

Compass HR Consulting, LLC

Employee Dissatisfaction at a Key Automobile Assembly Plant

Situation

A key U.S. automobile assembly plant responsible for building the top selling car in its vehicle line up was experiencing dissatisfaction with the selection process used to determine promotional opportunities. Specifically, women and minorities were concerned promotions were based on nepotism and/or favoritism and more qualified women and minorities were being passed over.

Opportunity

A corporate Employee Relations team diagnosed the problem as having two root causes: the perception promotions were based on race/sex/or personal relationships rather than qualifications and that favoritism existed in the promotional process. Changing these perceptions could lead to a higher level of employee satisfaction and improved morale, particularly among women and minorities and high trust in management decisions.

Actions

A team of corporate Employee Relations representatives, headed by A. J. Darin, conducted a surgical Employee Relations Audit to determine what was causing perceptions of race/sex/or personal relationships bias and favoritism. Based on the Audit, it was learned the brother of a Senior Manager, who was a member of the Personnel Development Committee responsible for selection of personnel for promotion, recommended, and approved the promotion of his sibling. The flash-point with this promotion was that one month prior to being recommended for promotion, the sibling received a two-week disciplinary suspension without pay for a serious policy violation and was still promoted over equally qualified candidates who had clean disciplinary records.

Results

As a result of the Employee Relations Audit the following recommendations were accepted by the Plant's Operating Committee:

- Ensure employees understand the promotional process, including factors such as willingness to relocate, educational requirements etc.
- Assure that all salaried employees know who their Personnel Development Committee Representative is.
- Address favoritism concerns as part of other communications activities such as department meetings/town hall meetings.
- Consider posting all non-management level salaried job openings.
- Exclude all salaried employees who have been disciplined (especially for Harassment and Integrity Violations) from promotional eligibility while the disciplinary action is active in their personnel file.

The aforementioned recommendations were implemented and as a result, no employment litigation occurred and no employee complaints were filed with the EEOC or other regulatory agency. Further, future promotions were perceived to be more equitable based on qualifications and inclusion of employees in protected classes.