

Displaying patriotic items at work

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A few people have written to me about their frustrations associated with work policies not allowing them to display the American flag or its symbol at their work stations. They have indicated that threats of disciplinary action loom over their heads for any violations of the policy. As frustrating as this may be for some patriotic employees, it’s something they’ll have to tolerate.

I can understand the frustration though. It’s sad to think that items with patriotic symbols on them can actually offend people. Unfortunately, though, this is the case in many places where the American flag supposedly represents “hate” and “oppression” to some people. As a result, certain political groups put pressure on people in positions of power or authority to create laws or policies intended to make certain people feel happy. In turn, some CEOs get swooped up in this and are forced to create policies for or against the display of patriotic items. In many instances, they will enforce the policy that will create the least amount of tension or stress in the company or organization.

In some cases, CEOs direct that patriotic items not be displayed at work

stations if some employees find such displays offensive. In other cases, there are CEOs who let organizational values play a big part in their policy decisions. Aligning values and policies is often their main objective regardless what political pressures exist. So if their company puts emphasis on the value of patriotism and respect for American virtues, then I’m sure there would be no policy preventing someone from displaying a small American flag at their work cubicle.

One person wrote to me and said they were fired for placing American flag stickers around the edges of their work station and that they didn’t win their subsequent law suit against the company for wrongful termination. They didn’t win their battle in court because the company put its policy in writing and all employees had to initial their understanding of it. So before you “fall on your sword” over this issue, make sure you are aware of the possible consequences.

If you find yourself involved in this type of situation at work and it bothers you, my suggestion is to determine how important this policy really is to you personally. Can you control your mindset and behavior by complying with

your company’s policy on this matter? If you can, then press on and not let it impact your attitude and morale. If you can’t, then maybe you and your company are not a good match--it may be in your best interest to look for employment opportunities elsewhere--at a place that has similar values as you.

At the end of the day, does any of this really matter when you go home? Are you letting a company policy affect your personal life? If you are, don’t. If you aren’t, then don’t let it boil your skin at work either. Focus your energy on other things and ignore the frustrations associated with such a policy. Just take a few deep breaths, maybe meditate quietly for 5 minutes, and you can keep yourself calm and grounded and move on to more productive thoughts and actions.

As a professional with lots of responsibility, sometimes you have to roll with, block or throw punches associated with various policies. Knowing which course of action to take at the precise time, along with a high dose of emotional intelligence, is vital in your sustained success and satisfaction at work.

~ The End ~