

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

The sun is shining and a few employees from Verulam Ltd decide to go for a pub lunch. Colin subsequently attends a client meeting whilst under the influence and the client complains to Verulam Ltd. What should the company do?

The sun is shining out and the employees at Verulam Ltd can't wait for lunch.

Some of the employees at Verulam Ltd decide to plan a pub lunch to celebrate the good weather.

One of the managers, Colin, has a client meeting at 3pm but doesn't want to miss out on a pub lunch, so decides to go to the pub with his colleagues.

The drinks start flowing...

Colin returns to work for his client meeting, having quite clearly had one too many beers. The client is appalled and walks out of the meeting.

The following day, the client makes a formal complaint about Colin and threatens to switch accountants as a result.

WHAT SHOULD THE BUSINESS DO?

OPTION A
Colin's line manager meets with him to informally discuss the incident and any underlying alcohol issues. If appropriate, offering to refer Colin to Occupational Health for medical and/or specialist advice. Colin is also told he must formally apologise to the client.

OPTION B
Instigate proceedings under the company's Disciplinary Procedure.

OPTION C
Dismiss Colin.

The approach taken by a company in this scenario will largely depend upon their level of tolerance in relation to alcohol in the workplace.

THE CORRECT APPROACH

The nature of the work undertaken by some businesses may mean that they must have a zero-tolerance approach towards alcohol consumption during working hours; for example, electrical engineering or care work. In such cases, it is likely to be appropriate for these types of companies to treat substance misuse as misconduct, particularly if it happens repeatedly. Employers may then be minded to initiate disciplinary proceedings, potentially leading to dismissal.

However, other companies may want to take a softer approach and resolve issues informally by providing support to employees in relation to alcohol/drug-related problems. Employers could refer employees to appropriate treatment providers and offer them time off work to attend treatment.

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