

Improving Poor Performance Through Progressive Discipline



Some employers prefer to solve the problem of poor performance by firing the individual rather than working through the progressive discipline process to improve the employee's performance. Using progressive discipline to salvage the employee has many benefits.

Yes, it can be difficult and uncomfortable to address and formally document an employee's shortcomings. Yes, it takes time and effort to do so, but it can pay rewards far beyond the salvation of the individual employee involved. The employee will benefit from the individual attention and, in the long run, will appreciate the opportunity to turn their performance around. The employer will benefit from reduced turnover and improved employee morale.

Documentation of the disciplinary process is crucial. It should reflect that the employee was aware that their job was in jeopardy. This can be accomplished by concluding with language such as, "Failure to show immediate and sustained improvement may result in further discipline up to and including termination."

The use of progressive discipline conveys a sense of fairness to all employees.

It is also necessary to document the efforts made by the employer to assist the employee in improving his or her performance. A performance improvement plan should be set up that outlines specific expectations and timeframes. Any additional training or coaching provided or offered to the employee should be noted. It is important to be able to demonstrate that the employer acted in good faith and reached out to the employee to assist in that individual's improvement efforts.


Although a no-fault layoff may seem like a quick and easy solution to poor performance, progressive discipline can have much more far-reaching benefits. Layoffs should not be used to handle individual performance problems.

When progressive discipline is used, employees know that problems will be handled in a fair and open way and that they will be given an opportunity to improve before being let go. This approach can help create a positive work environment, increase good will, and the chances of a successful outcome

Need help with your progressive discipline process? MRA's [HR Advisors](#) can help you!

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