

# Employee Control and Discipline: Patterns and Priorities

## Autorité et discipline dans l'entreprise : les modèles et les priorités

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### Résumé de l'article

L'exercice de l'autorité et de la discipline montre un aspect des préoccupations des employeurs au sujet de la conduite des employés. L'autre côté, qui consiste dans le rendement au travail, a fait l'objet d'études approfondies. On a cependant accordé beaucoup moins d'attention aux questions d'autorité et de discipline. Dans nombre d'entreprises, on a utilisé diverses mesures pour apprécier le rendement de l'employé: bonis, majorations de salaire, avancement, etc.

La conduite répréhensible entraîne aussi diverses sanctions: avertissements, réprimandes, suspension, renvoi. Certaines de ces sanctions ont été utilisées pour accroître le taux de rendement, mais elles ont donné de piètres résultats.

Dans son article, l'auteur se limite à l'étude des moyens susceptibles de corriger les écarts de conduite. Différentes méthodes sont utilisées pour assurer l'ordre et la discipline. Parfois, on se contentera d'avoir recours à des remarques verbales. Dans d'autres entreprises, on trouvera des règlements écrits.

L'auteur a poursuivi son enquête auprès des cadres et de la direction de vingt entreprises employant de 500 à 50,000 salariés et qui appartiennent à tous les secteurs de l'activité économique.

Le résultat de cette enquête démontre que 19 d'entre elles possèdent des règlements écrits concernant l'absentéisme et, respectivement, 17, 12 et 9 concernant les retards, le prolongement de la pause-café et l'abandon du lieu du travail. La consommation d'alcool et de drogue est aussi souvent l'objet de règlements écrits, surtout lorsqu'elle est de nature à affecter le rendement de l'employé. Les contraventions aux règles de sécurité et le jeu (horseplay) sont sanctionnées dans à peu près la moitié des entreprises, principalement celles où l'activité professionnelle comporte des dangers d'accidents. L'insubordination proprement dite faisait l'objet de règlements formels dans 13 entreprises et les sociétés où l'on ne trouvait pas de tels règlements appartenaient généralement au secteur tertiaire. D'autres points faisaient aussi l'objet de règlements dans quelques cas comme la conversation pendant les séances de travail, la tenue ou l'apparence physique, l'usage du téléphone à des fins personnelles.

De ce qui précède, l'auteur constate qu'il peut y avoir confusion entre l'existence d'un règlement et son application, car les règles existent souvent pour éviter l'arbitraire. Les règlements peuvent être appliqués d'une façon très souple, d'une manière modérée et, ailleurs, d'une manière sévère ou très stricte. D'une façon générale, on peut dire que les sanctions sont très sévères lorsqu'il y a opposition à l'autorité constituée ou que les normes de sécurité ne sont pas observées. On les applique avec moins de rigueur lorsqu'il s'agit d'assiduité et de la présence au travail.

Outre les sujets précédents, lorsqu'il a été question d'autres sections susceptibles de sanctions, les intéressés ont fait référence à l'honnêteté de l'employé.

En bref, l'auteur en vient à la conclusion que l'attitude des entreprises varie beaucoup de l'une à l'autre. Certaines imposent des règlements plus nombreux que les autres et les unes se montrent plus rigoureuses que d'autres dans leur application.

On peut aussi ajouter que la grande entreprise est plus portée à avoir des règlements formels que la société de moindre importance. On remarque que les entreprises, qui ont les règlements les plus détaillés et les plus sévères, sont, en règle générale, plus anciennes, et possèdent une main-d'oeuvre principalement formée de cols bleus. La raison peut en être que le processus de fabrication requiert une plus grande interdépendance, qu'il s'agit là d'attitudes traditionnelles et que les cols bleus se sentent plus aliénés que les autres catégories de travailleurs. Là où il existe des syndicats, les règlements écrits sont plus courants, ce qui provient peut-être de la tendance des syndicats à institutionnaliser les règlements par le biais des conventions collectives. D'une façon générale, on peut retenir que les règlements écrits sont nécessaires là où des méthodes moins formelles ne sont pas aussi efficaces. Un autre fait à souligner, c'est que plus la proportion des hommes est forte au sein du personnel, plus les sanctions sont rigoureuses. On remarque aussi que là où les techniques de travail sont le plus développées, les sanctions sont moins strictes, possiblement parce que les employés ont une meilleure formation.

