
UNIT 12 DISLOCATION AND RELOCATION OF EMPLOYEES

Objectives

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- 1 understand the significance of dislocation and problem of dislocated employee;
- 1 identify various causes of job dislocation in an organisation; and
- 1 appreciate the need to help the dislocated employee through the process of retraining and relocating.

Structure

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 When Dislocation Occurs
- 12.3 Coping with Dislocated Employee
- 12.4 Helping the Dislocated Employee
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 Self-Assessment Questions
- 12.7 Further Readings

12.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult problems facing the human resource manager is the dislocated employee. Any discussion on dislocation involves the definition of dislocated employee, how to cope with it and why it occurs. Broadly speaking, the dislocated employee is any employee whose job has outgrown him or who is incapable (for whatever reason) of satisfactorily performing the requirements of his job. Usually an employee gets dislocated when he is incapable of performing, or unwilling to perform, a significant portion of his work in a satisfactory manner. It is obvious that employees seldom become dislocated overnight because job requirements are rarely that flexible and employee skills are barely that stable.

12.2 WHEN DISLOCATION OCCURS

The job dislocation occurs as a result of the erosion of one's skills and capabilities or the changing job requirements and technology. The most common excuse for an employee becoming dislocated in his job is inability to adjust to change. It is a fact that people do not resist change, rather they fail to change because of fear of the unknown.

There are fundamentally two reasons that men permit their jobs to outgrow them: attitudinal and physical. Attitudinal causes are far and away the most serious because they not only are the most common cause of dislocation but they also are the least tangible to deal with. People are confronted with common fears and worries when they are faced with changing ways of doing things. These include the fear of losing one's job, the fear of losing status in the eyes of co-workers, the fear of losing privileges, and the fear of lesser chance for promotion.

The reasons for job dislocation are:

1. Physical deterioration of the individual
2. Aging and senility
3. Indifference to work
4. Group pressure

Let us look at each of these factors, and how they can cause job dislocation.

1. *Physical Deterioration:* Although it is uncommon, it is possible that an employee may become unfit for a particular job from a physical standpoint. Sometimes, of course, the job itself is the cause of the physical unfitness, as in the case of mine workers getting pneumoconiosis. In other cases, an accident or chronic illness can cause the person to become incapable of performing satisfactorily the whole job or a significant portion of it. Obviously, when an employee becomes physically unfit to do a job, he is dislocated and corrective action must be undertaken.
2. *Age and Senility:* A second factor which may cause chronic or hard-core job dislocation is aging and senility. While most people look at aging as a physical process, the HR manager in facing the problem of a dislocated employee, must recognise that aging is more of a mental problem than it is physical. Of course, there is no particular problem with the mental slowing down as long as one has a wealth of experience to rely and utilise in effectively performing at work.
3. *Indifference to Work:* The third chronic job dislocation is the attitudinal problem of indifference. They include withdrawal from participation, reluctance to compete for any kind of reward, animosity towards superiors and colleagues, and so on. Attitudes are extremely difficult to change without extensive psychological counseling.
4. *Group Pressure:* Another cause of extreme difficulty when an employee is job-dislocated is the group pressure. Group pressure is a significant factor in determining the behaviour of an individual. The organisation can convince the employee that the proposed change is to his benefit, but if the group (or union) is opposed to the change, the situation becomes very difficult. When a group plants seeds of distrust and discontentment in the minds of any individual, it is almost impossible to get him think along constructive lines.

12.3 COPING WITH DISLOCATED EMPLOYEE

Some of the remedies to overcome dislocation are as follows:

- 1 Tell the employee why new method or technique of learning is necessary.
- 1 Permit the employee to participate in implementation of the change.
- 1 Provide a standard of performance which has realistic and achievable goals.
- 1 Recognise that the employees will have difficulty in carrying out the new job and that they are not expected to be perfect to begin with.
- 1 Recognise the efforts of the employee in achieving the target.
- 1 Explain all instructions to the employee as and when necessary.
- 1 Allow time for the employee to familiarise with the new way of doing things.

Many employees become displaced in their jobs not as a result of their own failings, but as a result of technological advancement, changes in production processes, and

changing economic circumstances. Moreover, individual attitudes also contribute to a great extent to the problem of job dislocation.

Coping with the dislocated or replaced employee can be effectively accomplished by two ways, namely, through the process of retraining or the process of relocating the employee. In some cases, retraining is the solution, and in other cases relocating the employee.

