

# **AN EXAMINATION OF REDEMPTIVE MANAGER BEHAVIORS IN REINSTATING TERMINATED WORKERS: AN ORGANIZATIONAL CASE STUDY**

**Joseph J. Bucci**  
**Geneva College**

## **ABSTRACT**

The view of the Reformed faith is strongly in favor of redemption as it is expressed through restoration (Plantinga, 2002). This concept of restoration is nowhere more clearly demonstrated in management practice than in the reinstatement of employees terminated for cause. The focus of the case study is to examine manager behaviors evidenced in the reinstatement of previously terminated employees. This paper is a portrait of one organization where redemption through restoration is an employment strategy demonstrated by the reinstatement of workers who were terminated for cause, yet given a second chance opportunity.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is a central theme of redemption and restorative activity throughout the Scriptures. This is most strongly evidenced in the New Testament, where divine redemption not only includes deliverance from bondage through the obedience, suffering, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Son, but also God's identification with humanity in its plight (Elwell, 2001) and His compassionate divine intervening to restore men to God and to each other. The Reformed perspective of the Christian faith is strongly in favor of redemption as it is expressed through restoration (Plantinga, 2002). The Reformed view emphasizes that God is concerned not simply about souls, but also about saving and restoring human beings in their individual activities, in addition to saving and restoring social systems and economic structures as well (Plantinga, 2002). Author Plantinga suggests that this philosophy applies to the management/labor relationship as well. If there is built-in antagonism, then this relationship needs to be redeemed (Plantinga, 2002).

The concept of redemption through restoration, as applied to the workplace, is nowhere more evidenced than in the reinstatement of employees terminated for cause. In the past, employee reinstatement after termination was a rare occurrence (Darnay, Magee, and Hillstrom, 2007). Whether due to negative cultural mores or prohibitive employment policies, the practice of employee reinstatement was discouraged, and terminated employees would therefore seek to find success in another position at another firm (Darnay, Magee, and Hillstrom, 2007). But this practice of separation from one job and then seeking employment elsewhere is changing, as employers are not as free to dismiss workers at-will; while employees attempt to maintain employment and seek due process in terminations (Stanley, 2007). Activity to seek reinstatement has become much more common (Darnay, Magee, and Hillstrom, 2007).

In cases where an employee has violated company standards and been terminated for cause, there are several avenues by which the employee may seek restoration to their previous position. These reinstatements may occur within the framework of a voluntary agreement

between employer and employee, such as through a Last Chance Agreement as result of a negotiated settlement to reinstate a terminated employee (Peterson, 1997); or as a remedy in a discharge case when invoked by an employer or by an arbitrator (Bamberger and Donahue, 1999); or following an employee's participation in a treatment program where the employee's terminal behavior was linked to substance abuse or the employee's response to circumstances outside of the workplace (Atkinson, 2001).

Arbitration overturning employer dismissals has been found to be a frequent reinstatement remedy for unionized workers claiming wrongful discharge or extenuating circumstances. In research cited in Labig, Helburn and Rodgers (1985), "the most frequent single reason given by arbitrators for reinstating discharged employees was that in view of the grievant's generally satisfactory record and the likelihood that he had 'learned his lesson,' he was deserving of a second chance" (Stone, 1969). Outside of the unionized environment, employees have pursued reinstatement through wrongful discharge suits and other common law remedies in the courts (Mandelbaum, 1993).

A number of studies have examined the process of employee reinstatement through grievance resolution as well as other settlement activities (Labig, Helburn and Rodgers, 1985). These studies examined the characteristics and perceptions of the reinstated employee, or the intentions of the adjudicator in making the reinstatement, and then generally considered the subsequent employment relationship (Taras and Williams, 2000). It appears that no research has been conducted assessing manager behaviors with post-reinstatement employees (Bucci, 2011). In cases where the employee is successful in getting their job back, the manager is faced with a unique situation. It would seem that the traditional management dynamic has radically changed.

This paper is a portrait of one organization where redemption through restoration is an employment strategy demonstrated by the reinstatement of previously employed workers who were terminated for cause, yet given a second chance opportunity. The focus of the case study is to examine manager behaviors evidenced in the reinstatement of employees terminated for cause. These common behaviors across eight different reinstatement cases are being called "redemptive behaviors" because they were consistently present in the actions of managers in the focus organization during this restoration process of reinstating previously terminated employees.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Biblical Usage of the Word 'Redemption'

In the Bible, redemption is considered from the perspective of the process and how it transforms persons who allow the process to work in them (Elwell, 2001). Finding its context in the social, legal, and religious customs of the ancient world, the metaphor of redemption includes the ideas of loosing from a bond, setting free from captivity or slavery, buying back something lost or sold, exchanging something in one's possession for something possessed by another, and ransoming (Elwell, 2001). The Reformed tradition sees very clearly the message of the gospel and the purposes of the church in redeeming man and restoring God's creation in preparing for the eventual return of Christ (Wolters, 2005). It is a natural extension of this tradition that a valid and valuable effort on the part of leadership is to follow the pattern of Jesus and invest in individuals with weaknesses and seek to redeem them to useful service, both for the work of the kingdom of God and for future success in life. This task admits that weaknesses are real, and by acknowledging the need for assistance in overcoming weaknesses individuals will receive the

help and the training they need to again add value to the world around them, and likewise continue the process themselves with other such individuals.

