

Overview

The Workforce Metrics Employee-Centered Discipline system is based on Dick Grote's *Discipline Without Punishment* approach developed over twenty years ago. Our system incorporates this work with today's best management practices as advocated by Marcus Buckingham, Tom Peters, Daniel Goleman and others, and includes the routine use of employment assessment data and coaching reports to enhance a manager's effectiveness in supervising the under performing worker.

In short, Employee-Centered Discipline replaces the traditional "progressive-discipline" systems used in some form since the 1930's which always include these basics: oral warning followed by a written warning, followed by an unpaid disciplinary suspension of several days, followed – almost always – by the employee's termination. If they don't walk off the job first.

If you have been using a traditional punishment system have you experienced any or all of these side effects?

1. Managers who provide "more slack" to some people more than others who commit the same offense.
2. Supervisors who hesitate to take clearly appropriate disciplinary action until there is no alternative.
3. Over time, the punishments loose power: chidings and chastening become just part of the background noise.
4. Employees who avoid contact with supervisors: managers become viewed primarily as dispensers of punishment.
5. Confusing and seemingly unjustifiable levels of anger, apathy, resentment, and frustration.

We know of no company that uses some variant of this management dinosaur that reports substantial and permanent improvement in appropriate organizational behavior. More often we find that frustration, resentment and even belligerence are its byproducts. Yesterdays punitive discipline systems no longer fit the culture of modern business in a global economy.

With a traditional punishment based disciplinary system, consider that we create an almost impossible conflict for our managers: on one hand, we ask them to be leader, teachers, and coaches; then, we require them to be the dispensers of punishments. The consequence of this on a manager's behavior will likely be avoidance, favoritism, and denial when discipline problems arise in the next round of interactions.

The traditional system takes a problem employee, punishes them, and leaves the organization with a punished problem employee. The Employee-Centered Discipline approach requires the employee to become one of two things: a good employee or an ex-employee.

Our Employee-Centered Discipline system is progressive like the old approach – as the problem becomes more serious, so does our response become more serious. But with a critical difference: punishments in the form of warnings, reprimands, fines, demerits and points are replaced by a focus on personal responsibility and decision making. Our central belief is that employees, for the most part, will be mature, responsible and trustworthy when treated this way. Employees are not adversaries, but associates and partners in the success of the enterprise. And we have ample evidence that when employees and managers objectively understand themselves and the people they work with through employment assessments and the tools they provide, that productivity increases as people problems decrease. We also hold the conviction that for those few employees who simply can not or will not take responsibility for their behavior that they be (through our approach) swiftly *self-terminated*.

It is a cliché, but true, that we live in a litigious world. Our business environments are also culturally diverse and unemployment is low. Retention of expensively trained employees is imperative to profit. In this light, the prominent characteristics of Employee-Centered Discipline are that it:

