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ENG 306-50
Unit 1 – Breakroom Emails

Subject: Breakroom Upkeep

Hello team,

It has come to my attention that we've been having some issues keeping our shared breakroom area clean and tidy for one another. We all use the breakroom and are all adults capable of cleaning up after ourselves, so let's all make sure we respect each other well enough to make the breakroom a happy and stress-free place for everyone to take a break from their workday.

Please keep in mind the following guidelines when using our breakroom:

- If you spill something on the countertop – please clean it up promptly! There are paper towels and cleaning wipes available for your use in the cabinets.
- Your trash goes into the trash cans – not left on the tables once you are done with it
- If you notice the coffee pot is low or empty, either make a new batch or turn off the burner
- Cover your food in the microwave, and wipe it down if there is a spill
- There is dish soap, sponges, and a drying rack next to the sink – please use these instead of leaving dirty dishes in the sink for someone else to attend to

We will begin cleaning out the breakroom refrigerator the first Friday of each month – any unclaimed food containers will be disposed of at the end of that date in order to keep our fridge clean and uncluttered.

We do have a support staff of custodians that help us keep the area clean, but please let's respect our support staff enough to clean up after ourselves when we make coffee or heat up our lunches.

Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions, thank you!

Best,
Kelly

Subject: Breakroom Upkeep, Continued

Hello team,

It seems we're still struggling with keeping our shared breakroom clean for one another, so I'd like to open up a dialogue with you all about what rules you think we should have in place to make sure we're all doing our part to keep our break area clean. Again, we are all adults, and we must be respectful of one another enough to not expect someone else to clean up after us.

In addition to posting our guidelines, you will find a box posted on the refrigerator where you can put suggestions on any kind regarding cleaning product suggestions, new rules, or anything you might find helpful to keeping us all motivated to clean up after ourselves. We'll review these suggestions and discuss them in our weekly standup meeting when necessary.

The custodial team has been so kind as to stock some extra cleaning supplies underneath the sink for our use, but have still found that some of our old habits are holding over. When exiting the breakroom, please take a moment and do what you can to leave the area just as clean as when you entered.

Remember, the fridge cleanout is the first Friday of each month. The custodial staff has been instructed to toss any unclaimed containers at the end of the day on Friday, so make sure you take a look in the fridge to make sure you're not going to be missing something important to you.

Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions, thank you!

Best,
Kelly

I think I had to write some version of these emails at least a dozen times in my past positions, so I understand the struggle to create a balance between being a boss and being a coworker when addressing something like a messy breakroom. I thought about the past emails I've received and had to write addressing team concerns, and tried to consider what was not received well, what did result in positive action, and how a manager would need to address an issue that's not high stakes, but affects everyone in the office.

The Instrumental Goal in these emails was to inform the employees that the current habits around the breakroom are not acceptable, and that a change needs to be made. Without singling anyone out, I tried to make this a collective issue that will take the entire team's cooperation to overcome.

The Relational Goal was to address the employee's gross behaviors without infantilizing them – respecting that they are indeed adults with the ability to clean up after themselves. I have found it difficult in the past to find the right tone to use when admonishing a group without making them feel attacked and resentful. I've also received emails in the past from managers addressing the state of a shared work space that basically just threatened some action if we did not correct course – which certainly wasn't received very well by most of the office and only created discord.

The Identity Goal was to address the issue as a team issue – rather than a boss talking down to or threatening to punish a group, the goal is to be constructive and speak about what actions we can take to improve the situation.

I would hope that a continued discussion about the issues in the breakroom would emphasize to the team the importance of the message you send to others with your habits around the workplace. An employer would want their team to feel free to use the amenities offered to them, but respect the area as much as they respect those who share it.