There are two complementary themes to redemption in the New Testament: the release from enslavement and the payment of a price for that release (Palma, 1993). In the New Testament three Greek words from two root words are used to represent redemption (MacArthur, 2005). The first two Greek words come from the same root word – “*agorazo*” and its compound form – “*exagorazo*.” Both those words are translated "redemption" in the New Testament. An example of this in use is the following: “But false teachers also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought (*agorazo*) them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Pet. 2:1). The Greek word “*agorazo*” means to buy, to purchase, or to acquire ownership by payment of a price. This is a common word in the Greek, yet it is also one of the great words in Scripture used to describe a believer’s redemption by Jesus Christ. The Greek root of both is *agora*, which means "marketplace." How appropriate to consider this root in our search for redemptive behaviors demonstrated by managers in the marketplace.

The other Greek word used in the New Testament for redemption is “*lutroo/apolutrosis*.” An example of this in use is the following: “In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace” (Ephesians 1:7). The Greek word translated "redemption" here in Ephesians 1:7 (*apolutrosis*) is an intensified form of *lutroo*, which refers to paying a price to free someone from bondage.

In the Roman Empire during New Testament times, if a person wanted to free a loved one or friend who was a slave, they would buy the slave for themselves and then grant the slave their freedom. The owner would testify to that deliverance by a written certificate. The root word “*lutroo*” was used to designate such a transaction (MacArthur, 2005).

### Reformed Faith’s View of Redemption

The Reformed worldview is unique in its protestation that the redemptive work of God means a restoration of an original good kingdom and the workings of His disciples here on earth should reflect this (Plantinga, 2002). Plantinga continues the thought, by declaring that in the Reformed viewpoint, God isn’t content to just save souls. God wants to save and restore individual activities, social systems, and economic structures (Plantinga, 2002).

As articulated by Wolters (2005), the basic tenets of the Reformed view regarding redemption are that the redemption achieved by Jesus Christ is thorough and complete, in the sense that it restores the whole creation (Wolters, 2005). Wolters writes of this Reformed view that as the miracles of Christ are considered, all but one (the one exception of the cursing of the fig tree) are miracles of restoration — restoration to health, restoration to life, restoration to freedom from demonic possession. Jesus’ miracles provide an example of the meaning of redemption: a freeing of creation from the shackles of sin and evil and a reinstatement of creaturely living as intended by God (Wolters, 2005). According to Wolters, mankind, which had previously botched its original mandate and the whole creation along with it, is given another chance in Christ; we are reinstated as God’s managers on earth. To the Reformed view it is not just a spiritual transformation alone. It is a renewal and restoration of all those individuals and institutions corrupted by sin and now freed by the redemptive work of Christ.

The Reformers often quote Abraham Kuyper, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands and theologian, who said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" (Wolterstorff,

Joldersma and Stronks, 2004). So it would be accurate to state that there is a strong sentiment among Reformed thinkers that restoration is a critical mission of their leaders, no matter in what domain they pursue their calling. This would seem to apply whether the leaders are professional clergy or business leaders.

Regardless of whether the manager is a person of faith, according to Banks and Stevens (1997) the manager's role is perceived to be one with a "sacred responsibility" towards their employees, where the manager competently manages and trains the employees for success (Banks and Stevens, 1997). What then is the manager's responsibility should the worker fail to achieve organizational success?

## BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW SUPPORTING RESTORATION

### Faith-Based Authors

There are examples in the literature from both Faith-based and Non Faith-based authors of success stories in reinstating terminated employees. A faith-based approach would appeal to the manager to demonstrate spiritual values as applied to the workplace, describing the employee-manager relationship as a "sacred responsibility" (Banks & Stevens, 1997).

There are admonitions in the Christian literature regarding offering second chances to employees demonstrating aberrant behavior in the workplace. Dennis Bakke was the co-Founder, President and CEO of the AES Corporation, a leading global power company with businesses in over thirty countries, \$40 billion in assets, and revenue of more than \$10 billion annually. AES is an example of counter-intuitive management practices as mentioned in the book *Hidden Value* (O'Reilly and Pfeffer, 2000). When Bakke and Chairman Roger Sant co-founded AES in 1981, they adopted a unique philosophy. They wanted to develop a culture around a set of Christian values which articulated the beliefs that people should be trusted, and that businesses don't just exist to make money but to serve. Bakke believed that the best and most appropriate response to most mistakes in life and within an organization was to admit the error, ask forgiveness, and promise not to make the same mistake again. Creating an environment where people can admit mistakes required that people in the organization understand what it meant to forgive (Bakke, 2005). And after granting forgiveness, they (the leaders) should then act as if the problem or action never took place and offer opportunity for reinstatement. Firing was appropriate when people did not accept responsibility for transgressions and refused to ask forgiveness. This was especially true if the problem was a major breach of an important principle or value (Bakke, 2005).

Richard Chewning (1990), in his book, *Business through the Eyes of Faith*, tells the story of an employee who stole from a business and was not fired, but given the opportunity to continue working and not be fired. The manager confronted the employee behavior several times attempting to salvage or redeem the employee (Chewning, 1990).

