Home Learning Task - Employee Relations

Case Study 3

In the early years of trading, Bootus, a manufacturing firm of fur lined boots, had experienced industrial relations problems with its staff. Due to sit-ins and strikes in the past, the owners had refused to invite the unions into any negotiations regarding pay and conditions. There was a lot of resentment, many staff left and those who stayed were unwilling to accept any changes to work practices such as the introduction of new technology on production lines.

Under new management, Bootus made improving staff relations a priority. They listened to staff opinions via quality circles and negotiated changes with staff rather than just passing out instructions at staff meetings. When changing suppliers, for instance, the managers would consult staff for their opinions and when a dispute arose over wage levels amongst the males and females, Bootus invited ACAS to arbitrate.

At staff meetings, Bootus outlined the procedure for seeking assistance with any industrial problems. A worker was encouraged to first speak to their boss and if the problem continued then staff could approach the HR department or their union rep. Staff were also shown the ACAS website which offered advice on a full range of industrial problems. In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and, in addition to Bootus’ duties of care, staff were told of their responsibilities such as wearing safety glasses on the production line. Bootus rewrote their job adverts in line with the guidelines in the Sex Discrimination Act, and requests for absences to acknowledge religious festivals were checked via the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. Bootus ensured they avoided any potential legal claims which also protected their reputation.

Overall, Bootus’s open style of management allowed staff to feel like valued stakeholders in the firm. Staff absenteeism fell and with changes being easier to introduce the firm became very responsive to customers needs and sales and profits rose.
1. Describe 4 forms of industrial action staff could take against a firm, such as *Bootus*.

2. Describe the measures a firm, such as *Bootus*, could introduce to improve employee relations between managers and staff.

3. Describe the steps an employee would go through if they felt they disagreed with action taken by a firm, such as *Bootus*.

4. Describe 3 forms of legislation a firm would follow to ensure it was protecting its workers’ rights.

5. Explain 3 effects on a firm, such as *Bootus*, of poor staff relations.