

YOU'RE FIRED... NO WAIT YOU'RE NOT!!

“HR overturned our decision to dismiss him”. I heard this again recently while I was talking to a client. It is something I get told regularly by managers who feel that they are being side-lined in their decision making. But when probing further, in virtually every case where a manager has had his dismissal decision overturned, they admit that:

- The reversal was due to a technicality that HR revealed, because a procedure had not been properly followed
- The decision was made before HR was consulted
- The decision to reverse the dismissal probably saved the company a lot of embarrassment, time and money

I am in full agreement that HR shouldn't make disciplinary decisions on behalf of line managers. On the other hand, labour laws are so intricate and tied in legalities that line managers seldom have time to get to know them intricately. It is understandable that they end up not following procedure correctly.

You really do compromise yourself when you fire somebody and have to reinstate them. You start having doubts about your decision making, the support that you receive and about the whole process that you have followed.

So what could be done differently? As in any problem solving situation, it is useful to:

- Follow the business procedure that your organisation has adopted (if it has adopted one)
- Consult with HR before making the decision rather than after
- When you have collected the information, give yourself a day before making the decision

But most of all, you may want to heed the words of Francis Bacon, the English philosopher, statesman, scientist, jurist, orator and author from the 17th century:

“If a man will begin with certainty, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainty”

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