Dans l'ensemble, on peut dire que la sévérité des sanctions imposées indique que l'insubordination et l'inobservance des règles de sécurité sont les actes qu'on considère comme les plus répréhensibles tandis qu'on ne sévira contre le manque d'assiduité et la consommation d'alcool et de drogues que ceux-ci ont tendance à devenir chroniques.

# Employee Control and Discipline

## Patterns and Priorities

David E. Dimick

*This study is directed to the issue of what determines the importance of an offence. Two types of characteristics were examined: the offence itself, and several aspects of the organizations involved. It is possible to compare some of the results obtained here with a survey of U.S. companies (BNA, 1973).*

Control and discipline reflect one side of an employer's concern with employee behaviour. The other side, work performance, has been a frequent subject of empirical investigations and has been subject to extensive conceptual analysis, as well. In many organizations, different types of reward systems are used for these different objectives. Work performance can be encouraged through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards such as recognition and approval, raises, bonuses, and the increments in status and influence which accompany promotion.

Unacceptable behaviour may elicit negative sanctions — warnings, reprimands, suspensions, discharge. Some of these sanctions have been used in attempts to increase performance. Research has shown a disappointing record for such attempts (e.g., Likert, 1967; Kay, Meyer, and French, 1965). Such negative sanctions may have the effect of providing a «floor» (a minimum level) for acceptable performance, but have been quite limited in their capacity to raise that floor.

Much of what has previously been written about control and discipline has been presented from a normative point of view, advocating approaches which range from traditional (Black, 1970) to «progressive» (Huberman, 1964) to «discipline by objectives» (Odior-

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ne, 1971). Another set of efforts have been essentially descriptive in nature. They portray the approach to discipline which has been used in various organizations. Such presentations (see Sadler and Horst, 1972; Huberman, 1975; Wollenberger, 1973 as examples) frequently combine an explicit or implicit advocacy along with the descriptions of the systems in use.

Some previous research has attempted to explain variations in control and discipline procedures. Boise (1965) studied city employees in Philadelphia and found that discipline was more severe when the offending employee was seen as not being crucial to the work of the unit. Rosen and Jerdee (1974) found that the severity of recommended discipline in a series of hypothetical situations was positively related to the negative consequences of the behaviour involved, not just the behaviour alone. They also found that penalties were more severe for persons of lower organizational rank and for persons described as marginal (as opposed to «exceptional») in their talents, given the same infraction. Other research has shown that the emotional state of the supervisor and the manner of the subordinate (hostile or uncooperative) moderate the intensity of the discipline applied (Goodstadt and Kipnis, 1970; Kipnis, Silverman and Copeland, 1973). Evidence from a study by Shaak and Schwartz (1973) indicated that managers at higher organizational levels recommended more severe penalties for a set of hypothetical offences than did managers at lower levels. The same study also found that safety issues brought on the strongest response (i.e., penalty).

In short, the previous analysis of employee discipline has been largely normative and descriptive. The empirical work which has been done has focused primarily on the characteristics of the individuals (employee or the employee's supervisor) and relatively little on the offense. Frequently these studies used hypothetical situations and asked various people how they *would* respond if confronted with the events described.

The study reported here was directed to the issue of what determines the importance of an offence. Two types of characteristics were examined: the offence itself, and several aspects of the organizations involved. It is possible to compare some of the results obtained here with a survey of U.S. companies (BNA, 1973). To our knowledge, there has been no similar study of Canadian employers. Comparisons between the two (the BNA and this investigation) will be presented in a subsequent section of this paper.

