



The voice of the employee

Many years ago, management made an inquiry claiming that they wanted to know what your needs were. The results of that inquiry led to what the USPS labeled “The Voice of the Employee.” Management heard your voice say that productivity and accountability must improve, but they ignored the voice that objected to abusive and disrespectful management pushing you harder.

Management didn’t get it right. That’s where you come in!

The real voice of the employee is heard every day on the workroom floor. It is heard and most often ignored by management; it is heard and many times ignored by employees from our craft and others, and it is also heard when it is repeated while union officers visit you on the workroom floor, at union meetings or when you call asking for help.

If the membership objects to a hostile work environment, then it becomes your responsibility as an officer

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and/or shop steward to look into the situation and deal with it.

If we bring this problem to management’s attention, is it willing to listen and work on the problem? If so, then roll up your sleeves, place the situation on the agenda for your “joint labor-management safety and health committee” or the “labor-management meeting.” In either of these forums, we should identify the problem and then discuss how to solve it. If our counterparts are interested and committed, then we will be able to find a solution that takes care of the problem.

If, however, management is not interested in tackling such an issue jointly, then the burden shifts to you as a union representative to act on the problem by investigating the situation and determining if it is a possible violation of the National Agreement, a handbook or manual, an applicable regulation or the law. We need to identify what happened, then what rule was violated, and then a remedy.

Many years ago, following a very sad event in our history, the national parties drafted and signed off on a commitment to improve the quality of our working conditions. That document, titled the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace, offers answers to what we believe to be the real voice of the employees (M-1242).

When the union is called upon to do something about abusive managers, we need evidence of our challenge to their improper behavior. You, as shop stewards, as branch officers, and as letter carriers on the front line are responsible for the enforcement of the rule through labor management forums and/or the grievance procedure.

Management must, at all times, maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect. Those words are found in Section 115.4 of the *M-39*. They are supposed to be the model of appropriate behavior in the workplace. They have no legitimate excuse, as they are responsible for

making sure that the environment does not become hostile and/or antagonistic; therefore, when they cross the line, you need to protect your brothers and sisters.

There is no simple formula to proving violations of the Joint

Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace. What does not offend or affect you might offend and/or affect another employee. We have to use judgment as grievance handlers. It is all based on hard work, investigation and putting a solid grievance together.

Please contact your branch officers and, if necessary, your national business agents if you need assistance on this serious subject.

Lastly, if you have dealt with an abusive manager who has been moved outside of your city or branch, I would appreciate it if you would send me a complete copy of relevant grievances (joint statement violations and/or mutual respect violations) and their settlements so that they may be used, if necessary, to protect the next carrier in the next city from further harm by that same manager.

Protect each other by keeping an eye on each other. When you are asked, be honest and state what you saw and what you actually heard. ☒