



## Handling Grievances at Work Place

Mr. Sandeep Saluja<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Surjeet Kaur<sup>2</sup>

Grievance is a feeling of discontentment or dissatisfaction or distress or suffering or grief among the workers. The human behavior differs from person to person. Every employee has certain expectations which he thinks must be fulfilled by the organization he is working in. It is not possible for the management to satisfy the feelings and ego of all the employees. It is therefore, but natural that workers have grievances against their immediate supervisor or against the management as a whole or against the systems and practices, which are followed in the organization. Grievance is a feeling of discontentment or dissatisfaction or distress or suffering or grief among the workers. The dissatisfaction when expressed becomes a complaint and when the employee believes that some injustice is being committed it becomes a grievance.

1 AP in Cordia Institute of Business Management, Sanghol

2 AP in Rayat Bahra Institute of Management, Mohali.

### Introduction

An excellent manager anticipates and prevents grievances. The best towards grievances is to anticipate them and take steps to tackle them before these assume dangerous proportions. Prevention is always better than cure. An ordinary manager tackles grievances as and when they arise. An excellent manager anticipates and prevents them. Managers can know and understand grievances with the help of the following methods.

1. Observation. A manager/supervisor can usually observe the behaviours of people working under him. Since he is close to the
2. There are no sources in the current document.report promptly. If a particular employee is not getting along with other employees, spoiling materials due to carelessness, disobeying orders, reporting late for work or is remaining absent, the signals of dissatisfaction are fairly obvious.
3. Grievance Procedure. A systematic grievance procedure is the best means to highlight employees' dissatisfaction at various levels. In the absence of such a procedures, grievance pile up and burst up in the form of a volcano at a future date. If management fails to induce employees to express their grievances, unions will take over and emerge as powerful bargaining representatives.
4. Exit Interview. Most of the employees leave their current jobs due to dissatisfactions of one from or the other. An interview or every employee who quits the organization can reveal employee grievances. If the manager tries sincerely through an exit

- interview, he might be able to find out the real reasons why an employee is leaving the organization. Great amount of care and empathy is needed for a successful exit interview.
5. Opinion Surveys. Surveys may be conducted periodically to elicit the opinions of employees regarding the organization and its management. Group meetings, periodical interviews with workers and collective bargaining sessions are also helpful is knowing employee discontent before it becomes a grievance.
  6. Gripe Boxes. A gripe box may be kept at prominent locations in the factory for lodging anonymous complaints pertaining to any aspect relating to work. Since the complainant need not reveal his identity, he can express his feelings of injustice or discontent frankly and without any fear.
  7. Open Door Policy. Open door policy is a kind of walk-in-meeting with the manager where the employee can express his feelings openly about any work related grievances. The manager can cross check the details of the complaint through various means at his disposal. This policy is suitable only in a small organization, because in big organizations, top managers do not have the time to meet a large number of employees daily. In large organizations, management by walking around might be preferable to open door policy. In this system, the manager walks through the employees, observes them and if necessary listens to their problems.

## Meaning

Grievance is any dissatisfaction, which an employee may have in regard to his employment situation that adversely affects the production of the employees.

According to Dale S. Beach, "Grievance is any dissatisfaction or feeling of injustice in connection with one's employment situation that is brought to the attention of management."

According to Keith Davis, "Grievance is any real or imaginary feeling of personal injustice which an employee has concerning his employment relationship."

## Objective of the Study

- 1.) To develop a better understanding of the concept of Grievances and Grievances Handling.
- 2.) To study the effectiveness of Grievances Handling Machinery and its procedure for handling Grievances at the work place.

## Causes of Grievances

Grievances are related to the human behaviour, which differ from person to person. There may be various reasons for the arising of grievances, which are summarized as follows.

1. Employment Conditions: - Workers may be aggrieved because of the employment conditions. They may desire labour welfare facilities or improvement in the working conditions.
2. Effect of Trade Unions: - Sometimes, trade unions in the organization may be the cause of grievances among the employees where trade unions are new and/or strong and they are bent upon doing something for the welfare of the employees, grievances arise if the management does not agree to the proposals made by it.
3. Social Injustice: - Grievance may be caused by social injustice. If a facility is provided in a similar unit, the employees of the unit where the facility is not provided may feel aggrieved.
4. Difference of Opinion: - Grievance may also arise because of a difference of opinion or thought. When both the parties stick to their views. Which are contradictory and it becomes a prestige point for both the parties, grievance may arise.
5. Adherence to Rules: -Grievance may arise if company does not adhere to its policies or procedures or if the rules are followed but in a biased manner or they are being assigned a different explanation.

