

7 Overcoming difficulties

Aims of the exercise

- To identify the types of difficulties involved in managing absence.
- To identify methods of overcoming these difficulties.
- To develop a 'can do' approach to absence management.

Who it's for

Groups of three or four.

How to use it

You can best use this exercise when a team is having difficulty managing absence at work.

What happens

This exercise is broken into two separate tasks. In task one, groups identify the difficulties in managing absence at work. In task two, they develop practical solutions, which they can implement in the workplace. At the end of task one, you facilitate a discussion that identifies categories of difficulties. Groups then work separately on finding solutions to these difficulties for the second task.

Time it takes

Group work for task 1: 10 minutes

Discussion for task 1: 10 minutes

Group work for task 2: 20 minutes

Discussion for task 2: 20 minutes

What you need

- Worksheet 7.1
- Flipchart and stand or whiteboard
- Marker pens for trainer
- Flipchart paper and marker pens for participants
- Paper and pens for participants

How to prepare

- Photocopy or print out a copy of Worksheet 7.1 for each participant.

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Trainer's notes

Introduction

Explain

Managing absence is not easy. If it were easy, every organisation would have low absence figures. We all know this is not the case. Therefore we need to identify the difficulties we face when managing absence. This will help us to see how we can move forward.

Select groups of three or four, give them a supply of flipchart paper and marker pens, and issue a copy of Worksheet 7.1 to each participant.

State

Use Worksheet 7.1 to record any difficulties that you think you may encounter when managing absence. Then, as a group, record your findings on the flipchart paper provided. You have 10 minutes to do this. After that time, each group will present its ideas to the others.

Circulate among the groups to ensure they remain focused on this task.

After 10 minutes

Ask each group in turn to present its views. Then lead a discussion about the difficulties that each group has identified. There will be a lot of overlap. Try to categorise the types of difficulties on a sheet of flipchart paper as you discuss.

At the end of the discussion, select groups to tackle the different problems in each of the different categories.

State

As a group you have to identify practical solutions to the difficulties you have been given. The solutions must not compromise consistency or the agreed procedures of the organisation. You have 20 minutes to discuss your solutions and record them on a sheet of flipchart paper.

Circulate among the groups to ensure they remain focused.

After 20 minutes

Ask each group in turn to present its solutions. Then lead a discussion about each group's views to ensure the solutions are practical and can be implemented. At the end of all the presentations, ask participants to commit to these actions.

Suggested questions

- Does that overcome all of the difficulties?
- What reaction will we get?
- How should we manage that reaction?
- Will this offer a positive result?
- Who needs to be made aware of these actions?
- How do we gain commitment to these actions?
- How do we gain consistency across the organisation?
- How should we monitor our new actions?
- How often should we monitor these actions?

Points for emphasis

Back in the workplace, participants should:

- always look for solutions to the problems
- work together to gain solutions
- share the solutions with others to gain commitment
- maintain consistency
- communicate any changes to those who need to know
- monitor their new actions regularly
- alter their plans if required.

State

We now need to work on the implementation of these solutions. Therefore we need to support each other's actions. Decide when to monitor the actions to ensure you get the results you require.

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We all know that *absence management is not easy*. We will encounter various difficulties in managing absence. You need to list these difficulties here, then as a group on a sheet of flipchart paper. You must be prepared to explain the difficulties you identify to other members of your group, then as a group to other groups. You have 10 minutes to complete the exercise.

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