Both formal and non-formal means are used to control employee behaviour. Spoken reprimands, the tone of voice, and various non-verbal forms of communication are used and are frequently effective in enforcing standard practices of many kinds. Even such areas as how one can use one's time on the job when work is slack (does one have to look busy?) frequently become a matter of «common law» which may vary with the supervisor or the department in question. Such controls are sufficient for many employees much of the time.

However, there are some areas which are subject to more explicit regulation in many organizations. This analysis is concerned with these kinds of employee behaviour. Specifically, the following question is raised: what unacceptable behaviours are of such high and uniform importance in an organization that they are proscribed by formal rules?

#### PROCEDURE

A wide range of personnel policies were examined in a survey of twenty companies. The companies were selected to represent a cross-section of middle and large-sized employers in the private sector. These companies ranged widely in size and industry, and represented all major regions of the country. (See Table 1.) Part of this survey specifically asked about the control and discipline of employees. Questions were asked of both personnel specialists and selected line managers as to whether the company had rules which applied to a number of possible offences.

Respondents were asked whether the organization had explicit rules applying to the areas listed in Table 2a. Although some organizations applied such rules to managerial and professional employees, the interviews with the line managers suggested that these rules were really used as explicit criteria for discipline with non-managerial employees only. The results of this study should be interpreted in that light. Other employees are usually handled much more flexibly.

Data from the BNA (1973) survey have been used to provide a comparison with the results of this study. The comparisons are based on a similar, though not identical, list of possible areas in which rules may exist. Their standard for the existence of a rule (Table 2a.) was somewhat more limiting than in the current study, leading to a smaller percentage of organizations in that study having «rules». In comparing the strictness of enforcement (Table 2b) the data from the BNA survey are presented in terms of the penalties imposed after various repetitions

**TABLE 1**  
**Sample Characteristics**

A. <i>Company Size</i>	
1. Number of Employees	Number of Companies
400 — 1,000	4
1,000 — 5,000	5
5,000 — 10,000	5
10,000 — 60,000	6
2. Annual Sales (in 000,000's)	
\$ 30 — 100	6
100 — 500	7
500 — 1,000	3
1,000 — 2,500	4
B. <i>Industry</i>	
1. Primary Sector (Resource Extraction & Processing)	4
2. Secondary Sector (Manufacturing, Food Processing)	8
3. Tertiary Sector (Insurance, Banking, Retailing, Transportation)	8
C. <i>Location (Head Office)</i>	
1. Atlantic Provinces	1
2. Quebec	4
3. Ontario	11
4. Prairie Provinces	1
5. British Columbia	3

of an offence. The current study approached the same issue but found that the respondents could not reply with that level of precision. Thus the posture of the company was summarized with a four point rating scale.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most common areas for formal regulation are those dealing with being present for (and capable of) work. Nineteen of twenty companies had formal rules dealing with absenteeism — how much was permissible, procedures for notification when it occurred, and in many cases a procedure for medical certification was specified if the absence was for reasons of illness or injury. Tardiness was the subject

**TABLE 2A**  
**Proportions of Companies with Rules in Various Areas**

	<i>All (BNA<sup>1</sup>) Companies</i>	<i>By Size</i>		<i>By Industry Sector</i>		
		<i>Moderate/ Large</i>		<i>Primary/Secondary/ Tertiary</i>		
1. Absence from Work	95 (55)	90	100	100	100	88
2. Lateness ; early departure	85 (52)	80	90	100	100	62
3. Use of Alcohol or drugs affecting performance	85 (48)	80	90	75	88	88
4. Insubordination	65 (45)	60	70	50	100	32
5. Safety Infractions	65 (40)	60	70	50	100	38
6. Dress ; appearance	65 (-)	60	70	50	50	88
7. Length of work breaks	60 (52)	50	70	50	62	62
8. « Horseplay »	50 (44)	40	60	50	88	12
9. Leaving Worksite during workday	45 (44)	40	50	50	88	0
10. Sleeping during working hours	30 (39)	30	30	50	50	0
11. Personal Use of the telephone	25 (-)	30	20	25	25	25
12. Unnecessary conversation	10 (-)	10	10	0	25	0

<sup>1</sup> From Table 3 of the BNA survey (1973).

of regulation in seventeen companies while workbreak duration and leaving the work site were regulated in twelve and nine companies, respectively.