6. Psychological Reason: - Sometimes, doubts and fears in the minds of workers for any injustice to be committed to them may give rise to grievance.

## **Grievances Handling**

Grievances should be removed as early as possible for creating good labour management relations and promoting efficiency. Grievances are but natural to arise in the organization where thousands of workers are employed. But these should be removed as early as possible for creating good labour management relations and promoting efficiency. Grievances should not be allowed to accumulate because grievances will give rise to further grievances. The effects of grievances will be:

- 1) Sense of frustration, disloyalty and non-cooperation among workers.
- 2) Loss of interest in work.
- 3) Affect on the quality and quantity of output.
- 4) Indiscipline, which may take the form of absenteeism, work to rule, demonstrations, violence and strikes.

## **Need For Grievances Handling**

Proper machinery for handling of grievances is very necessary for harmonious industrial relations and for maintaining industrial peace. The employees do not have sufficient knowledge of the human nature or of the many social forces impinging on them. Sometimes they do not even know their actual grievances but still feeling dissatisfied they tend to file grievances about something else.

It is, therefore very essential that a systematic procedure should be evolved and followed to settle the grievances. Such a procedure is known as the 'Grievance Handling Procedure'.

## **Importance of Grievance Handling**

The benefits of grievance handling may be summed up as follows:

- Grievance handling encourages the human problems to be brought out. Management can learn what the workers think about the policies practices and procedures of the company and why they think so. It can also learn about the dissatisfaction, frustration, or discontentment in the workers' mind and may try to take corrective action. Management should carefully study the grievances to determine the real causes underneath them.
- A grievance system gives an opportunity to the workers to express their feelings, fears, doubts and dissatisfaction. It will help in solving ht problems before they become serious. It is always better to prevent fire than trying to stop it after it has started. Similarly, if problems are allowed to accumulate, they will breed problems and ultimately they will become so great that they may have adequate pressure to blow the lid off the whole organization, but a good grievance system always tries to keep the grievance within bounds and prevent the development of unwanted pressure.
- With the help of an effective grievance system, the management comes to know about the behaviour and attitude of the superior towards their subordinates. It is reflected by the complaints made by workers against supervisors.
- A good grievance handling system boosts the morale of the people working in the organization.
- Grievance procedure helps to develop a good group culture. Each group has its own particular way of living together and grievance system helps to establish and maintain a work culture or way of life.
- Managers and supervisors tend to give more care to the human aspects of their jobs because they know that their actions are subject to challenge and review in a grievance system.

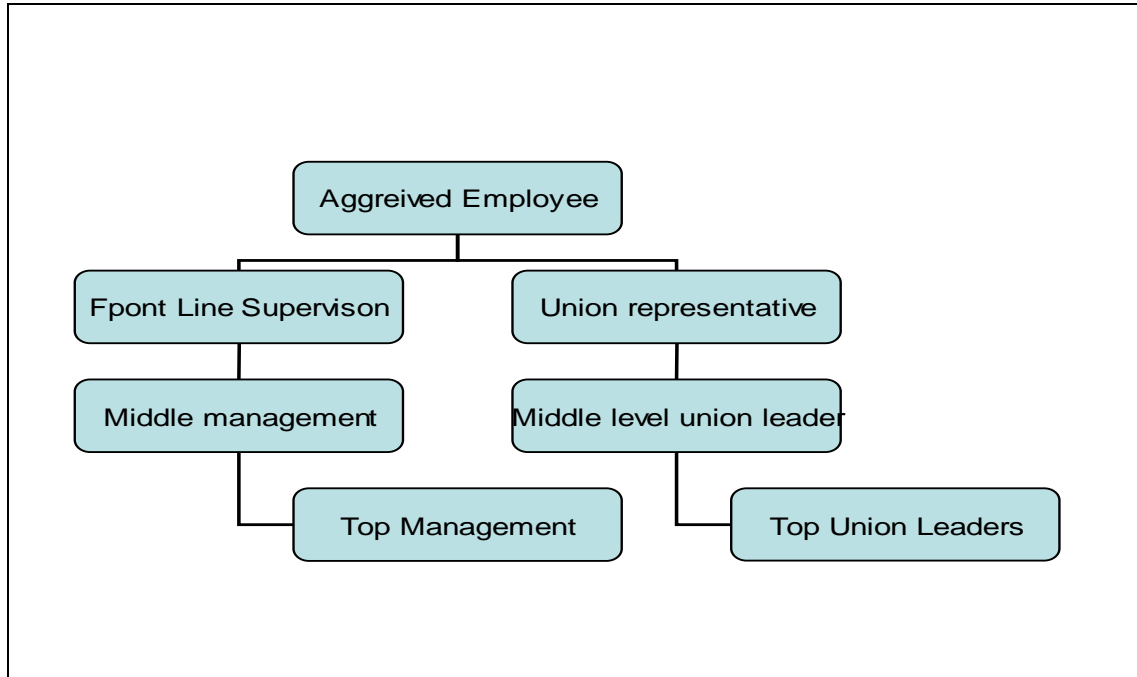
### **Important Step in Handling the Grievances**