According to Chewning, it is a manager's role to help employees avoid situations that might lead to failure. Managers also need to help employees accept responsibility for failures that are within their control (paths for correction) (Chewning, 1990). Chewning provided not only moral justification but also a cost-benefit rationale, stating that it is cheaper to develop the "raw material" within the employees an organization already has than to go out and spend the money to find a "polished" employee in the marketplace (Chewning, 1990).

## Non Faith-Based Examples

A non faith-based approach is more of an uncommon practice, sometimes based on the personal experiences or philosophy of the manager (O'Reilly and Pfeffer, 2000) and presents a mixture of personal testimony with a cost-benefit rationale to the contemporary managers for utilizing such a remedy.

George Zimmer, founder of the Men's Wearhouse chain of retail stores, understands that employees do make mistakes and fall from grace. Zimmer is himself a recovering alcoholic, and from his personal struggles and response to redemptive activity in his own life he has chosen to demonstrate similar principles as he manages his business. Zimmer's management practices are written about in the book, *Hidden Value* (O'Reilly and Pfeffer, 2000), and were highlighted in a recent business trade magazine (Hamner and McNichol, 2007). Zimmer is identified as one of a handful of "contrarian" leaders, utilizing unconventional approaches to management and business development.

For example, Zimmer plays himself in his commercials instead of hiring an actor. One more unconventional practice noted is Zimmer's demonstration of redemptive management, which is evidenced by giving employees a second chance (Hamner and McNichol, 2007). It is Zimmer's policy that no employee will ever undergo a criminal background check. This is unheard of in the retail industry (Hamner and McNichol, 2007). Zimmer uses discretion in assessing what constitutes a discipline problem requiring action. Conventional retail wisdom says this guarantees petty larceny on a grand scale. In fact, the company loses a mere 0.4 percent of revenue to theft, much less than the typical 1.5 percent loss suffered by other similar large retailers (Hamner and McNichol, 2007).

Entrepreneur of the Year and successful businessman Gerald W. Chamales knows the value of a second chance and the tough work involved in the redemptive process. Mr. Chamales is himself a recovering alcoholic who worked his way into the executive suite from a life of poverty, welfare and food stamps. Chamales knows what it's like to be at the absolute bottom; and through his business pursuits Chamales not only reformed his own life, but now he also has the opportunity to help restore the lives of many of his workers.

Chamales is Chairman and Founder of Rhinotek Computer Products, a \$45 million business where roughly one-third of the workforce comes from halfway houses, work-furlough centers, and recovery programs. "This is not philanthropy," says Chamales. "This is a sound business principle that started out because it was the right thing to do and now we realize it's the smart thing to do" (Marchetti, 2005). These employees are assigned a mentor and enrolled in a training program. There is rigorous follow up, but lots of determination due to the opportunity given when others would not take the chance. Says Chamales: "You could say we recycle human beings. Instead of giving them a handout, I'm giving them a hand up" (Pennington, 2002).

John Shegerian is a CEO of a growing electronics recycling business. He wants to open his next few recycling centers in rusty, neglected neighborhoods, which fits his reclamation philosophy, as does his drive to rehabilitate and restore people as well (Brown, 2008). One-third of Shegerian's full-time and part-time employees at Electronic Recyclers International are in its "second chances" program, which includes ex-cons and former addicts (Brown, 2008).

Shegerian's own problems with addiction caused him to fail in his business activities and to be divorced by his wife. He checked into a rehabilitation clinic in Arizona, and this formerly successful investor and entrepreneur lost everything. But after he got his own life back on track,

an opportunity came up to help manage a struggling recycling business. "I know the fragility of life," Shegerian says. "It would be an absolute shame if I didn't do something with this opportunity." He has been able to turn the business around, reunite with his wife, and remember where he came from by offering "second chance" opportunities to men and women with similar sordid pasts. It so happens that these "recycled" workers have a 17% turnover rate, half that of other employees (Brown, 2008).

For the cost-conscious manager, if the moral argument for reinstatement is not sufficient, then perhaps a financial rationale could be considered. As previously mentioned, there are several sources including journal articles which highlight the cost benefit of reinstating an already trained and experienced worker (Bamberger and Donahue, 1999; also as previously mentioned Chewing, 1990). Bamberger and Donahue (1999) stated that the cost benefits of LCAs included reduced costs related to grievance and arbitration avoidance (for both union and management), as well as more efficiency in the adjudication of discipline, and the minimizing of the costly revolving door of employees using substance abuse treatment as a means of avoiding more serious disciplinary actions (Bamberger and Donahue, 1999). One Human Resource text noted that replacing workers is expensive and new employees need time and attention to learn their jobs (Noe, 2007). There is a value proposition to considering the redemption of an already trained and experienced terminal employee. This work of redemption through restoration has not only a moral framework, but a financial benefit as well.