Alcohol and/or drug abuse were the subjects of frequent regulation. The unanimous opinion of those interviewed was that the concern was for the impact of such actions on work effectiveness. If the alcohol or drug abuse was not reflected in poor work or seen to be obvious, the rules weren't applicable.

There were ten pairs of companies in this survey, each pair containing a large and a moderate-size organization in a particular industry. « Industry sector » refers back to the categories in Table 1. Thus, the further breakouts on Table 2a reflect the patterns among these (size and sector) sub-groups of companies. The variations aren't notable, with the exception of the tertiary sector which less frequently had such legislation (62% of companies) as opposed to the primary and secondary sectors in which 100% companies surveyed had a rule. Though the sample is relatively small, rules dealing with attendance and intoxication appear to be more frequent in Canadian companies than with the U.S. employers covered in the BNA survey.

Infractions of safety rules and horseplay were specified formally as being unacceptable in roughly half of the companies. The existence of safety rules in sixty-five percent of this sample should not lead one to infer that the other thirty-five percent of the employers had a flippant attitude toward employee safety. Rather, most of those companies which were involved in industries where there were significant physical hazards had written safety rules, as can be seen from the breakdowns. Service sector companies (insurance companies, banks and so forth) tended not to have anything more complex than fire drill procedures.

Similarly, horseplay rules were found in companies (such as those in the meat packing industry) where such actions represented a significant danger.

The issue of insubordination was the subject of formal rules in thirteen of twenty companies in this survey. To have rules prohibiting insubordination is to underline the importance of social regularity and control. The dramatically lower frequency of rules regarding insubordination in the tertiary sector is noteworthy. The fact that most of the employees in these companies were not unionized coincides with the predominance of white-collar jobs.

Either of these two factors could account for the results: the union presence by making it necessary to legitimize sanctions against insubordination, or the job mix by influencing the number of situations in which employees are inclined to be insubordinate.

The basic reality of being an employee is that one is subordinate. The uniform expectations of employees therefore seem to derive from the social requirements of a work organization: being present and capable of working, and subordinating ones behaviour to hierarchical control. Certainly there is a logical link between the technical needs of the organization and social requirements they impose. But it also is plausible that these derived social needs may become functionally autonomous. That is, the means may in fact become an end in themselves. The resistance to flextime in companies where it subsequently works well is an example of such a social requirement (fixed hours of work) which may have become institutionalized even after the original need had diminished.

A number of other possible offenses were surveyed. Though relatively unimportant to the overall sample, such things as leaving the worksite during the work day and sleeping during working hours were substantial concerns in the secondary and primary industry companies.

The BNA survey generally reflects less variation across possible offenses. Some of the differences between the results of the present survey and the U.S. based survey may be due to methodology and the sample size in the present study. Some of it may reflect different patterns in employment relationships in the two countries.

What do these findings suggest? It is clear from these results that two important conditions of employment are being present and submitting to the authority of designated superiors. While these conditions are implicit in most conventional organizations, it is instructive that these expectations are also institutionalized in the form of rules. What this shows is that these expectations apply throughout the organization, that they are not intended to be subject to local arrangements.

It is possible to confuse the *existence* of the rule with the *importance of violating* that rule. Many rules exist simply to provide a non-arbitrary standard for supervisory personnel to apply. It removes them from the responsibility of having made the rule and therefore from some of the antagonism associated with it when the rule is applied. To obtain a better appraisal of the importance of an offence, enforced procedures were discussed with both the personnel representatives and selected line managers. Each rule was assessed as to the severity of sanctions which would be imposed when a violation took place. A four-category system was used to classify company posture; it is described in a footnote to Table 2b.

Strongest sanctions applied to safety, horseplay, insubordination and alcohol or drug interference with work. More moderate sanctions were applied to absenteeism and other actions which resulted in people working less than the full time specified.

