



**Small Biz Strategies**  
Dr. Marc Clark [mdclark@kih.net](mailto:mdclark@kih.net)

By Dr. Marc Clark, President/CEO  
SmartBizOnline.com

If you have any workplace rules, regulations, policies and/or procedures, there's a good probability that sooner or later they will be broken by one or more of your workers and that you may have to step up and enforce those company standards with some form of discipline.

Discipline doesn't necessarily mean automatic termination. One has to first gather all the facts, investigate their credibility and then issue a consequence that is fair to the infraction. Hopefully your business has a written set of standards, employee handbook, and established Code of Conduct to provide you assistance in such matters (and to assist in creating consistency and continuity in the way you deal with people).

Discipline should be administered in a four step process. Upon the first infraction the employee should receive a verbal warning:

Step #1 - Discuss the problem and expectations for eliminating the problem. Make sure this discussion with the employee is written up on a formal company disciplinary report and filed in

# Enforcing the rules: How to effectively discipline your employees

the employee's personnel folder. If the undesirable behavior continues...

Step #2 - The "Written Warning." The employee's behavior is documented and a discussion with warning in hand is conducted. In this written warning the verbal warning is noted. The conversation held with the employee at this level is more serious and accountability is stressed. At this level the employee should be warned that any continuance of the unacceptable behavior will lead up to either Suspension (Step #3) or Termination (Step #4).

Employees should have a clear understanding that it will be their conduct that will generate the final decision and outcome as to what will happen to them because of their behavior. They, in essence, choose their destiny and supervision is administering their choice.

As a side note, employees should always be given the opportunity to provide their side of the story during a disciplinary action. In Steps, 2, 3 and 4, comment space should be provided to the employee on the disciplinary form itself. Also for these three steps of discipline, supervision should request that the employee sign the disciplinary form. However, it should be noted that signing the form does not mean that the employee agrees with what is written on the form but that the form and its contents has been reviewed and that a copy has been given to the employee. Should the employee refuse to sign, supervision should document this employee refusal and have it witnessed by a third party, preferably another supervisor.

In all but the most serious cases, you'll want to try to avoid terminating employees, especially if they are good workers. In fact, terminating a worker without some form of discipline policy and procedure could cause you some form of legal problem especially if any form of discrimination can be justified.

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Without a clear policy and verification that the policy was used for the terminated employee, you could end up in a "your word against the employee's" situation.

Here are some things to ponder as you prepare your company's discipline policy and procedure process:

Setting up a structured and fair discipline program gives you some

background on the philosophy and the goals of a discipline program. It also explains progressive discipline and what a discipline program should contain. Remember that discipline means something more than just punishment. It also supports the idea of training that is expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior that will produce moral and mental improvement. Discipline aids in providing a systematic method to obtain obedience.

Employee's complaints assist you in dealing with employees' complaints and guides you through the process of setting up a program and a policy to manage these complaints.

Performing an investigation and an inquiry tells you what to do once a grievance has been received and details the steps you need to take in appraising the situation. In order for a disciplinary program to be successful, this step must be mastered by all those administering it.

Dealing with difficult employees will help you with the most challenging part of the discipline process - actually confronting the employee. You will need to make decisions about whether to coach or council an employee and how to go about doing it fairly and without bias.

Proper documentation of disciplinary actions is a significant part of the discipline process that must be done accurately to protect your business and substantiate any actions you take against employees.

Share your thoughts with Dr. Clark at [drmarc@smartbizonline.com](mailto:drmarc@smartbizonline.com)

## John Becker leaves legacy

John Donald Becker, Jr. (Jack), age 77, a 34-year resident of Davidsonville, Md., died November 28, 2010, at home. He was born October 20, 1933, in Washington, D.C. He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Nancy Lea Becker, his daughter, Shalene Marie Raffensperger, of Davidsonville, siblings Edwin Becker, Gretchen (Becker) Sirk, William Becker, David Becker, Donna Mae (Becker) Duggin, and grandsons Jack and Jeffrey Raffensperger. Jack graduated from McKinley Tech High School in Washington, D.C., and worked as a printer for National Geographic Maga-

zine early in his career. He was later a professional roller skating instructor and owned and operated a chain of roller skating centers.



John Becker

zine early in his career. He was later a professional roller skating instructor and owned and operated a chain of roller skating centers. Jack's passion was the sport of artistic roller-skating. He loved the many skaters he taught, and all the other professionals and people that were involved in roller-skating. He coached the U.S. Team at the World Roller-Skating

Championships in Vigo, Spain. Memorial contributions may be directed to Indian Creek School (Make checks out to: Indian Creek School, attn: In Memory of Jack Becker, 680 Evergreen Road, Crownsville, MD 21032).

**Trivia Question**  
**Answer:**  
**What roller skating move is named for Jackson Haines?**  
**Answer: The Jackson Haines Spin**