#### RESTORATION AS A HIRING STRATEGY: AN ORGANIZATIONAL CASE STUDY

One organization was part of a series of interviews by this researcher, having been found to have a strategy in place actively offering opportunities for employees previously terminated for cause to be restored to their former status. At this organization, employee reinstatement has become a viable staffing option, in light of the high turnover of first-time employees. This particular organization is a full-service direct marketing company, which offers its client companies data processing and personalization of mailings, printing, database management, and lettershop services, with support services like trucking and logistics. There are about 400 employees working at this organization out of a single location in western Pennsylvania. Half of the employees work in an operations capacity, the remaining employees work in various sales, service and professional roles.

The researcher was given access to these interviews and additional data through the permission of the Vice President of Human Resources (VP of HR), who is a graduate of the college where the researcher is employed. The researcher was also given access to termination data from which a cross-sectional analysis was conducted.

The number of employees terminated and rehired by this organization over a 10 year period was 128. The focus of this research was a particular three-year period: There were 58 employees terminated and rehired between March 2007 to March 2010. On the following page is a table highlighting reasons for termination:

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According to the data over the past four years (2007-2010), of the 58 employees terminated by the firm and subsequently rehired, there have been 14 persons terminated for cause and rehired. 4 of the 14 are still employed with the company. In this particular organization there were eight (8) unique cases of employee reinstatement where the redemptive managerial behaviors were examined.

### Manager Interviews

The researcher conducted two visits and several follow-up calls to the organization, meeting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Shift Supervisor, the Plant Manager, the HR Administrator and the Vice President of HR. The HR Administrator was included with the list of managers because, although in her current role has no direct reports, she has worked through the organization's discipline or performance management process with employees; she has experience with terminating employees for cause, and has directed employees through the reinstatement process. The HR Administrator also has the authority to hire and/or fire without supervisor approval, although she works closely with supervisors in the hiring and termination process.

The responsibilities of the HR Administrator contrast with the Vice President of Human Resources in the same organization, who has a small staff but does not have the authority to hire and/or fire without supervisor approval. The VP of HR does work with senior management as compared with the role of the HR Administrator who works exclusively with operations personnel. So the HR Administrator acts in a manager capacity according to the research criteria, but the Vice President of HR does not.

### Employee Reinstatement Cases

The researcher examined the manager behaviors drawn from interviews with the four managers mentioned above, examining managerial behaviors in the reinstatement process with eight employees. Four of the organization's employees terminated for cause and then reinstated are presently still with the firm and another four employees terminated for cause and reinstated are no longer with the firm. The definition of termination for cause means that an involuntary termination occurred where there was a breach of employee obligations within the framework of the hiring agreement (Elinfonet.com, 2009).

Four of the reinstatement cases were successful, with the success of the reinstatement being defined as having reinstated employees who returned and remained with the firm for a period of at least six months and demonstrated the same or an improved level of performance as observed by the manager, such as: higher work attendance rate, reduced or non-repeating absenteeism, lower turnover rates, and positive productivity. Four of the eight reinstatement cases were not successful, meaning that according to the base line measure set prior to the research, these four employees did not remain with the firm for the minimum tenure nor upon their return did they achieve the minimum standard of performance, back to previous levels.

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## Ownership Faith and Values

The company owners had an evident faith background. The owners had a strong set of values which were clearly manifest to those in leadership there. The VP of HR spoke in detail about this. The values of the owners led to the development of this philosophy about allowing and encouraging rehires, which had given rise to this reinstatement strategy. Whether it was purely altruistic or whether because there were times when the leaders were desperate, the managers interviewed worked within this environment. In other businesses, another manager might have considered hiring someone who left on good terms. But at this organization, the managers will actually consider bringing people back who leave under not the best of terms.

This organization had sought to develop a strong family atmosphere. According to several of the managers, this was a very family-oriented facility. This was based on the founder's Christian values and their history as a company. The VP of HR spoke about the founding of the business and the values and faith of the ownership. There were not evident in the workplace any signs expressing the values of the founders, nor any apparent scriptural quotations or Christian logos. But the VP of HR said that she has been given the opportunity to express her own faith more positively through her job (not in a preachy way).

In one expression of the values of the company owners, the company provided a food service in-house for lunches for the employees because they were low-wage workers and they did not have a lot of time to go out during lunch to purchase food. There was also a morning breakfast buffet which the company provided to its workers. According to the managers, this was another example of the demonstration of the organization caring for its employees. Another example of how the business encouraged strong family connections was through its hiring of factory worker's family members. The VP of HR spoke about her own flexibility in managing her family issues.

There was a time when the reputation of the company was poorly perceived, and the VP of HR had worked with other leaders at this organization to change this reputation and to weed out employees with poor attitudes or poor performance records. The company lagged the market rate in factory worker pay, and this made it difficult to recruit more steady workers, according to the leaders. The VP of HR spoke about seeking to raise the standard of employees' perceptions about the company and of improving working conditions. When she took over this role a few years ago, she had been seeking to hire better employees, and to improve the previous poor reputation of the company. As a part of this, managers began considering the reinstatement of workers with good work records who due to immaturity were originally terminated for cause.

## Restoration as an Organizational Strategy

What makes this organization pursue this reinstatement strategy? According to the Plant Manager, it is not all compassion and altruism. A major portion of their turnover is attendance-related. According to the data supplied by the VP of HR, and based on the reasons given for termination, about one-third of the terminations are for attendance-related reasons (poor attendance or job abandonment). The Plant Manager estimated that this number was much higher. The Plant Manager says that the primary reasons for attendance problems are employees trying to manage child care issues, problems with reliable transportation, or employee

immaturity in terms of learning to meet the requirements of working regular shift work. If an employee is terminated for cause due to attendance reasons it would be because they are not meeting the performance standards for attendance.

