

## **Punctuality@**

Mr. H.B. Vatia, Branch Manager of Kenya Main Branch of Kamini Bank was wondering as to what can be done to restore the punctuality of staff in his branch (Kumar,1984). Majority of staff was taking time off from the work on number of occasions during a day which resulted in work remaining incomplete, besides it involved payment of overtime for its completion.

The problem was generally not faced by other banks in Kenya, except in Bharat Bank, another Indian Bank having branches in Kenya. Other local and British banks were able to exercise sufficient control over their staff to ensure proper attendance.

Initially Mr. Vatia tried to persuade the staff for being punctual. He indeed sermonised them too on a several occasions. None of these, however, made any dent on the problem. Failing on these methods, he finally resorted to punishment to the erring members of the staff. This led to some improvement but not the desired one. Mr. Vatia also felt that prolonged use of this method may indeed lead to a more serious trouble. He, therefore, thought to analyse the situation and identify the root cause of the problem.

His investigation on the habits formed revealed that the unauthorised "time off" was used mainly for personal work which included shopping, personal errands, meeting friends, going for coffee, etc. When caught the general explanation given by the staff was that they had gone out for a cup of coffee. Mr. Vatia noticed that no canteen facilities were available in the branch nor there was any space where it could be set up. The British and other local banks, however, had made adequate provision for the purpose.

An automatic coffee vending machine was installed, but the move did not succeed as the staff complained that the coffee given was not up to standard. The members of staff protested and refused to use the machine.

Mr. Vatia also noticed that the muster roll of branch did not have any provision for making the period of the absence by a member of staff in the event he had to go out and it was not possible either to know or to control the period of his absence.

To overcome this, he decided to install a "time clock" at the main gate with 'in & out' trays and the staff was advised to use the attendance cards for marking their arrival, departure and also absence periods. Authorised outside work could be authenticated by the immediate Officer/Supervisor.

The idea was brought to the notice of branch union by the staff. There was resistance to the idea initially. Mr. Vatia however, pointed out to them that this was a scientific method of recording the attendance and it was not possible to falsify the same. As happened, during that period only, services of three members of staff were terminated for dishonesty and fraud. They had altered the time marked in the muster rolls for departure, thereby claiming overtime for period not worked by them. This was proved by the photocopy of the day's muster taken by Mr. Vatia from time to time by a unscheduled visit to branch, late at night without any indication to anyone in the branch.

Mr. Vatia pointed out to the union representatives that by the introduction of "time clock" the temptation to alter time by members of the staff would be removed as such it was in nature of long term benefit to the staff. The union almost came round to accept the idea, but still was not fully convinced.

At this stage, however, the Regional Manager having come to know of the proposed time clock from the president of the union suggested to Mr. Vatia that as no other bank in Kenya which had adopted the procedure, Mr. Vatia should have this scheme approved by the Secretary of the Kenya Bankers Association.

The approach to Secretary was a failure. He was a man of old British traditions and was shocked at the idea of introduction of a time clock in the banking industry there. All efforts to convince him that there was nothing wrong in it and that most offices of major corporations had this system, did not move him. Other bankers when individually contacted also did not favour the idea.

Not willing to go all alone, the Regional Manager advised Mr. Vatia to shelve the idea.

Mr. Vatia tells the story to his friends even today, 30 years over, and wonders where the hell he went wrong.

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