

Association of University and College Employees

THE STEWARD

WHAT IS A STEWARD

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

HANDLING A GRIEVANCE

DEALING WITH SUPERVISORS

CLOSING COMMENTS

LOCAL GRIEVANCE MEETINGS

COPIES OF MINUTES

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

Stewardship is not only an honor but a trust, carrying with it responsibility.

As a Steward you are on the front line with your members, your union and with management. You are the members' representative, their spokesman, counsellor and defender. You speak on their behalf with management, counsel them on their rights at work and within their union and must defend them against discrimination of all types. You are the person who sees that both the company and your members live up to the letter and spirit of your contract. Without you, the best contract in the world is of little value. You give it life and make it work. A good union cannot operate without the Steward.

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LOCAL GRIEVANCE MEETINGS

COPIES OF MINUTES

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

- 1 Read and fully understand your contract.
- 2 If in doubt on an interpretation, consult other stewards and local officers.
- 3 Police your contract and see that your members honor it.
- 4 Get to really know your members and their job functions.
- 5 Handle all grievances fairly and intelligently.
- 6 Anticipate and head off problems for members.
- 7 Don't knock management unnecessarily.
- 8 Don't make hasty decisions or side deals.
- 9 Support your fellow union officers, create good impressions of your union.
- 10 Enforce safety standards.
- 11 Attend all union meetings.
- 12 Seek out and sign up new members.
- 13 Keep your members informed about contract and union.

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HANDLING A GRIEVANCE

DEALING WITH SUPERVISORS

CLOSING COMMENTS

LOCAL GRIEVANCE MEETINGS

COPIES OF MINUTES

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

The best way to handle a grievance is to nip it in the bud. Discuss it fully with the Grievor, making sure that a grievance exists. Turn down all phony grievances, or those filed for political reasons, firmly, but courteously. If a grievance does exist, discuss it next with the supervisor concerned. Calm dialog can often achieve solutions. If this fails, formally file the grievance in accordance with the procedure laid out in your contract.

- 1 Get all the facts recorded in writing.
- 2 Have Grievor sign form.
- 3 Discuss grievance with Master Steward.
- 4 Collect as much supportive information as possible.
- 5 File in manner and within time limits laid out in your contract.
- 6 Have Master Steward distribute copies as indicated on grievance forms.

HANDLING A GRIEVANCE

DEALING WITH SUPERVISORS

CLOSING COMMENTS

LOCAL GRIEVANCE MEETINGS

COPIES OF MINUTES

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

In dealing with the supervisor . . .

- 1 Be friendly and pleasant, even if it hurts.
- 2 Talk about his interests, family, etc., to break ice.
- 3 Sit or stand straight, speak firmly, looking him directly in the eyes. Never sit at a lower level.
- 4 State your case honestly, reasonably, and briefly.
- 5 Don't daydream or think of what you are going to say next. Really listen to what the supervisor is saying and make notes on points you may wish to refer to.
- 6 Be co-operative, look for a settlement and not a fight. Don't horse trade or make deals.
- 7 Disagree enthusiastically but with dignity.
- 8 Re-state the specific issue, don't be sidetracked.
- 9 Be calm — never lose your temper.
- 10 Give and demand respect as an equal.
- 11 Don't threaten, bluff or bring in personalities.
- 12 Attempt to settle grievance at this level if at all possible.

DEALING WITH SUPERVISORS

CLOSING COMMENTS

LOCAL GRIEVANCE MEETINGS

COPIES OF MINUTES

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

In closing, don't go on forever. Try to judge when all of your facts have been presented in as positive a manner as possible. Then, select a closing for the occasion and person

you are dealing with. Always ask for a settlement, even if the supervisor has disagreed. The following comments are only representative. Try working out some of your own.

- 1 I've shown you the facts in the case. Can we settle it here?
- 2 Will you settle this grievance?
- 3 Can you take care of this today — or perhaps tomorrow?
- 4 I know you're a fair-minded person and the grievance is just. Can we settle it?
- 5 I feel we can save much time if we settle this grievance here.

If he won't settle, leave courteously, but remind him to keep thinking it over. Tell him you will check back with him the next day before taking it the next step in the grievance procedure. Allow the supervisor a chance to save face if necessary — it doesn't cost anything. It may lead to better discussions in the future.

If he settles, reassure him of the wisdom of his action and how the workers affected will appreciate his decision.

Don't brag about the way you look after your members; always be modest. Don't talk too much — get out quickly.

CLOSING COMMENTS

LOCAL GRIEVANCE MEETINGS

COPIES OF MINUTES

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

If you were unable to settle the grievance with the supervisor, the grievance now goes to the next level in the procedure — the Local Grievance Meeting. Make sure it has been filed within the time limits and in the manner set out in your contract. There should be an agenda made up for each meeting, showing not only the grievances but items for discussion as well. Now you'll be glad you collected as much information about the grievance as you did. You'll need all the arguments you can muster.