The HR Administrator said that this job (factory environment) is not for everyone, but the people also take their jobs for granted. When they lost their jobs and go and try to get another, the jobs are not out there. This makes the employees more willing to call and request reinstatement. There has to be a choice made as a manager whether to hire an unknown new person and work to train them and get them up-to-speed and subsequently lose them; or whether to rehire a known commodity, someone who has now “seen the light” in their attendance issues. This change of heart on the part of the workers, along with the expressed values of the owners, made the pursuit of this reinstatement strategy all the more a viable option.

The business had recently started hiring people from drug and alcohol transitional homes. There were persons on work release from a halfway house or in a probationary period due to previous incarceration being given the opportunity to work at this company. These employees were all faithful in their attendance through the course of their probationary program. But once the employees were fully released, their performance and attendance fell off, and many went back to their old habits. Many abandoned their jobs, and in several cases no one knows what happens to them. But this was another example of the values of the owners as expressed by the organization in offering people second chances.

The organization has changed its approach to addressing how they process these reinstated employees since these interviews have been conducted. Previously the organization noticed that the reinstated employees would do well upon their return for a month or so, but then they would regress back to their previous behavior patterns. The organization has become much more selective in the consideration of who they reinstate, and much more thorough and structured in the process by which employees are reinstated back into the organization.

## MANAGERIAL BEHAVIORS OBSERVED

In order to follow a more logical sequence in the examination of the managerial behaviors observed in the interviews and actual plant visits, the researcher organized the results according to the historical process of employee selection (Noe, 2007). This process includes forecasting and planning for positions, candidate review, candidate qualification check and confirmation through interviewing, background check, employment offer, and finally workgroup orientation and integration (Noe, 2007). Therefore manager behaviors noted in the reinstatement process will be examined in this sequence.

### Forecasting and Planning Stage: Motivation for Reinstating Workers

The VP of HR is asked about the firm’s reinstatement philosophy. Because the company is at times desperate for people, the researcher wondered if this blurs the lines and causes them to offer reinstatement too quickly. The VP of HR said that there is always a demand for workers, especially during their busy summer season. But no matter how desperate the company might be for workers, there are still certain employees that the organization would not bring back (employees terminated for violence or for selling drugs are two examples).

The VP of HR spoke about the founding of the business and the values and faith of the ownership. There is a theme of people messing up because of their life circumstances (and

where they are at that time) and then being at a different place later on, which causes the company to reconsider people. This was said with all sincerity. There are certainly ethical and moral principles that would not allow them to consider someone. They will give the terminated employees another opportunity but it is up to the people themselves. As a part of this second chance, there is a discussion with the reinstated employees about this opportunity to start over. They do use progressive discipline very fairly and consistently with both new-hire and re-hired employees. There is no variance there.

The VP of HR talks about worker employment tenure from the first termination to the reinstatement. As evidenced in the data, even after being given a second chance there are still many employees with whom the restoration process is not effective. It doesn't mean that the reinstatement was a failure the second time. If the person came in and performed up to standard with less training investment the second time around, and if this restored employee by their efforts was able to get the company through their busy season, then to the VP of HR this turnover is costly, but it is not a complete loss. There is the opportunity for the employees to be fully reinstated to a full-time position. And the company by this rehiring of a previously trained worker is able to get the worker up-to-speed much more quickly.

So managerial behaviors observed and discussed here centered on actions to include formerly terminated workers as a part of the plan to fill open manpower requests. The actions are related to discussing and developing a philosophy around which terminated employees might be considered for filling open spots. But the discussion of including terminated workers and restoration centers on a sincere willingness to offer second chances, to meet the seasonal demand for workers, but also to operate within the values evidenced in the organization in offering people second chances

#### Candidate Review: Thoughtful Consideration and Pre-Established Plan of Action

Of the managerial behaviors observed and discussed regarding candidate selection and review, with previously terminated employees there is first a thorough examination of the worker's previous history, in terms of performance and absenteeism, and any other job-related issues. The leaders need good workers and understand the turnover issues. Often times as previously stated they are desperate for any workers. But they plan to be careful in their reconsideration. There are two reasons behind this: one is to avoid hiring someone who might again fail to fulfill the requirements due to poor self-management habits. Secondly, there is the issue of putting the employee into a situation where they can be successful this second time around. This has become much more of an effort and improved since these interviews began, as information among the managers has been shared.

It is the HR Administrator's job, working with the Plant Manager and supervisors, to thoroughly analyze the employee background information and performance data to determine if they should bring this person back. There is an aspect of justice and fairness in this approach, justice in giving the employee a second chance to be successful in a position which may match their skills; and fairness to protect the organization from fruitless efforts in reinstatement.

As previously stated, about one-third of the terminations among factory workers are for attendance-related reasons (poor attendance or job abandonment). Within this particular case study five of the eight reinstatements being investigated were employees whose first termination was attendance-related. The Plant Manager noted that an attendance-related termination is not

an issue of violence. This is one reason why these types of termination for cause employees are considered for reinstatement.