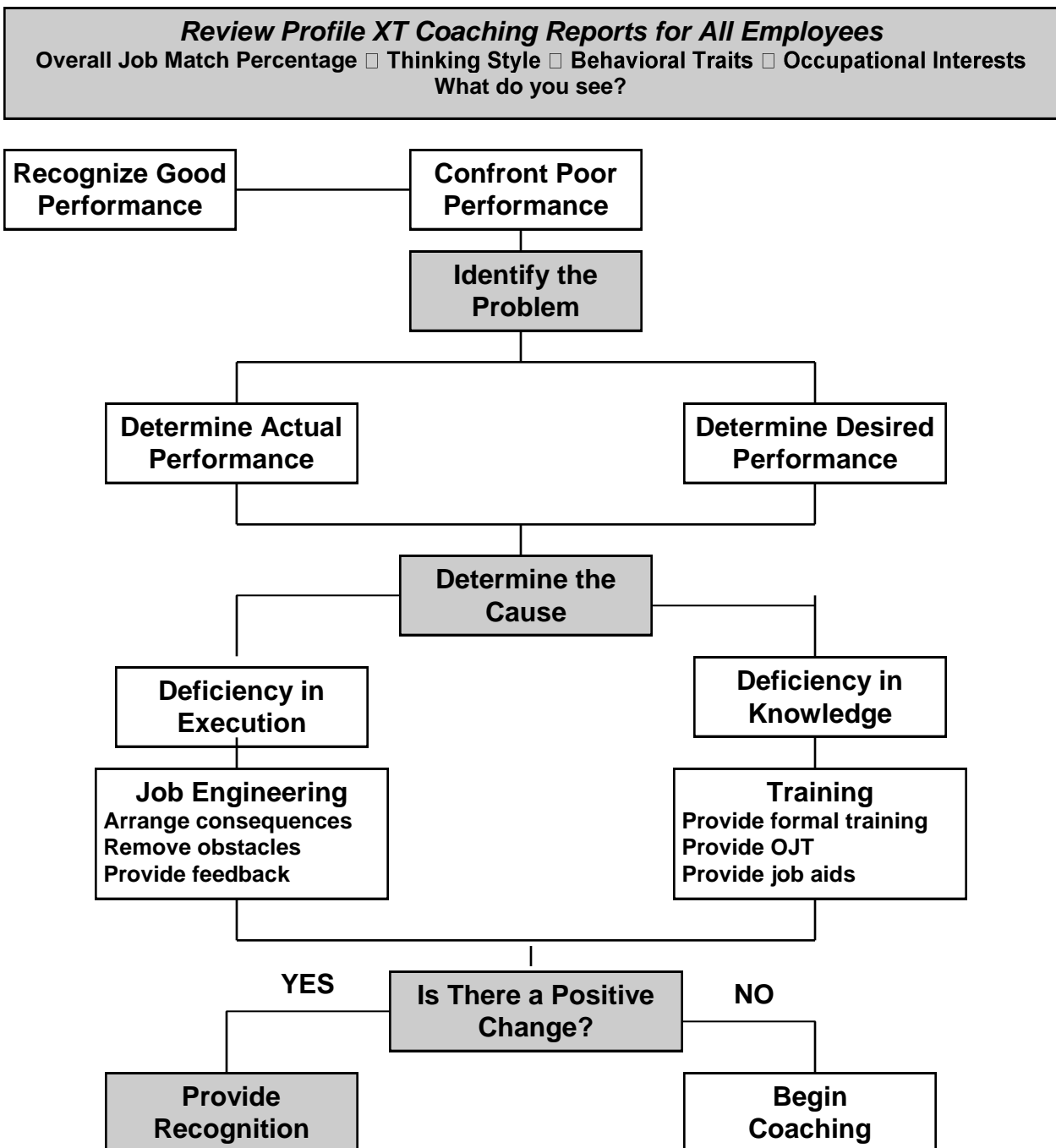
- Provides progressive steps and complete documentation so that full defensibility is ensured if any action the organization takes is ever challenged.
- Focuses on correcting problems and not punishing offenders.
- Provides a means to recognize and reinforce the good performance delivered by the great majority of employees.
- Provides a method to confront the few who fail to meet expectations in ways that maintain and enhance their self-esteem.
- Provides a process so that the system is understood, accepted, and supported by all.
- Provides a measurable outcome: Whenever an employee gets into a disciplinary situation, the system influences people to change behavior, accept responsibility, and return to a fully acceptable level of performance.

The Workforce Metrics Employee-Centered Discipline approach is distinguished by implementation of the use of high quality employment assessments for managers, current employees and all new hires. We include seminars and training with the investment in the assessments so that people can better understand themselves, themselves in relation to fellow coworkers, predict the challenges of varying personality styles in managing individuals, and understand the strengths and needs of teams. In short, the Employee-Centered Discipline program begins with and continuously uses the assessments through the employee life cycle.