Basically, the union's concern with job dislocation revolves around giving advance notice of dislocation to the employee and compensating the employee who is dislocated. It need not be emphasised that union co-operation is very essential in solving the problem of job dislocation. Normally unions do not like job dislocation and may jeopardise any attempt made in this direction.

The obvious solution in dealing with dislocation is to retrain the employee. Training or retraining needs are to be determined on the basis of projected new skills and capabilities required on the part of any dislocated employee to perform his task. For this, future training needs are to be assessed through formal and informal consultations and discussions. A thorough job analysis has to be carried out in advance to facilitate retraining.

If the employee cannot be retrained the only other solution is to relocate him. Relocation means that the employee is likely to be transferred, demoted, possibly promoted, or removed from the organisation (by taking recourse to law, if necessary). Hence, relocating an employee means to move him to a different job in the organisation or to sever his relationship with the company. In case of chronically dislocated employee the main problem the manager of human resource will face is how to relocate him somewhere else within the organisation. The unavoidable technique of relocation is, of course, the severance of the individual from the organisation.

Activity A

Suppose in your organisation some employees are in the process of dislocation of their jobs due to different reasons. Your organisation has decided to retrain them as an obvious solution to cope with the problem. Keeping in view retraining technique, your focus will be on:

- 1 how retraining needs are to be determined on the part of employees who are apt to be dislocated in their jobs?

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- 1 how to develop new skills and capabilities of dislocated employees?

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12.4 HELPING THE DISLOCATED EMPLOYEE

Due to various reasons relocation is not a successful intervention. Any dislocated employee who is relocated elsewhere in the organisation probably will not be pleased with his circumstance. In fact, he may be outwardly hostile toward the organisation and resentful of the change. The HR manager should not take it for granted that a job relocation is necessarily successful just because a man accepts such an offer. The outward acceptance by the man may be due to various pressures generated by the job or the family or by the community. Before transferring an employee, the HR manager must be carefully attuned to such mundane matters as school, vacation, holidays, weather and various other factors which normally affect the work life of the employee. The policy decision of relocation should take place at the convenience of the company and must commensurate with the employee's convenience and needs.

The company should make its efforts to ameliorate or minimise the problems which the employee and his family are likely to face as a result of dislocation, both financially and emotionally. When it comes to the question of emotional problems of relocation by the employee and the family, the obligation of the organisation is to attempt to familiarise both with the new situation. Attempting to physically relocate an employee at a new site is expensive. Therefore, the organisation should make all necessary efforts to cope with the financial problems arising out of dislocation of an employee.

Employers wish to retain the flexibility of moving key employees to new job assignments to enhance the effectiveness of both the individual and the organisation. The provision of various relocation services will fulfill both the objectives.

Among the various services that may be provided are:

1. Helping in the sale of home, if any, of the relocated employee.
2. Transporting household goods, and disbursing employee travelling expenses.
3. Employment assistance for the employee's spouse, if required.
4. Information and advice concerning the new area, such as schools, medical facilities, conveyance facilities, and so on.
5. Helping in finding and purchasing a new home, if the employee so desires.
6. Providing relocation counseling service to the employee and his family.

Policies of companies who relocate employees vary tremendously and depend upon many factors like the practice of the industry, the geographical location of the company, and the level of the relocated employee in the organisation. Normally most organisations lay down a policy for various levels of employees, e.g., top level executives, middle management and supervisory personnel, and rank and file employees.

Activity B

If an employee cannot be retrained, the other option is job relocation. If you are planning for relocating an employee by taking into consideration the future needs of your organisation, what are your avenues?

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12.5 SUMMARY

Job dislocation which is a slow erosion process causes immense hardship to both the HR manager and the employee(s) affected. The problem of the dislocated employee is serious and can become acute under certain circumstances. The home life of the employee has a considerable impact on performance at work. Financial and other forms of relocation assistance appear to have been generally successful in overcoming employee reluctance to move. Any policy designed to cope with this problem must call for positive outlook and immediate, corrective and humanitarian action. The HR manager must ensure that necessary preventive action and purposeful implementation of job dislocation and relocation of employees is carried out with all efforts that it deserves.

12.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What are the main causes of job dislocation?
2. What are the solutions to deal with dislocated employees?

12.7 FURTHER READINGS

Bennis, W.G., K.D., Benne, and R. Chin (eds.), *The Planning of Change*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York, 1961.

Famularo, J.J., *Handbook of Modern Personnel Administration*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972.

Lawrence, L.S., *Managing the Marginal and Unsatisfactory Performer*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Massachusetts, 1969.