Employees terminated for theft would not be considered, according to the Plant Manager. Stealing is not one on which the leadership would want to compromise, since several this is an issue of loss of trust. But with some of the habitual issues like attendance, the Plant Manager says that in other ways we all have our demons. To the Plant Manager, this is an issue of self-discipline or not having a ride. They will try to give them the chance to switch shifts.

There seems to be a consensus among these managers that an employee previously terminated for attendance has already been trained, so this affords the manager the opportunity to put the employee right back into the operational area more quickly. Throughout the interviews several of the managers repeated a similar theme. According to several of the managers, with attendance-related terminations and subsequent reinstatements the employee can come right in and there is a lower cost for the organization to get them up to speed. So either you are taking a chance on someone new (or you do not know what you are getting), or you are consider rehiring a terminated worker, who knows what the job entails and generally has requested another opportunity.

So managerial behaviors observed and discussed here included action by the organizational leadership to determine the parameters for which employees would be considered for reinstatement, as well as planning for putting the returning worker into a situation in which they have more potential for success.

#### Candidate Qualification and Interviewing: Directive Communication and Expressions of Remorse

Another set of behaviors demonstrated by the managers is a directive communication and engagement with the employee. This is demonstrated in two ways: one is a pressing in to question the employee's motives for returning. A second focus in this directive communication are several levels of management stressing to the returning employee the significant opportunity presented with the second chance, as well as the greater scrutiny which will be evident to the employee. This results in some additional pressure on the employee to perform, since the expectations of the managers are that this employee is cognizant into what they are committing themselves.

In one of the reinstatement cases discussed, the manager's communication about the company's expectation this second time around led the manager to be very honest with the employee and allowed for some teasing. In this case, the manager was able to challenge the returning employee to improve his performance. It seemed that due to the very directive communication and hands-on effort by the manager, the employee took the challenge and sought to improve himself.

The HR Administrator sits with each potentially restored employee and checks their story about why they want to return and the reasons for their past failure. The manager presses this second chance employee about how they have changed. Later in the process the Plant Manager forcefully emphasizes the significance of this second chance that the employee is receiving.

They will give the terminated employees another opportunity but it is up to the people themselves. As a part of this second chance, there is a discussion with the reinstated employees about this opportunity to start over. In the discussions with employees and through this directive approach, in the questioning of motives and clarifying expectations, there is often found in these discussions expressions of remorse by employees. Managers did not seek to prompt a false sense

of remorse on the part of the returning employee. However, in the discussions with returning employees, managers at each level carefully ask for an explanation as to the current circumstances and what has changed to justify reinstatement. The HR Administrator, as the main gatekeeper to factory reinstatement, will remind returning employees again about the policies and review the consequences if they miss work.

Managers carefully check the performance data statistics. The supervisors and Plant Manager thoroughly examine the previous performance and attendance data and discuss this with the reinstatement candidates. In their reviewing of the employee's previous work history and performance, often times returning employees express remorse for their past mistakes and a resolve to not repeat these same errors.

So managerial behaviors observed and discussed here included a very directive approach to communication, pressing in to confront previous aberrant behaviors, and often eliciting a commitment from employees to work harder to take advantage of this second chance opportunity.

### Employment Offer: Second Chance but One Chance, Carefully Structured

When employees are reinstated they are brought back as seasonal employees, in a similar fashion to the LCA (Last Chance Agreements) of other organizations. Should the employee not complete their seasonal trial in the restoration process, then there is no need to justify a termination. The employee may be originally hired as a permanent employee but if they are terminated and request to be reinstated, they are reinstated as seasonal employees. In this case the employees would have to be moved up to a permanent employee status or they will be laid off when not needed. At this organization a seasonal employee gets no benefits and is at a fixed pay rate. The reinstated employees get one chance to make it right and then can be brought back as full-time employees.

As a part of this employment offer, the organization has become much more selective in the consideration of who they reinstate, and much more thorough and structured in the process by which employees are reinstated back into the organization. There will be more frequent inspection of the restored employee's work and more frequent scrutiny of every action. This will be discussed later in more detail. Supervisors on the floor are directed to more carefully evaluate the production and performance of this reinstated employee.

So the managerial behaviors observed here arranges with the employment offer a seasonal conditional employment arrangement, and in this arrangement managers stress their firm resolve that a second chance is available but it is up to the employee to take advantage of this opportunity. Managers then carefully structure the reinstatement process and are much more thorough in the process by which employees are reinstated back into the organization

### Workgroup Orientation and Integration: Managing Workgroup Response

How does it look after restoration of a terminated employee from the work group's perspective? According to the Plant Manager and another supervisor, it looks really bad. It appears to the employees in the workgroup of the reinstated employee that there is nothing behind the word of the managers regarding following the rules of the organization. For the employees who are watching, the Plant Manager says that this it is not good for morale. Workers

do feel like they can get away with a lot of things and then if terminated they can be just rehired again next year.