Thus, the results suggest that the companies included in this study reacted most vigorously when organizational authority was directly challenged and when unsafe acts were committed. They reacted less emphatically when the infractions occurred around issues of attendance and being present for the expected length of time.

The BNA survey (1973) had no question precisely comparable to the one asked in this survey. However, it was possible to use some very detailed information about penalties to get a rough indication of the comparisons between the two samples. Those offenses which were most severely penalized in this survey (ranked "1" through "4") also tended to result in suspension or discharge sooner, than that



**TABLE 2b**  
**Average Severity of Punishment, by Type of Offense**

	<i>Total Sample (BNA***)</i>	<i>By Company Size Moderate/Large</i>	<i>By Industry Sector Primary/Secondary/ Tertiary</i>
1. Insubordination	3.1 (1)	3.1/3.1	2.3/3.3/3.0
2. Safety Regulation Infractions	2.9 (2)	2.8/3.0	2.7/3.0/****
3. "Horseplay"	2.8 (2)	2.4/3.2	2.3/3.0/****
4. Use of Alcohol or drugs affecting performance	2.7 (1)	2.6/2.8	2.3/2.9/2.5
5. Absence from work	2.3 (3)	2.2/2.6	2.3/2.4/1.8
6. Lateness; early departure	2.1 (3)	2.2/1.9	2.3/2.0/2.5
7. Length of work breaks	2.0 (3)	1.8/2.2	1.7%1.8/2.3
8. Leaving work during the work day	1.7 (2)	1.2/2.3	1.5/2.0/****

\* The nature of sanctions for rule infractions in four areas reported in Table 2a were reported to be so variable as to make impossible to identify a typical penalty. These rules have not been included in this table.

\*\* After discussions with personnel specialists and line managers companies were rated on the strictness of their enforcement as follows:

- 1 = Loose application of rule
- 2 = Moderate application
- 3 = Strong application
- 4 = Very strict application

Operationally, a «1» meant sanctions were rarely imposed, «2» meant that sanctions were imposed but not to the point of discharge, «3» meant that full sanctions were imposed, and «4» meant that discharge was considered and sometimes used even in the event of a «first offence».

\*\*\* The BNA survey (1973) asked about typical penalties. Respondents reported whether warnings, suspensions or discharges were used at the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th offence. The number tabled here indicate the occurrence of the offence (1st, 2nd or 3rd) at which the majority of the employers would use a suspension or a discharge rather than a warning. The more serious the offence, the earlier the more severe penalties.

\*\*\*\* Indicates that 75% or more of the companies in the category indicated did not have any clearly identified penalty for rule infraction of the kind indicated.

offences ranked lower in this survey. Thus, there is a general correspondence between those results and the survey reported here.

The size and industry sector breakdown of the results reported here suggest that large companies and those in secondary manufacturing tend to have generally stronger penalties than is the case in smaller

companies or in other sectors. These differences are not completely consistent across types of offences and are generally not very large.

It should be noted that when the managers and personnel specialists were asked to identify other areas in which rules existed, no area of regulation except one was mentioned by more than one or two of them. The area which did arise in several interviews as not having been mentioned in our list could best be categorized as employee honesty. In some situations the rule was formal; in other situations it was simply understood that misappropriating company resources was prohibited. This concern arose especially in cases where there were portable and valuable products or tools.

The preceding analysis reflects the pattern of rules and enforcement of the "typical" company in this survey and to some major subsets of the sample as those rules apply to specific acts or types of actions. However, it does not give much indication as to whether the companies in the study were uniform or varied in their approach.

It is possible to state that the companies were *quite* variable: some with many rules, some with few, some far stricter than others. An analysis was conducted to determine whether company characteristics or employee characteristics were significantly associated with different patterns of rules and rule enforcement. To do this, two indexes were developed for each company from the same data used in developing Tables 2a and 2b.

