

## How to Handle a Sarcastic Employee

For the benefit of management students amongst our readers we publish below extracts from the Sowetan's management series (19.6.85). Ernest Mcunu, an Executive Board member of the South African Institute of Management, deals with a problem.

The problem: manager, George Seoka, is reading through the annual performance report for an employee, Jabulani Nkosi: Jabulani is a bright, ambitious kind of worker, but more often than not, it is his mouth that gets in the way of his career advancement.

Seoka has already heard on the grapevine that:

Nkosi was a good enough worker, but he always seems to be making sarcastic or mocking remarks about the company, about the company's management and so on.

Nkosi is summoned: he enters Seoka's office and says:

Well Mr Seoka, I guess you called me in to give me a big raise, right? Or maybe a promotion?

Nkosi's attempts at humour were met with a blank expression by Mr Seoka... Seoka walked to his window and took a few minutes to collect his thoughts:

Solution: Explain to him carefully that he is a good worker; it is just that his mouth gets in the way of his career advancement... Impress on him that making progress up the corporate ladder depends to a great extent upon how well one communicates with others, and that a sarcastic or cynical tone in one's voice, does nothing positive, either for the individual or for the company... And, once he begins to think twice before saying anything, he will be on his way to becoming a more respected individual and the corporate doors will be open for him.

Mr Mcunu concludes by asking the readers to write in with their own suggestions for solving this "problem". But maybe the problem is the whole co-optive strategy of "black advancement". Nkosi's questioning approach to management is much more realistic - solution: Nkosi should go back to his fellow workers, use his talents to help organise a union, and then tell Mr Seoka to get stuffed.

(with apologies to the Sowetan)