The employees in the organization know that the company always hires people in July and August, so they may feel like they can reapply and will be given another opportunity. The leaders acknowledge that during the busy season they are a little desperate, so the company is more willing to consider employees who were terminated due to attendance issues. The company gets desperate in their busy season, and they are willing to take a chance. The reinstated employees are coming in as seasonal, so the company has made less of a commitment the second time around. As previously stated, a seasonal employee gets no benefits and is at a fixed pay rate. It is how the employee responds to this second chance that makes a difference.

According to the HR Administrator, there is a sense with the current employees that because the company brings people back that these current employees do not take their responsibility as seriously because they have the feeling that, "if the company brought this person back they'll bring me back." The HR Administrator tries to be thorough in the investigation prior to bringing someone back, because she wants the message to get out that people coming back have to explain what happened the second time around and are not just able to do as they please and be reinstated. Managers in the plant worked to communicate the message that employees cannot do whatever they want and be terminated; and then just come back any time they want.

There is documentation in the reinstatement literature about employees who may take advantage of the situation when they know there are second chances. In cases where covenants or agreements to reinstate employees are in place in organizations, these may be viewed by both target employees and their coworkers as offering an opportunity to effectively avoid punishment, thus encouraging (rather than discouraging) future rule infraction (Bamberger and Donahue, 1999). There are also issues related to the perception of justice by employees in the workgroup (Ball, Trevino and Sims, 1992).

So managerial behaviors observed and discussed here centered on efforts by managers to demonstrate that reinstating employees does not mean that discipline is not to be followed, but an expression of the compassion of the organization and that those coming back have expressed a change of heart.

### Performance Management: More Frequent Follow-up and Work Inspection

Another set of behaviors demonstrated by the managers at all levels is an oversight and closer scrutiny of the restored employee. Much more care is taken in evaluating the performance of the employee, of putting them into a situation where they can be successful; and an expression of and follow-up regarding the discipline approach which will be demonstrated with the reinstated employee. In one particular reinstatement case the Plant Manager was very stern with this returning employee (who was new to this manager in his role). He expressed a zero tolerance policy towards any repeated aberrant behavior, similar to what caused the employee to be terminated the first time. This behavior would not be excused again. The Plant Manager said that with employee discipline and the communication to returning employees, the managers told one employee that he would go by the book (discipline, etc). Another manager noted in an interview regarding one reinstatement case that he had previously given this employee many chances because he was a good operator, and the manager wanted him to be successful. But in the reinstatement process the manager expressed that this time there would be no slack.

There was also noted by the managers a much more hands-on approach to placing the reinstated employee in a situation to help them be given an opportunity to be successful the second time around. The managers used a much more hands-on approach to restoring the employee, to disciplining the employee, and to being direct about the employee's performance.

So managerial behaviors observed and discussed here are a much more strict approach to employee discipline, following the company guidelines but with little room for flexibility; and a very hands-on approach to managing the employee in their reinstatement assignment.

#### Outside of the Selection Process: Empathy for Employee; Investment by Organization

Throughout this entire process, there is a strong managerial expression of empathy and compassion for these terminated workers given the restoration opportunity. Several of the managers talked about their own past history as a justification for pursuing this restoration process. There is a tremendous amount of empathy on display in the process of employee reinstatement in this organization. The HR Administrator expressed great sympathy for these returning employees, and believes that people deserve second chances. The HR Administrator expressed without prompting that she believes that people can redeem themselves, although this was not a faith specified reference.

The Plant Manager expressed that is a big believer in second chances. The Plant Manager spoke of his own "second chance" opportunities as well. He spoke about his own the second time, telling of his family history and his alcoholic mother. He professed to be a Roman Catholic and strongly believes that people deserve a second chance. The Plant Manager suggested that particularly with this current generation and the many dysfunctional families he sees, that young people all bring their baggage and need this structure. Many of the managers spoke of an empathetic connection, in which they viewed the reinstatement of employees in the light of their own belief in giving people second chance opportunities.

But this must be seen in light of two issues: Many managers interviewed in additional research expressed an interest in offering second chance opportunities to their terminated workers, but not necessarily due to their faith (Bucci, 2011). In addition, previous research on a similar topic found that just because a manager's faith guides their decision-making, it does not necessarily mean that a manager feels compelled to offer second chance opportunities to their employees. Furthermore, the expression of the manager's faith in guiding their decision-making could be evidenced in other areas in which the manager is more comfortable expressing their faith (Bucci and Bruce, 2008).

Finally, managers express their belief in the value of these employees as individuals; but also as persons in whom the organization has made some investment in terms of time and resources. You have made an investment in this person and good people are too hard to find. One manager interviewed described how it is hard to find someone who knows the business, likes the business and is willing to do the work. Managers consider the previous work history of the employee, but also the investment made by the organization to help this employee become successful at their task.

So managerial behaviors observed and discussed here are the expressions of empathy in the manager's approach to understanding and forgiving previous employee aberrant behavior. There is also managerial decision-making to act on behalf of the organization to recoup an investment made in an individual who did not fulfill their potential or give back to the organization a return for the investment made.

## SUMMARY OF MANAGERIAL BEHAVIORS OBSERVED

The focus of this case study was to examine manager behaviors evidenced in the reinstatement of employees terminated for cause. These common behaviors across eight different reinstatement cases are being called “redemptive behaviors” because they were consistently present in the actions of managers in the focus organization during this restoration process of reinstating previously terminated employees.