The Employee-Centered Discipline Model

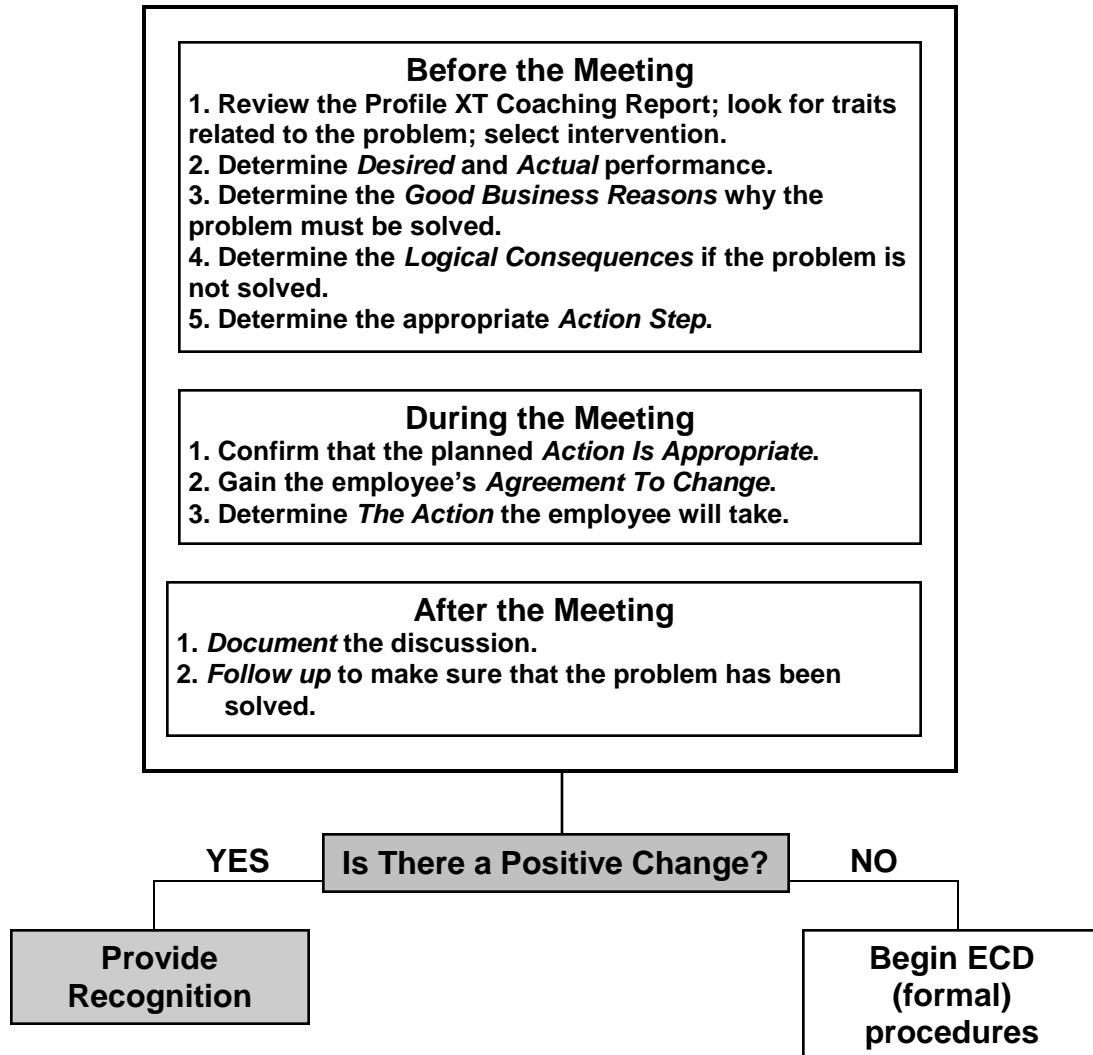
Positive Contact

One of the most frequent complaints we hear from employees is that they are rarely told when they are performing well. Except for the annual performance appraisal ritual or when a problem crops up is performance discussed. The Employee-Centered Discipline approach includes Positive Contact as a formal element to insure that managers recognize and learn that acknowledging good performance is as important as confronting poor performance. In the training for the ECD, managers are provided with guidance on when recognition is appropriate, its power in the work place, how to identify behaviors to recognize with guidelines, and suggested recognition tools.



Coaching

We believe that one of the critical roles of managers and supervisors is to be a good coach. The job of a coach is to make performance expectations clear; to provide the training necessary to meet those expectations; to remove any obstacles that prevent the individual from performing at a peak level; to ensure that the person gets the feedback necessary to know exactly how well or poorly he is doing; and to make sure that performing properly – doing the job right makes a difference, both to the individual himself and to the team as a whole. A good coach knows their employee's individual cognitive, behavioral and occupational interest traits and characteristics as objectively described through a review of their Profile XT Coaching Report. Managers are shown how to get the most out of this data and how to use the coaching suggestions in the report to greatly enhance both their coaching sessions with employees and the day to day supervision of their staff.



The Formal Steps of Employee-Centered Discipline

Level 1 – Oral Reminder

In our approach, instead of being reprimanded for what the employee has done, or warned about what would happen the next time they transgressed, the supervisor conducts a meeting where the individual is reminded of two things:

1. *The company's expectations.* The manager and employee review the performance expectation or job standard that he/she is failing to meet. If the issue is one of attendance for instance, they will review the attendance record and the company's expectation that every employee will show up, on time, every day. If the issue deals with a conduct or behavior problem, the supervisor will explain exactly why it was important that the violated rule must be followed. If performance is the issue, the supervisor will describe exactly what is expected in quality and quantity of work.
2. *The employee's personal responsibility.* Besides reminding the employee of exactly what performance is expected, the supervisor also reminds the employee of something equally important: that it is their responsibility to meet the company's standards. We show supervisors how to explain in a friendly and supportive but also serious and businesslike way that the company has delivered on its share of the bargain by giving the employee a good job and pay, together with the tools, training, and support required to do it well. It is now their responsibility to do what was expected, and do it well.