One index was the number of areas in which a company had explicit rules. The second index was the typical severity of punishment, across all rules. For this second index, the values on which Table 2b was based were used. That is, the "typical" severity of penalties imposed was calculated for each company by taking the mean of the enforcement indices for all areas where the employer had a formal policy. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

It is plausible to predict that larger companies would be more "formal" than smaller companies, that they would have more rules.\* The supposed impersonality of such organizations might also be reflected in stricter enforcement of rules and regulations. Neither of these two patterns developed in this sample. Using both annual revenue and number of employees as indications of size, correlation coefficients

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\* Richard H. HALL's discussion of formalization and its relationship to organization size is a useful elaboration of this notion. See his *Formal Organizations: Structure and Process*, 2nd ed., pp. 116-119 and 152-180.

**TABLE 3**  
**Correlations Between Company Characteristics and  
 The Rules Governing Employee Behaviour**

	Number of areas subject to rules	Severity of Sanctions
I Indicators of Company Size		
A. Annual Revenue	-.13	-.07
B. Number of Employees	.20	.01
II Indicators of Technology-Workforce Characteristics		
A. Percent with High School Completion	-.82*	-.08
B. Percent less than 30 years old	-.48*	-.04
C. Number of Production Workers	.60*	-.07
D. Percent Male	-.14	.66*
E. Percent who are union members	.64*	-.14
III Indicators of Business Activity Patterns		
A. Revenue Per Employee	-.50*	-.23
B. Product Diversity	.53*	-.17

\*  $p < .05$

were computed with the rules index and the enforcement index. The magnitude of the correlations were small; none of the four coefficients was statistically significant.

Thus, there was no support for a relationship between organization size, on one hand, and either the number of regulated areas or the severity of sanctions, on the other. This raises the possibility that these indexes may not be related to organizational characteristics at all. However, further analyses did identify some interesting patterns with regard to technology/work force and business activity patterns.

The "technology" of the companies was reflected in a number of workforce characteristics. The relationship between control and discipline measures and workforce characteristics is reflected in the correlations reported in Table 3. There was a very strong negative relationship ( $r = -.82$ ) between the percentage of employees who had completed high school and the number of areas which were governed by formal rules. A similar result was obtained when the percentage of the employees who were less than thirty was considered ( $r = -.48$ ). The number of production workers in a company was positively associated ( $r = .60$ ) with the number of rules, as was the percentage of employees who were union members ( $r = .64$ ).

It is possible, then, to characterize companies having extensive rules which prohibit various kinds of employee behaviour as being employers of relatively less educated, older and preponderantly production (i.e., "blue-collar") employees. Such a pattern of regulation may be the result of many factors. It may have been that the technical and social equilibrium implied by these rules is more important to blue collar organizations — that the workflow requires greater interdependence and therefore more explicit control. It may also result from traditional attitudes and management practice. Managers in the industries may have developed in a context of time or "culture" in which explicit rules were numerous and thought to be important. A third possibility is that employees such as those in the profile above are less integrated (more alienated) than those with more education and white collar jobs.

The fact that the proportion of employees belonging to a union was strongly related to the number of regulated areas suggest that both the second and third explanations are quite plausible. The presence of unions may tend to institutionalize adversary relationships and frequently necessitates more formal modification of the employment relationship. Managers who have spent their careers in this kind of organization may think it more necessary to have rules than managers from other backgrounds. It is also plausible that institutionalized adversary patterns contribute to or reinforce feelings of alienation. Given the small sample, any generalization must be cautions. But the strong ties between work force characteristics and the use of rules is a central finding which invites further study.

Only one organizational variable was significantly related to the severity of enforcement. This variable was the percentage of men in the workforce. The greater the percentage of men, the more severe were the sanctions which could be imposed. This may have been a result of the occupation mix — predominantly male work forces being subject to stricter discipline because of the work they were doing. Yet the near-zero correlation with other workforce characteristics raises the possibility that it may have been the experience and expectations of employers with male employees which was the more important fact.