Managerial behaviors observed and discussed here centered on actions to consider and included formerly terminated workers as a part of the plan to fill open manpower requests. The manager actions involved a sincere willingness to offer second chances, to meet the seasonal demand for workers, but also to operate within the values evidenced in the organization in offering people second chances. There were also actions by the organizational leadership to determine the parameters for which employees would be considered for reinstatement, as well as planning for putting the returning worker into a situation in which they have more potential for success. Managers pursued a directive communications approach, pressing in to confront previous aberrant behaviors, and in this process often elicited a commitment from employees to work harder to take advantage of this second chance opportunity.

The restoration process included an employment offer of conditional employment, and in this arrangement managers stressed their firm resolve that a second chance was available but it was up to the employee to take advantage of this opportunity. In order to aid reinstated employees in achieving success, managers established a more structured reentry for a reinstated employee, with a much more strict approach to employee discipline, following the company guidelines but with little room for flexibility; and a very hands-on approach to managing the employee in their reinstatement assignment.

Finally, managers expressed empathy in understanding and forgiving previous employee aberrant behavior. Managers also acted on behalf of the organization to recoup an investment made in an individual who did not fulfill their potential or give back to the organization a return for the organization’s investment in terms of improved performance.

## POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

There are several limitations to note in conducting this research. First of all, the behaviors of the manager do not necessarily predict nor can they accurately determine the reaction of the subordinate. There may be additional factors affecting employee commitment or disillusionment, such as cultural items, finances, or lack of opportunity elsewhere. Discipline is directed at employee’s demonstrated behaviors on the job, but here the manager is dealing with an effect and not a cause of behavior. Little is known about the personal and work-related factors (such as marital status and skill level) upon which the utility of such redemptive practices may be contingent (Bamberger and Donahue, 1999). As was noted in this research, only four of the eight cases examined resulted in a successful reinstatement, as defined having reinstated employees who returned and remained with the firm for a period of at least six months and demonstrated the same or an improved level of performance as observed by the manager, such as: higher work attendance rate, reduced or non-repeating absenteeism, lower turnover rates, and positive productivity. Yet the behaviors demonstrated by these managers were fairly consistently applied to all the attempted reinstatements.

There is also an issue of these reinstatements being a cooperative process by the organization and its managers; as compared to a forced reinstatement due to an arbitrator's ruling. There cannot be any generalized application of these results to apply in situations where managers feel pressure to take terminated employees back. Williams and Taras (2000) noted in their research through follow up interviews with union officials and employees that through the reinstatement process managers may have felt resentment when forced to take back employees, and therefore offer little support and assistance to the reinstated employee (Williams and Taras, 2000).

## CONCLUSION

An organization's most significant investment is in their human resources. This not only includes employee salaries and benefits, but also the training of employees to successfully perform their required tasks. A trained, experienced worker is a valuable asset. One of the greatest challenges of management is to direct this valuable and diverse workforce towards achieving organizational goals synergistically in compliance with cultural norms. One Human Resource Management text noted that replacing workers is expensive and new employees need time and attention to learn their jobs (Noe, 2007).

There is a value proposition to considering the redemption of an already trained and experienced terminal employee. The cost benefits of reinstating an already trained and experienced worker were highlighted in several of the studies read in preparation for this research and in other literature as well (Bamberger and Donahue, 1999; also Chewing, 1990). There is also a moral opportunity in terms of providing a just restoration to an employee in which a major corporate investment has been made and not realized.

Managers as agents of the firm will generally act on the firm's best interest, which includes hiring the most qualified workers to meet the organization's requirements and help the organization to achieve its expressed objectives. Whether this includes employment restoration through reinstatement is as much a reflection of the manager's own beliefs as of the organization's own hiring philosophy. For some organizations, employee restoration can lead to success for the organization as well as for the employees.

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APPENDIX

**Table 1: An Overview of Employee Turnover and Reinstatement: Focus Organization**

Period Being Studied March 2007-March 2010	
Employees terminated and rehired – reason for 1 <sup>st</sup> term	
37	resigned
2	retired
3	no info
14	TRM for cause
2	seasonal - l/o
Total 58	TRM & rehired in cross-section (March 07 – March 10)
Total of rehired employees still with firm	
17	rehired still with company (29 % of total rehired)
4	TRM for cause remain (7 % of total rehired)

**Table 2: Data on Selected Employees Terminated for Cause and then Reinstated: Focus Organization**

Case	Tenure Prior to 1 <sup>st</sup> TRM	Reason	2 <sup>nd</sup> Term	Tenure Prior to 2 <sup>nd</sup> TRM
A	2 months	Discharged-poor attendance	Ready to TRM, then resigned	4 months
B	2 years	Discharged-other-incarcerated for DUI		
C	3 months	Discharged-obscene language	TRM-Poor Performance	4 months
E	4.3 years	Discharged-poor performance	TRM-Other	6 months
F	1 month	Discharged-poor attendance		
G	14 months	Discharged-poor attendance		
H	14 months	Discharged-poor performance	TRM-Poor Performance	5.5 months
I	18 months	Discharged-poor attendance		