The following steps should be taken in handling the grievances:

- The nature of grievance should be defined, expressed and described clearly as early as possible so that the wrong complaint may not be handled.
- After the real issued is located, all the relevant facts should be gathered about the issue. Such fact gathering may involve interviewing and listening to employees. This will help in finding out how and where the incidence took place and the circumstances under which it happened.
- After gathering the relevant facts the management any get a real picture of the grievance. Thus, the management should make a list of alternate solutions.
- Before finally announcing the decision, management should gather additional information for checking tentative solutions to find out the best one. Past company records or past experience of the executives may help in this exercise of choosing the final solution.
- Next step should be to convey the final decision to the employees concerned, in very clear and unequivocal terms.
- Last step should be the follow up action. It is very essential to know whether the grievance has been handled satisfactorily or not. Attitudes of the employees must be studied to see whether they are satisfied with the decision or not.

### **Machinery for Redressal of Grievances**

Every organization requires a permanent procedure for handling employee grievances. In small organization grievance procedure may consist of only two steps while in big organizations there may be five or six steps. A typical grievance procedure is shown in the following diagram.



**An effective grievance procedure must have the following essential prerequisites:**

#### Essentials of Successful Grievance Handling

Legal Sanctity. The grievance procedure should be in conformity with the prevailing legislation. It should be designed to supplement the statutory provisions.

- Acceptability. The grievance procedure should be set up with the participation of the employees and it should be applicable to all in the organization. In order to be generally acceptable, the procedure must ensure (i) A sense of fair play and justice to the workers, (ii) reasonable exercise of authority to managers and (iii) reasonable participation to the union.
- Unambiguity. Each and every aspect of grievance procedure should be clear and unambiguous. All employees should know whom to approach first when they have a grievance, whether the complaint should be written or oral etc. the redressing officer should also know the limits within which he can take the required action.

- **Simplicity.** The grievance handling procedure should be simple and short. If the procedure is complicated, it may discourage the employees and they may hesitate to make use of the procedure in case of any problem.
- **Promptness.** Since delay causes frustration and tempers may rise and rumours spread around the work. It is essential that grievance should be dealt with speedily and promptly.
- **Training.** Supervisors and unions representatives should be given training in grievance handling. This will help to ensure effective working of the grievance procedure.
- **Follow Up.** The working of the grievance procedure should be reviewed at periodical intervals. Necessary improvements should be made to make the procedure more effective.