Employees are told during the Oral Reminder meeting that this is the first step of the company's formal discipline process and that any further problems would lead to a Written Reminder. On the other hand, employees are also advised that if there are no further incidents requiring disciplinary action within a specific time frame designated by the company, then this action will be deactivated. His slate could be wiped clean.

Level 2 – Written Reminder

In the Employee-Centered Discipline approach, the supervisor begins the Level 2 transaction not by “writing them up” but by talking. The employee is asked into an office where the manager explains the problem, and then listens to what the employee has to say. After confirming that the issue was genuinely one of failure to meet the company's expectations and not a mutual misunderstanding, the supervisor then reminds the employee of exactly what the company is looking for and his responsibility to perform as expected. The supervisor then seeks to gain the employee's agreement that this will be the last time that the problem will need to be discussed. Upon gaining agreement, the supervisor and the employee jointly discuss the action that the employee will take to put the problem behind him or her.

At the end of the conversation the supervisor will advise the individual that, because of the seriousness of the situation and their earlier unsuccessful efforts to resolve it, this transaction will result in a formal Written Reminder. The supervisor closes the meeting by again reconfirming the employee's commitment that this is the last time they will ever need to discuss the matter.

Following the meeting the supervisor will write a memo to the employee, documenting the discussion and the employee's agreement to improve. We believe that using a memo form to document the transaction, rather than a preprinted form that is often used in traditional systems will cause people to react less negatively to the formal documentation. They might in fact actually read what the supervisor has written. Writing the memo after the meeting allows the supervisor to record not only the existence and the history of the problem, but also, much more important, the employee's commitment to correct the situation and perform properly in the future.

In the training seminar for Employee-Centered Discipline, we provide suggested procedures for preparing for the Written Reminder meeting, how to conduct it effectively, what to do after the meeting, and distribute sample memos that correctly capture what transpired.

Level 3 – Decision Making Leave

The central difference in a traditional discipline system and that of the Employee-Centered Discipline approach is Decision Making Leave. The problem employee is provided an entire day off, with pay, to consider his/her situation and decide to fully commit to the job or resign. At this step, the employee is made to clearly understand that if they decide to return fully committed to acceptable performance that just one more repetition of the past behavior will result in immediate termination.

Using a paid suspension from work as a final disciplinary step has enormous advantages over any other final-step tactic. A paid suspension allows a cooling-off period so that both sides can calmly reflect on the situation. It gives both the supervisor and employee time to think. By suspending the employee with pay and doing without their services for the period of time they are away, we clearly communicate that we are serious about the matter. The paid suspension period is a dramatic gesture. It will force the employee to gain a preview of unemployment, come to his senses, and decide to correct his behavior.

Another benefit of a paid suspension is its effect on other members of the organization. Employees who have been flirting with discipline issues will see the action that has been taken with this individual as a signal to them that the company does not put up with unacceptable behavior or shoddy work. More important, though, is the message that a suspension sends to the great majority of the organization's employees who perform well and never encounter any disciplinary problems. Good employees will see that management is not timid or fainthearted in confronting unpleasant facts of organizational life. Employees who do not shoulder their share of the load will not be allowed to slough it off on the more committed and diligent employees.