The union committee should meet before all Local Grievance Meetings, the evening before if necessary, to discuss the agenda and plan its strategy. The Master Steward should be the chairman of the union's committee.

When you meet the management committee remember you are dealing with people who have handled a great many grievances. Don't underestimate them. If you are called upon by your chairman to speak, be clear, firm, calm and do not use slang words. The more professional you appear, the more force your arguments will have. Be neat in appearance; it makes a big difference.

Your committee should insist upon accurate minutes of the meeting. This is important should the grievance go to the next level.

The meeting room must be considered neutral territory, with your committee facing the management group, either across the table or at either end. A caucus room should be available. Do not accept a hall for this purpose. And the party that wishes to caucus should leave the board room to do so. Be firm but courteous in making this point if management insists that you should step outside, even when the management committee wishes to discuss something privately. After all, the meetings can always be held in some other location. At all times be professional and equal. Never allow yourself to be considered anything less.

LOCAL GRIEVANCE MEETINGS

COPIES OF MINUTES

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

GRIEVANCE:

"The union feels that John Doe has met all the criteria as per Article 68.1 of the current contract as well as the interpretation by both the union and management for advancement to Group Two. The union therefore seeks to have John Doe upgraded to Group Two in the salary scale, retroactive to his anniversary date of July 15th."

MANAGEMENT POSITION:

Following a review of the assignments of the Grievor, John Doe, management advises that consistent with their interpretation, the Grievor is eligible to progress to the Group Two level in accordance with the criteria set out in Article 68.1.

UNION POSITION:

In view of management's position on John Doe, the union wishes to settle this grievance.

ACTION:

Settled.

Each grievance should be written out in the above manner, showing the language of the grievance, the management position, the union's position and the resultant action. Not always will the union committee find that management has agreed with its position. Sometimes the "management position" will show that it does not believe any violation has taken place. The union can respond in a variety of ways. If it feels that management is just being obstinate, it can:

Refer the grievance to the next level for action.

If it finds management has brought forward information that affects the union case it can . . .

Ask that the grievance be held pending while the union considers this new information.

Or if the information shows that the grievance has no substance it can . . .

Request that the grievance be withdrawn without prejudice.

The above are only a few of the language possibilities available to a union. Many more will become apparent with time.

Your committee should insure that the minutes of each meeting are duly signed by both management and the union.

COPIES OF MINUTES**TIPS FOR STEWARDS****GRIEVANCE INFORMATION**

The Steward is to the union what a supervisor is to a company. You, as a Steward, are expected to lead. To be able to do this effectively you must have . . .

- 1 Tact — never say anything that will offend.
- 2 Impartiality — be broad-minded and fair.
- 3 Reliability — keep your word when given.
- 4 Co-operativeness — always willing to help others.

- 5 Honesty — never lie, cheat, or steal — time or money.
- 6 Sincerity — be yourself, don't act.
- 7 Dignity — be reserved, calm and dignified.
- 8 Intelligence — use reasoning and logic
Think before you speak. Never make hasty decisions. Consider your actions carefully.

You'll soon discover that your members seek . . .

- 1 A sense of security.
- 2 A feeling of job growth.
- 3 A feeling of involvement.
- 4 A feeling of importance.
- 5 A desire for self-expression.
- 6 A sense of dignity.
- 7 A feeling of being appreciated.

It's up to you, the Steward, to keep management aware of these needs. Also, it is up to you to keep your members informed of the value of belonging to a union. They are constantly assaulted by anti-union comments. They must be told the truth about their union and its record so they can feel proud of belonging to a truly democratic organization.

As frequently as possible get together with the other Stewards for discussions about the contract and your union, even if it is only during lunch. Your Master Steward should hold regular meetings where problem areas are examined and discussed. Make sure you receive as much information about the union and your contract as you possibly can. Keep after the Master Steward and Local Officers until you are satisfied with the results.

TIPS FOR STEWARDS

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

Five important "W"s concerning every grievance.

- WHO** is involved in the grievance?
Name(s), department, job classification, shift of union personnel.
Name(s) of those who caused this to be a grievance.
- WHEN** did grievance occur? On what day and at what time did the act or omission take place that caused the grievance?
- WHERE** did the grievance occur? Exact location, department, area, machine, etc.
- WHY** is this a grievance? What has been violated — contract, supplement, past-practice, law, rulings or awards, etc.? In order for there to be a legitimate grievance, there must be a violation of something — this "W" directs your attention to that specific 'something' which has been violated.
- WHAT** are the demands? What adjustments are necessary to completely correct the injustice or violation, to place the aggrieved in the same position he would have been in had the grievance not occurred? This principle is modified only by contract limitations.

GRIEVANCE INFORMATION