### **Grievance Handling Procedure**

There is no legislative provision for a well-defined and adequate grievance procedure. The management can adopt any procedure of its choice. Every management should lay down a procedure for getting the grievances redressed. There is no legislative provision for a well-defined and adequate grievance procedure. The management can adopt any of the following two procedures of grievance handling:

1. **Common Procedure:** - Clause 15 of model standing orders provides that “all complaints arising out of employment shall be submitted to the manager or the other persons specified in this behalf with the right of appeal to the employer” The usual, common and informal procedure is first to approach the immediate supervisor for the grievance and failing to get a satisfactory answer the second step is to go directly to the departmental head or personnel relations officer in the personnel department. If the worker is not satisfied here also he should approach the top executive. But is very rarely resorted to. Some companies provide that if complainant remains unsatisfied from the response of the top executive, grievance should be referred to the arbitration or joint grievance committee consisting of the representatives of both the parties. The decision of this committee should be final.
2. **Model Grievance Procedure:** - the draft Model Grievance procedure accepted by the labour conference in 1958 is as follows.



- An aggrieved employee shall present his grievance verbally in person to the officer designated by the management for this purpose. The officer shall give the response within 48 hours of the presentation of the complaint. If the worker is not satisfied with the decision of the officer or fails to receive the answer within 48 hours, he will present his grievance to the head of the department.
- The head of the department shall give his answer 3 days or if action cannot be taken within this period, the reason for delay should be recorded. If the worker is dissatisfied with the decision of the departmental head, he may request that his grievance be forwarded to the grievance committee.
- The grievance committee shall make its recommendation to the manager within 7 days of the worker's request. If decision cannot be given within this period, reason should be recorded. The management shall implement unanimous decision of the committee. If there is difference of opinion among the members of the committee, the matter shall be referred to the manager along with the views of the members and the relevant papers for final decision.
- In either case, the final decision of the manager shall be communicated to the employee within three days from the receipt of the grievance committee's recommendations.
- If the worker is not satisfied even with the final decision of the manager, he may have the right to appeal to the manager for revision. In making this appeal, he may take a union official along with him to facilitate discussion with the management. The management will communicate the decision within 7 days of workman's revision petition.
- If the worker is still not satisfied the matter may be referred to voluntary arbitration.
- Where a worker has taken a grievance for redressal under the grievance procedure, the formal conciliation machinery shall not intervene till all steps in the procedure have exhausted. A grievance shall be presumed to assume the form of a dispute only when the worker turns down the final decision of the top management. The grievance committee shall consist of 4 to 6 members.

This is the model procedure of grievance handling. The organization may make the necessary amendments wherever it thinks proper, in the procedure with the consent of the workers of trade union.

3. Grievance Legislation: - In India industry, adequate attention has not been paid to the settlement of grievances. Legislative framework only indirectly deals with the redressal of individual grievances. At present, there are three legislations dealing with grievances of employees working in industries. The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, requires that every establishment employing 100 or more workers should frame standing orders. These should contain among other things, a provision for redressal of grievances of workers against unfair treatment and wrongful actions by the employer or his agents. The Factories Act, 1948 provides for the employment of a Welfare Officer in every factory ordinarily employing 500 or more workers. These welfare officers also look after complaints and grievances of workers. They will look after proper implementation of the existing labour legislation. Besides, individual disputes relating to discharge, dismissal or retrenchment can be taken up for relief under the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 amended in 1965. Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Act 1982 has provided for the setting up of a grievance settlement committee. Any employer of any industrial undertaking employing 50 or more workers is required to provide for a grievance settlement authority for settlement of industrial dispute connected with an individual worker. Where such a dispute arises, the worker or the trade union of which he is a member, may in the manner prescribed, refer the dispute to such authority for settlement. Any reference so made to the authority shall not be referred to Conciliation Board, Labour Court, Industrial or National Court unless it has been decided and the decision of the authority is not acceptable to one of the parties to the dispute.

## Conclusion

Management should ensure that the grievances should be received and settled promptly, so that the workers get the necessary sense of satisfaction. As earlier stated, redressal of the grievances is a must to maintain good labour management relations and industrial peace. Thus, the management should ensure that the grievance should be received and settled promptly, so that the workers get the necessary sense of satisfaction. The aggrieved employee approaches the front line supervisor first. If the company is unionized, a representative of trade union also joins the supervisor in handling the grievance. All grievances cannot be settled in this step, as these may be beyond the authority and competence of the supervisor. In the next step, the middle level manager, generally the personnel officer, along with a middle level union officer attempt to tackle the grievance. In the third step, the top management and top union leaders sit together to settle grievances involving companywide issued. If the grievance remains unsettled, it is referred to an outside arbitrator for redressal.

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