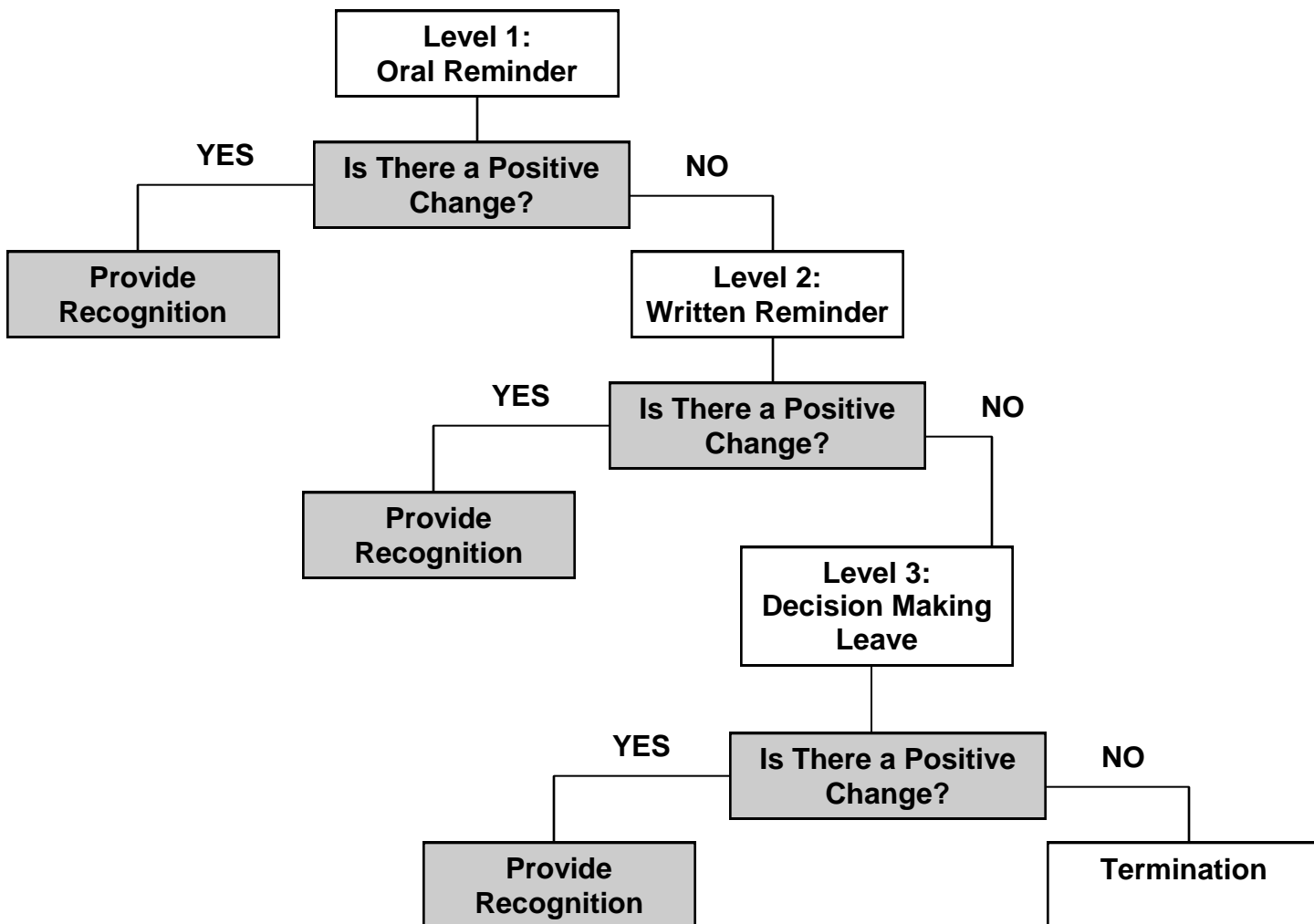
Finally, paid suspension provides an enormous benefit to the organization should an employee ever be terminated and then challenges the action the company has taken. The hearing officer's first question is always, "Did the employee fully understand how serious the situation was? Did he/she realize that job was in jeopardy?" The use of a paid suspension has been universally accepted by third parties as sufficient notice to the individual that his job is indeed at risk. If he didn't get the message from a paid suspension, nothing else that the company could have done would have gotten the point across.

Employee-Centered discipline training provides:

1. How to prepare for the Decision Making Leave (DML) meeting.
2. Scheduling the leave.

3. Conducting the DML meeting.
4. Documenting the DML.
5. Handling the employees return and the meeting to discuss their decision.
6. Accepting and documenting resignation.

The Formal Steps of Employee-Centered Discipline



The Workforce Metrics Employee-Centered Discipline system includes services for the development, implementation and administration of this approach to solving employee problem behavior. We help you:

- Establish the degree of management authority at each level of the system.
- Clarify the specific roles and responsibilities of line management, human resources, and top management.
- Develop procedures for deactivating disciplinary action when an employee has successfully solved a problem.
- Determine the severity of various infractions.
- Develop effective documentation procedures.
- Identify any unique training needs.
- Link Employee-Centered Discipline with all other related performance management programs.
- Develop organization-wide understanding and support.

We anticipate that you will have many questions and concerns that you will need addressed, and we would look forward to the opportunity to discuss the features and benefits of a proven, modern best practices system to substantially improve employee conduct and productivity.

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