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### On Disciplining Employees

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By Mike Taigman

I could hear the sobs over my cell phone before putting the phone to my ear.

"She fired me today," moaned the voice.

I'd only met the person on the phone once before. He's a dispatcher in an EMS communications center. He'd been fired by a relief supervisor for coming back late from a break.

Eventually, this dispatcher got his job back after a number of managers came forward on his behalf. Apparently, the relief supervisor had no other disciplinary record in the dispatcher's employee file and had not gotten along with his coworkers for quite a while.

Who does the discipline in your organization? Mark Postma, the COO of the Sunstar system in Pinellas County, Florida, has strong feelings about discipline and who should do it.

At Sunstar, no one in the operation can discipline employees on his or her own. The senior leadership team discusses all disciplinary situations, and the team collectively decides on the discipline.

According to Mark, "Discipline is something that we can't take lightly. When we look at cases as a group, we are able to do it with less emotion and more objectivity. Because of this, we make much better decisions and are not likely to have labor problems."

In the current world of staffing shortages and employment litigation, it's vital that disciplinary situations are handled properly. If more systems would process discipline through their leadership teams, my cell phone could catch a break.

Mike's Web site is [www.miketaigman.com](http://www.miketaigman.com).

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