

## **Case Study: Is Scientific Management Dead?**

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The following article about the bathroom break policy at a Jim Beam bottling plant is a current example of scientific management. I use this to segue between Classical and Human Relations approaches.

In using this in class, I ask students to read the article, then get in groups to

- (1) identify the problem that Jim Beam is trying to solve and
- (2) brainstorm alternative ways of solving the problem coming from a Human Relations approach instead of a Scientific Management approach.

Posted on Wed, Aug. 21, 2002

### **Jim Beam fighting citation for bathroom-break policy**

SHEPHERDSVILLE, Ky. - The Jim Beam bourbon-making plant in Bullitt County is fighting a state citation criticizing its policy on bathroom breaks for employees. Since October, line workers at the plant have been permitted to use the restroom only during lunch and two other times during the day - one before lunch and one after. They also are allowed one unscheduled toilet break per day, and can be disciplined for taking more, starting with a warning and escalating to dismissal after six incidents.

The old policy allowed workers to rotate off the line for short, unscheduled breaks throughout the day, with no set number. The company changed the policy after it concluded that workers were taking advantage of the liberal break policy.

The Labor Cabinet, in a citation issued in November, said Jim Beam is violating a federal labor law requiring employers to provide restroom facilities to employees. Jim Beam is appealing the citation. The cabinet did not propose a fine.

A hearing on the citation is scheduled next week in Bardstown. The distiller has filed a memo with the Labor Cabinet, saying it "observed, documented and analyzed break habits of the employees" and consulted with a urologist to make sure that the new policy would be "reasonable."

The company said people with medical conditions get more leeway. But the United Food and Commercial Workers union that represents the approximately 100 production-line workers said the urologist determined the breaks were not motivated by need, but most likely by "smoking habits."

The union said 45 workers have been disciplined, some workers have begun wearing protective undergarments and others have urinated on themselves because they were afraid to leave the line. "It's embarrassing to be a 36-year-old woman and have to justify your need to go to the bathroom," said Krystal Ditto, who said she has been disciplined five times and is one unscheduled bathroom visit away from losing her job. "Once you get the feeling you have to go, you sit there looking at the clock and see you have an hour to go, and it intensifies. I'm not going to sit there and be miserable."

The company is holding its ground. "We feel our system provides reasonable breaks for all employees, and we're looking forward to explaining our position in detail next week at the hearing," said Stephanie Moritz, director of publications for Jim Beam, based in Deerfield, Ill.

Jo Anne Kelley, the union local's president, has worked at the Jim Beam plant for 34 years. She said the policy is degrading and that company officials have told some workers that they should "practice" going to the bathroom every two hours at home on the weekends to put themselves on a schedule. "Basically, we're being asked to train our

bladders and other organs to meet their needs, not ours," Kelley said. "Your bodily functions don't have a time clock."

In its appeal, Jim Beam said its break policy "effectively balances the medical needs of employees with the company's need to maintain a productive workforce."

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