The business activity patterns of the companies suggest that technology may rival demographic factors in determining the extent of formal rules. The significant negative correlation ( $r = -.50$ ) between revenue per employee and the number of rules suggests that highly labour intensive technologies (low revenue per employee) tend to have many rules while technologies which are less labour intensive result in

fewer former rules. It may also be that labour intensive technologies require a less educated workforce, and the rules are a direct response to the workforce. The under-lying factor in either case would still seem to be the technology of work.

The product diversity of a company was positively associated with the extent of its use of rules in controlling employee conduct ( $r = .53$ ). This suggests that rules are a way of maintaining uniformity over a widely varying set of circumstances. It is reasonable to suggest that rules are used to control employee behaviour in situations where "obvious" norms or informal control is less plausible. Certainly, multiple locations would be less susceptible to the "natural" spreading of consistent norms.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Description and admonition have characterized much of previous writing about control and discipline of employees. Those empirical analyses which have been reported have typically focused on the influence of personal characteristics of the supervision or on employee characteristics (length of service, level, "indispensability"), as factors affecting disciplinary decisions.

On study (GNA, 1973) covered some of the same areas as the survey reported here. The proportion of companies in this sample with explicit rules in certain areas (absenteeism, tardiness, alcohol abuse, for example) was much higher than in the BNA survey. In other discipline areas, the proportions of companies with rules was found roughly similar.

The strictness of enforcement in both this survey and in that one (done in the U.S.) showed similar patterns. The more severe penalties were for dangerous acts ("horseplay", intoxication, safety infractions) and for insubordination. The issues of attendance and punctuality were less likely to incur suspension or discharge penalties at the first or second offence.

Correlation analysis relating employee discipline to organizational characteristics was used to identify some tentative reasons for the considerable variation in discipline procedures. The use of *formal rules* was associated with labour intensive technologies with diverse products and/or services. Employees tended to be older, less educated, and more predominantly "blue-collar" and unionized.

Only one company characteristic (the proportion of employees who were male) was associated with the severity of sanctions imposed. The fact that other employee characteristics (level of education, extent of union membership) did not correlate significantly with the typical severity of sanctions reduces the probability that being male was simply an indicator of some other circumstance. It is an interesting result, suggesting that more severe sanctions are more necessary or appropriate with male employees, at least in the sample companies on which this survey was based.

The results of the study are generally consistent with the BNA survey. The patterns and priorities in disciplinary rules suggest that certain issues are seen as requiring a relatively uniform approach throughout an organization. Attendance and punctuality were subject to frequent legislation, although penalties for violations were initially less severe. Safety infractions and issues of insubordination were less frequently subject to rules, except in the secondary industry sector, where they were very common. However, the strictness of enforcement was quite high.

It is premature to offer a general explanation of what shapes the patterns of disciplinary practices. The results of this survey can be understood to suggest two broad factors which should be explicitly examined. First is technology. Those work situations where physical dangers exist seem to result in both explicit rules and strong enforcement. The second is organizational necessity. Rules and enforcement applied for insubordination, attendance, punctuality and alcohol abuse are one reflection of a need to have a behaviourally predictable organization. The variation of employee characteristics and company characteristics with the extent of explicit rules suggests that situations which threaten organization control and coordination (e.g., unions, geographic dispersion) are met, at least in part, through discipline procedures.

Understanding the patterns and priorities in control and discipline are important to understanding the employment relationship more completely. Hopefully it is an area which will receive more attention in the future.

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## Autorité et discipline dans l'entreprise : les modèles et les priorités

L'exercice de l'autorité et de la discipline montre un aspect des préoccupations des employeurs au sujet de la conduite des employés. L'autre côté, qui consiste dans le rendement au travail, a fait l'objet d'études approfondies. On a cependant accordé beaucoup moins d'attention aux questions d'autorité et de discipline. Dans nombre d'entreprises, on a utilisé diverses mesures pour apprécier le rendement de l'employé: bonis, majorations de salaire, avancement, etc.

