

GRIEVENCE PROCEDURES



A CHAPTER FROM THE BUSINESS TOOLKIT

This is only one chapter of the toolkit. You can download the full document or any of the other chapters from the Partner Africa website.
www.partnerafrica.org/business-toolkit

WELCOME

This toolkit provides practical assistance on how to improve **Productivity, Quality and Workforce Management - areas which are inextricably linked**. People are a core and valuable asset for every business and in order to have an efficient, productive business, employees need to work in good conditions. Partner Africa, through its extensive auditing, training and consulting work have found that workers who are safe, respected and content in their work are more efficient and productive. For instance, productivity is increased by reducing the need for sick days and constant recruitment and onboarding due to high worker turnover. The connection also flows in the other direction: as productivity and efficiency improves, there are opportunities to improve wages and reduce excessive working hours without impacting price.

Productivity, Quality and Workforce Management are all essential elements to building a lasting business and a strong partnership with purchasing companies into the future.

The group of companies and organisations behind this toolkit want to share best practice and learning across the industry. This toolkit gives suppliers practical assistance on how to improve productivity, quality and workforce management in production sites. It will enable you to understand each issue and why it matters for your business, what is required, what that means in practice and will also enable you to assess your current situation and provide you with practical tools to make the necessary improvements.

Written and produced by Partner Africa

www.partnerafrica.org | info@partnerafrica.org



Produced by Partner Africa for The Coca-Cola Company, Diageo, ABInBev and Aim-Progress





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The content of this Toolkit was developed by Partner Africa and consultants, in conjunction with the participating brands. Each company may have additional and/or specific requirements on the topics covered in this document and thus this Toolkit should be utilised as a reference guidance only.



5.3 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS?

- Addresses complaints/issues quickly and systematically
- Minimizes disruptions to business and production
- Resolving problems within the enterprise without government intervention
- Builds trust and confidence between workers and managers
- Workers who know their concerns are being resolved are more committed to the business and less likely to be absent or leave – which would cost the business in loss of production and recruitment costs

Where there isn't a grievance procedure or where workers don't feel able to raise their concerns, the turnover can be higher, as people just leave if they are unhappy rather than trying to resolve the issue.

✓ THE EXPECTATIONS

- An accessible, trusted, fair and confidential mechanism should be provided for workers to express any grievances without fear of reprisal. Concerns should be appropriately addressed in a timely manner





WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

The objective of any grievance mechanism should be to seek to understand allegations, mitigate any negative consequences, and provide some form of remediation, where appropriate.

This section explains in more detail what this means in practice and can also be used as a tool to self-assess your site.

Put a if you think that point is in place in your business and put a if it isn't or needs improvement. You can then create an action plan, to assign and follow up an action for every (sample action plans are given at the back of the toolkit).

- There is an easily accessible, trusted and fair method for workers and/or external individuals to report concerns or violations including: accidents or safety issues, harassment or discrimination, abuse, bribery or potential conflicts of interest
- There is a written grievance procedure that's shared with all employees explaining how the process works, how long each step takes, who the employee should contact about a grievance and how. It is understandable and accessible to all
- Workers are able to report a concern anonymously. This is very important
- Reports are kept confidential
- Training and clear explanation are provided to all workers (and repeated at regular intervals) to ensure all workers know how to use the system and that they understand the process for handling any issues that are raised
- Reports are followed up with appropriate action taken, in a timely manner
- Workers are entitled to have a representative assist them with any complaint
- If the problem can't be resolved informally there would be a meeting with the employee (a grievance hearing), to hear evidence and make a decision on the case, which should be in writing. If either party isn't happy with the decision they can appeal
- There is a policy in place prohibiting retaliation against workers and other stakeholders who lodge good faith grievances or concerns. Employers are careful to ensure this is carried out and no worker is poorly treated or harassed because of reporting a concern
- Are you aware of your customers' requirements and mechanisms available on reporting grievances? Check your customers' supplier code and website to find out details of their services for whistle-blowing and grievance reporting



PRACTICAL TIPS AND TOOLS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Setting up an effective grievance procedure

Simple solutions for a small business:

- A suggestions and grievances box could be provided in an accessible part of the site, which is not in view of management offices
- Workers should be informed and trained in the use of the box and informed what will happen with any concerns raised
- Senior person within the business must be responsible for ensuring the process is followed
- The box should be regularly emptied and a system in place to investigate and resolve issues raised
- Resolved issues should be communicated to workers.
- Workers recognised and rewarded for good suggestions and never penalised for comments or critical suggestions

A more formal method for larger sites/businesses:

- You could provide a confidential hotline number which is publicized amongst workers through verbal briefings, distributed materials/leaflets and posters in public areas and restrooms
- The process should be effectively communicated to workers, including who will answer the call,

confidentiality, anonymity and what will happen to resolve issues raised

- The hotline should go through to a confidential organisation, not the management, with operators who are able to speak all the major first languages of the workers
- A system should be in place for any concerns reported to be documented anonymously and submitted to relevant members of the management team
- A procedure must be in place to follow up and thoroughly investigate all concerns and provide a remedy where appropriate that is communicated to workers
- Clear policies and procedures to ensure there is no retaliation

Resources and tools

- Tesco have compiled a very practical document on how to set up and run a grievance procedure. It also gives sample templates of a 'grievance form' and a 'notice of formal grievance meeting'. Link in endnote references ⁶²
- 'Discipline and grievances at work' leaflet can be downloaded from the link in the endnote references ⁶³





REFERENCES

⁶² William Thomson. Tesco. Grievance Mechanism. Accessed on Sustainable Agriculture in South Africa (SIZA) website. https://www.siza.co.za/documents/Ethical_Grievance_Mechanism.pdf

⁶³ Discipline and grievances at work: The Acas guide. <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2179>