

Your Employees

Employers who do not respect their employees do not respect their own businesses. Without happy employees, your business cannot prosper; and you cannot have happy employees unless you respect and boost their self-esteem.

One of the important issues is the agreement between the employer and the employee about the wages, the nature of work, responsibilities and expectations. Both parties must clearly define and agree on these issues.

Sulayman bin Ja'far al-Ja'fari says that one day he went with Imam 'Ali ar-Rida (a.s) to the latter's home. When they reached the house and entered the courtyard, they saw the servants of the Imam busy in doing their work. The Imam noticed a stranger among his workers.

Imam: "Who is this man with you?"

The servants: "He is helping us in our work and at the end of the day we will give him something as wages for his work."

Imam: "Have you talked and agreed with him on his wages?"

The servants: "No; but he will be pleased with whatever we will give him."

The Imam became very angry with his servants.

Sulayman al-Ja'fari said, "...Why are you taking this issue so hard upon yourself?"

The Imam: "I have several times forbidden them from employing anyone to work with them unless they have agreed upon his wages.

"Know that even if you pay three times more than the average wages to someone who works for you without prior agreement, he will still think that you have underpaid him. But if you have agreed on the wages, and then you pay him that wage, he will thank you for the fulfillment of your agreement; and if you add even a little upon it, he will recognize it as your generosity and know that you have paid him more." [1](#)

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Islamic teachings also emphasize that a laborer should be paid on time. To stress on this issue, Hisham

bin Hakam quotes a statement from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s) regarding a porter or a hired hand: "You should pay his wages before the sweat of his forehead dries up."² According to the Prophet, one of the unforgivable sins is denying of your employee's wages.³

Fixing the Wages

As a basic rule, the employer and the employee should reach to an agreement on the basis of justice and fairness. Of course, an Islamic government has the right to set the scale of minimum wage to ensure that the workers are not exploited. A market based on Islamic values cannot have executives who enormously increase their own salaries but ask their employees to accept lower wages.⁴

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As an employer, you must be considerate to the special needs of your employee: sick leave, leave for family emergencies, and even permission for attending Jum'ah prayer that falls on a working day in the West.

¹. Al-Furu', vol.5, p. 288

². Al-Furu', vol.5,p.289

³. Al-Furu', vol.5, p.382; Zayd bin Ali, Musnad (Beirut: Dar al-Hayat,n.d.) p.498

⁴. The name enron has now become a symbol of greed at the executive levels. Thousands of Enron employees lost their life savings in plans tied to the energy company's stock and pensions when Enron collapsed.

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