

No smoke
without fire

No smoke without fire

Handling grievance and discipline

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Fact and Fiction

All the characters and events in 'No Smoke Without Fire' are entirely fictional. Any similarity to real people, events products or organisations is coincidental.

The contents of this guide were first published in 1984 by Melrose Film Productions Ltd, England.

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Video-based training from Video Arts

Congratulations on choosing **No smoke without fire** from Video Arts to help develop the skills in your organisation. Video Arts is recognised as the world leader in video-based training, with over 30 years' experience in staff development. With more than 250 video, e-learning and DVD programmes covering all the essential skills of business, you can remain confident that training with Video Arts is the most effective way to improve the skillset of the people within your organisation.

Why train?

[Train hard, fight easy - Marshal Zhukov](#)

These days, it is difficult for organisations to become successful and stay that way. The pace of change is faster, competition is tougher, customers are more demanding, innovation is more prized, but harder to achieve.

Part of the response has been to create leaner, flatter, more flexible structures, but structures don't run organisations and create success; people do. Intelligent people, energetic people, reliable people and, most of all, people with the right mix of up-to-date knowledge and skills as well as the attitudes and behaviours needed.

That means people who are trained, not for a lifetime's work, not just once in a while, but as a central, continuing part of their working lives.

Why use video and DVD-based training?

Video is familiar. Television is how most people find out what is going on in the world. It is not surprising that this is a medium they are comfortable to learn from when they are being trained.

Video makes demonstration easy. We can show situations being handled badly. We can contrast that with how to handle them well.

Video is flexible. It can be the cornerstone of a course run for a group by a specialist trainer. It can quickly provide simple, clear lessons for a team whenever it is convenient for them. It can bring interest and enlightenment to a self-study programme.

Video injects realism. It lets us present those being trained with emotional, as well as rational, problems to solve. Ask a group 'how would you deal with an angry customer?' and you will get a tidy, textbook answer. Use video to confront them with an angry customer and you will get a much more realistic reaction.

Video provides variety. Different people learn in different ways and none of us has an infinite attention span. Video provides us with a powerful means of injecting variety into our training.

Why use Video Arts' programmes?

[Winston Churchill once said that he loved to learn, but hated being taught.](#)

That is the secret of successful training: how to help people to want to learn. We do this by combining:

- A storehouse of professional knowledge and expertise, developed over 30 years and drawing on some of the best minds in the business
- The highest possible production values, both in the videos we produce and in the support material that goes with them
- The magic ingredient - humour - which can make a delight of the dullest subject

Section 1

Introduction

The programme

No smoke without fire is a training video (or film) designed to illustrate the issues which arise when managers have to handle grievances or manage disciplinary problems. It also provides insights into related topics like interviewing skills, communications and management style. The programme is set in an office but the issues raised are not restricted to white-collar jobs.

The audience

The programme is aimed at all managers and supervisors with responsibility for staff. Ideally almost all grievances and disciplinary problems ought to be resolved as near to the point at which they arise as possible. For this reason the programme is more relevant to those who are responsible for the early stages of grievance and disciplinary procedures rather than, for example, the hearing of formal appeals. However the principles which underpin the way the situation is handled apply at any level.

The tutor must give serious thought to the composition of the group. Some of the issues raised in the video concern the relationship between different levels of managers and personnel specialists. If the group contains a similar mixture it is often easier for the tutor to relate discussion of the video's fictional situation to the real world of the participants.

The tutor

It is important that the tutor should have a general understanding of employee/industrial relations and, ideally, some knowledge of how grievances and disciplinary problems are dealt with in participants' organisations. This is particularly the case when the video is used on in-house training events since discussions will inevitably throw up practical and often rather detailed questions which the tutor must deal with.

The materials

1. The video or film print. We refer to 'the video' throughout this guide but everything said applies equally to film prints. The video runs for 26 minutes.
2. The presenter's guide. This contains
 - A brief introduction and synopsis of the situation portrayed in the video.
 - An outline of how the material should be used.
 - Detailed ideas for discussion, structured round a one-day training programme.
 - Outline one day programmes for Grievance Handling and the Management of Discipline, plus OHP masters for use in discussion/syndicate sessions, preparation documents etc.
 - A bibliography of training and other materials which can be used in conjunction with 'No Smoke without Fire'.

Section 2

Synopsis

No smoke without fire is set in an office. During the video we see a series of grievance and disciplinary problems arising, getting slightly out of hand and finally being resolved.

Alan Dell is the supervisor of a section of clerical staff. We soon realise that his control of the section is fairly weak and that there is a good deal of tension between two of those who work for him, Larry, who has a casual attitude to his work and Marion who has been doing the job very conscientiously for a long time.

