

# 2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

## Addressing Employee Discipline: A non-punitive approach.

City of Greenwood Village (Police Department), Colorado

*#Reality Focused, Results Driven*

Population: 17,000

### Innovation

#### Criteria:

- Initiative fundamentally changed a process, product or service (fundamental)
- OR
- Initiative builds upon existing knowledge to improve a product, process or service (incremental)
  - The initiative substantially stretched the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.

### Describe Your Innovation

*(When and how did this innovation get started? Do also detail how the program or policy innovative, how it has changed previous processes, products, or services, and how it has substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.)*

The premise of discipline without punishment is the belief that the organization and its managers have the right to set reasonable standards and that the organizations' managers or supervisors have a responsibility to point out discrepancies when they arise. More importantly, only the employee can decide whether or not to perform properly and meet the standards. The burden of responsibility for performance is placed clearly on the employee and not the agency or its managers. Our innovative non-punitive approach to discipline began in July, 2005.

### Collaboration

#### Criteria:

- Initiative demonstrated engaging stakeholders both internal and external.
- Initiative demonstrated high performance teaming, breaking down internal silos.
- Strategic partnerships and or community networks were developed as a result of the initiative

**In less than 200 words, what individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? What strategic partnerships and/or community networks, if any, were developed?**

The primary initiator was former City Manager Jim Sanderson. The overall philosophy is to treat each employee with dignity and respect while addressing specific work related problems. It is the expectation that every employee maintain effective work performance and behavior. If an employee's attendance, performance, or behavior fails to meet the organization's expectation then appropriate steps in the discipline without punishment system are implemented. The focus of discipline without punishment is that employees must take personal responsibility for their actions.

If a private consultant was used please describe in detail their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. Maintain a 100 word maximum.

No private consultants were used. The concept was taken from the book, Discipline Without Punishment by Richard Grote. Mr. Grote is president of Performance Systems Corporation of Dallas, Texas, a management consulting firm that specializes in helping organizations implement non-punitive performance management

## Significance

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses an area of concern for the majority of local government organizations.
- Initiative can serve as a model and replicated in other jurisdictions.

Please describe the extent to which you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially replicable within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on this project? Please also provide verification of the replication.

Discipline without punishment encourages employees to adhere to rules, policies, performance standards, and a general respect for others. Unfairness in discipline and general perceived unfair treatment of employees is the number one reason grievances are filed. Discipline generally is a short-term “fix of a more serious underlying problem with a system or a person. A non-punitive discipline approach can be completely duplicated in other jurisdictions because the foundation of the system is employee based. I am not aware of any other public sector agency that has implemented the discipline without punishment process.

## Effectiveness

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses a community or organization need.
- Initiative has achieved tangible results.
- Initiative improved the organizational culture or the traditional approach to problem solving.
- Initiative has received recognition for its achievements, i.e. independent evaluation, national recognition, local press, etc.

Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain?

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in changing the organization's approach to discipline was readjusting managers' ingrained attitude that punishment is the appropriate response to employee failures in behavior and performance. The most common criticisms made about the non-punitive system were; a non-punitive process will not be taken seriously by employees, employees will take advantage of the process to get a “free day off,” and, it will not be upheld in arbitration. Challenges also included; supervisor buy-in, no perceived need, understanding the agency culture, changing workplace values, changing perceptions, and the lack of an effective implementation process. Since the program was adopted, the department has experienced more effective and accepted disciplinary measures as well as less absenteeism.

What outcomes did this program or policy have? Could you share one or two objective measures that demonstrate these outcomes? Ultimately, how did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment?

The ultimate problem with traditional approaches to discipline is that they take problem employees, punish them, and leave them punished problem employees. A non-punitive approach to discipline requires problem employees to make a choice: to become either committed employees or former employees.

Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage.

The City of Greenwood Village program has not received any press or media coverage.

## Presentation

Criteria:

- Presentation will be delivered by a team.
- Presentation will be highly interactive and engaging.

## Example Social Media Post

N/A

Please write an abstract or short description for your innovation that would make conference attendees say "Well, I need to attend this session!"

Discipline Without Punishment (DWP) changes the discipline process as well as the interaction of employees and management. The overall philosophy is to treat each employee with dignity and respect while addressing specific work related problems. It is the expectation that every employee maintain effective work performance and behavior. Fundamental fairness is a primary component of the DWP system. Offering a quality alternative instead of the standard discipline of unpaid suspension days is beneficial to the employee and the organization.

The premise of discipline without punishment is the belief that the organization and its managers have the right to set reasonable standards and that the organizations' managers or supervisors have a responsibility to point out discrepancies when they arise. More importantly, only the employee can decide whether or not to perform properly and meet the organization's standards. The burden of responsibility for performance is placed clearly on the employee and not the agency or it's managers.

How will you make the session creative and unique?- How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?- Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.- What will attendees be able to have as an actionable "takeaway" from the session?

One immediate difference is that traditional, punishment-based discipline systems ignore the majority of people who never create disciplinary problems. In a non-punitive approach, there are new step added to the process. Just as the policy is expected to resolve employee problems, it also makes clear that supervisors are expected to recognize employees when they perform well. Recognizing good performance is now part of formal policy requirement. Supervisors continue to be responsible for beginning the correction process by employee coaching

prior to formal disciplinary action. The exception is when the magnitude of the behavior warrants serious disciplinary action.

In the early stages of disciplinary action, the Discipline Without Punishment approach replaces the familiar responses of verbal reprimands and written warnings with two comparable steps toward employee performance improvement: Reminder 1 and Reminder 2. Instead of being reprimanded for their mischief or warned about what will happen the next time they misbehaves, the employee is formally reminded of two important things. First, they are reminded of the organization's exact expectations of high-quality work, on-time performance, or whatever else has triggered the need for the discussion. Second, they are reminded that they have a responsibility for meeting the organization's standards.

[Anything else you would like to add?](#)

N/A