La conduite répréhensible entraîne aussi diverses sanctions: avertissements, réprimandes, suspension, renvoi. Certaines de ces sanctions ont été utilisées pour accroître le taux de rendement, mais elles ont donné de piètres résultats.

Dans son article, l'auteur se limite à l'étude des moyens susceptibles de corriger les écarts de conduite. Différentes méthodes sont utilisées pour assurer l'ordre et la discipline. Parfois, on se contentera d'avoir recours à des remarques verbales. Dans d'autres entreprises, on trouvera des règlements écrits.

L'auteur a poursuivi son enquête auprès des cadres et de la direction de vingt entreprises employant de 500 à 50,000 salariés et qui appartiennent à tous les secteurs de l'activité économique.

Le résultat de cette enquête démontre que 19 d'entre elles possèdent des règlements écrits concernant l'absentéisme et, respectivement, 17, 12 et 9 concernant les retards, le prolongement de la pause-café et l'abandon du lieu du travail. La consommation d'alcool et de drogue est aussi souvent l'objet de règlements écrits, surtout lorsqu'elle est de nature à affecter le rendement de l'employé. Les contraventions aux règles de sécurité et le jeu (horseplay) sont sanctionnées dans à peu près la moitié des entreprises, principalement celles où l'activité professionnelle comporte des dangers d'accidents. L'insubordination proprement dite faisait l'objet de règlements formels dans 13 entreprises et les sociétés où l'on ne trouvait pas de tels règlements appartenaient généralement au secteur tertiaire. D'autres points faisaient aussi l'objet de règlements dans quelques cas comme la conversation pendant les séances de travail, la tenue ou l'apparence physique, l'usage du téléphone à des fins personnelles.

De ce qui précède, l'auteur constate qu'il peut y avoir confusion entre l'existence d'un règlement et son application, car les règles existent souvent pour éviter l'arbitraire. Les règlements peuvent être appliqués d'une façon très souple, d'une manière modérée et, ailleurs, d'une manière sévère ou très stricte. D'une façon générale, on peut dire que les sanctions sont très sévères lorsqu'il y a opposition à l'autorité constituée ou que les normes de sécurité ne sont pas observées. On les applique avec moins de rigueur lorsqu'il s'agit d'assiduité et de la présence au travail.

Outre les sujets précédents, lorsqu'il a été question d'autres sections susceptibles de sanctions, les intéressés ont fait référence à l'honnêteté de l'employé.

En bref, l'auteur en vient à la conclusion que l'attitude des entreprises varie beaucoup de l'une à l'autre. Certaines imposent des règlements plus nombreux que les autres et les unes se montrent plus rigoureuses que d'autres dans leur application.

On peut aussi ajouter que la grande entreprise est plus portée à avoir des règlements formels que la société de moindre importance. On remarque que les entreprises, qui ont les règlements les plus détaillés et les plus sévères, sont, en règle générale, plus anciennes, et possèdent une main-d'œuvre principalement formée de cols bleus. La raison peut en être que le processus de fabrication requiert une plus grande interdépendance, qu'il s'agit là d'attitudes traditionnelles et que les cols bleus se sentent plus aliénés que les autres catégories de travailleurs. Là où il existe des syndicats, les règlements écrits sont plus courants, ce qui provient peut-être de la tendance des syndicats à institutionnaliser les règlements par le biais des conventions collectives. D'une façon générale, on peut retenir que les règlements écrits sont nécessaires là où des méthodes moins formelles ne sont pas aussi efficaces. Un autre fait à souligner, c'est que plus la proportion des hommes est forte au sein du personnel, plus les sanctions sont rigoureuses. On remarque aussi que là où les techniques de travail sont le plus développées, les sanctions sont moins strictes, possiblement parce que les employés ont une meilleure formation.

Dans l'ensemble, on peut dire que la sévérité des sanctions imposées indique que l'insubordination et l'inobservance des règles de sécurité sont les actes qu'on considère comme les plus répréhensibles tandis qu'on ne sévira contre le manque d'assiduité et la consommation d'alcool et de drogues que ceux-ci ont tendance à devenir chroniques.