Sparked by a row over smoking this tension finally explodes and Marion walks out. Alan goes to his boss Fay, for advice. She quickly discovers that Alan's management of his section leaves considerable room for improvement. When Marion is persuaded to return to work, Fay's discussion with her reveals that she has a whole list of grievances which go far deeper than the issue of smoking in the open plan office and include a conviction that she should have Alan's job. As well as addressing these, Fay also has to deal with the disciplinary issue of Marion walking off the job. She does this informally.

Meanwhile Larry's timekeeping and work performance continue to be unsatisfactory despite warnings from Alan. Finally Fay decides to discipline using the formal disciplinary procedure. Though she has a strong case against him she runs into some problems from Larry's representative over what he insists is inconsistently harsh treatment of Larry compared with Marion.

Section 3

Using the video

Context

1. The programme has been good produced in such a way that it can be integrated into structured training events on discipline and grievance handling or used on its own as the basis for a tutor-led discussion. Ideas for tackling these different uses can be found in this guide.
2. The programme can be used either with participants from a number of different organisations, or on in-house courses with groups of managers who work closely with one another.

Preparation

Whichever the way the programme is used the tutor should:

1. Be familiar with the material.
2. Be clear about the objectives of the event and hence the emphasis to place on different aspects of the situation shown in the video.
3. Prepare a list of topics for discussion.
4. Decide on a timetable.

Tutors using **No smoke without fire** on courses for people from different organisations should think about how the features of the different organisations can be used to stimulate discussion. For example:

1. Size: large organisations have problems achieving consistency; small ones do not like formality.
2. Representation: the role of representatives, union or non-union can vary considerably in grievance and disciplinary situations from one organisation to another.

When the programme is used on in-house courses tutors should:

1. Be familiar with relevant procedures and agreements.
2. Have some real life examples from the organisation to make the course as directly relevant to the participants as possible.

Contents

Detailed guidance is given later to focus discussion on the following points:

1. Prevention is better than cure
2. Handling grievances
3. Managing discipline
4. Interviewing skills
5. What next?

The first, and last of these topics are important since there is a natural tendency for participants to concentrate their discussion on what they have seen on the screen. Tutors have to make it clear, first, that in an ideal world situations like this should not arise, and second, that once they have been resolved they must be wrapped up tight so that they don't come back to haunt you!

Process

There are a number of ways in which the material can be used. For example:

1. Straight discussion. Show the video without interruption and then a lead general discussion of the issues raised.
2. Stop the video. Sometimes tutors will want the group to concentrate on the particular issues. This can be helped by stopping the video at the relevant points. Suggestions for two of these breaks points are provided in the outline one-day programme.
3. Assign roles. When dealing with a large group the discussion can become rather disorganised. Tutors can introduce structure by assigning roles to different sections of the audience in advance. For example they might be asked to concentrate on the important aspects of the situation from the perspectives of Fay, Alan, Marion, Larry and Peter Bowes from Personnel.
4. If the group is large, tutors should consider using syndicate groups.
5. The tutor must encourage the group to link what they have seen to their real life problems and experience. One way of highlighting this (which is particularly useful on in-house courses) is to keep a record on a flip chart of issues raised in discussion, which need further work after the course.

Section 4

Issues for discussion

There are many ways in which you can 'No Smoke without Fire' depending on such factors as:

- The size of the group
- The time available
- The issues you want to emphasise

In this section you will find a range of ideas for discussion and syndicate work. These have been structured around the following one-day programme.

Programme outline

Item no.	Content	Approx timing
Session 1	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims/structure of course 	10 mins
Session 2	Video: No smoke without fire	26 mins
Session 3	General discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grievance handling and discipline • Prevention • Differences • Similarities in the two situations 	50 mins
Session 4	Grievance and disciplinary procedures	20 mins
Break		

Session 5	Grievance handling exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video excerpt • Syndicate exercise • Feedback and discussion 	90 mins
Break		
Session 6	Discipline exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video excerpt • Syndicate exercise 	45 mins
Break		
Session 7	Grievance handling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four-step approach Discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The five-step approach 	25 mins
Session 8	What next? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Or Interviewing skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion 	30 mins
Session 9	Programme review	15 mins
Total		6 hours

You will see that, because of the very tight time constraints, session 8 presents tutors with a choice between dealing with the follow-up to handling grievance and disciplinary situations and examining interviewing skills. Of course, if you have time, you can do both.

We suggest the following ideas for the sessions on this programme.