence. Simmering is for cooking – not our employees
- ✓ Work restrictions need medical documentation

# Positive Interactions with Our Employees

1. Show genuine kindness and empathy for an injury
2. Remember everyone is not dishonest or bad
3. Be understanding and flexible when possible
4. DO NOT use alphabet soup – explain the process
5. Tell them what to expect – tell them steps
6. Be consistent with all employees
- 7. Liaison should be helpful – do NOT pick a cranky person**
8. Keep up with appointments; check in OFTEN



# Practice Scenario #1

- You are the Safety and EHS Manager at ABC Markets, Inc. There are 68 employees at your site. You are also responsible for another company site that is 23 miles away. The other site has 42 employees.
- Rachel is a retail clerk with 6 months of service. She is friendly and competent but strikes you as lacking enthusiasm for her job. On Friday morning, she reports to you that she will have to do all of her work while sitting down. She says that she injured her back lifting a box last week and it is not improving so “you will just have to work with me until this thing gets better.” She did not report this to anyone until now.
- You ask Rachel if she has seen a medical provider. She says “no, they will just say it is from my car accident, which it is not.”
- **What do you do next? What do you say? What reports do you make? Do you send Rachel for a medical exam? What are the potential impacts on culture?**

## Scenario #2

- You are the Operations Manager for a small construction company. There are 29 employees total. You also handle safety and some policy and human resources duties.
- Ross, a general laborer, has been employed by the company for 6 years. He has shared with several people at work, including you, that he has been diagnosed with cancer.
- Chandler is also a general laborer and has worked for the company for 14 years.
- You have received reports from other employees that Chandler is performing much of Ross' work and that Ross is sitting often during the workday. You speak with Chandler and he confirms that he "helps Ross out" quite a bit and says he understands that Ross needs to rest because he does not feel well on some days.
- You then meet with Ross and he tells you that his doctor has recommended for him to stop working "for awhile" until his treatments are finished. He says that would be great but he cannot afford to do so and wants to work "until I absolutely have to stop."
- **What do you do next? What are the potential impacts on culture and other employees? What are the options?**



## Scenario #3

You are the CEO of Elks, Inc, a mid size manufacturer. In your monthly meeting with the leadership team, the HR Director and EHS Director get into a heated discussion. Sally, the EHS director, says recordables are out of control and there needs to be a “crack down” from the top down to “show them who is boss.” Harry, the HR Director says employees don’t get enough time off so they exaggerate injuries. He says the solution is to give more flexibility and work life balance so employees cooperate more.

**What do you say in response?**

Thank you – and Let's connect on Social!



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