



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Fostering Employee Trust

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For managers, trust can be built or destroyed by how and what they communicate. Say nothing, and your employees will worry about what you aren't saying, and assume the worst and mistrust you. This is especially true if your demeanor is also reserved and you rarely engage with your team. Talking too much about the wrong thing—focusing on the negative or frequently pushing staff to work harder—can have the same impact.

The number one complaint employees have about their managers is different aspects of poor communication, according to 91% of those surveyed in a report by the Harvard Business Review. Given this, it seems that the antidote for employee mistrust is open, frequent, and appropriate communication.

Current thinking in the employee engagement and retention arena also points to these important building blocks in the foundation of employee trust:

Consistency

It's human nature. People need to know what to expect to feel secure and know how to adjust when changes arise. Let your actions, body language, and words tell the same story. If you are reliably calm, patient, and listen with interest, your staff will learn that they can speak to you honestly which will reinforce your trustworthiness. This foundation will serve you to navigate difficult times

and circumstances with your team. Conversely, if your office door is always closed, you may be communicating that you don't have time or care about your staff or their needs, which will grow seeds of mistrust.

Relatedness

Be friendly. Be authentically interested in your employees. Learn who they are and what is important to them. Do you have an artist on your team? Does someone build homes for Habitat for Humanity or play on a soccer team after work? How many are single, have young children, or just sent their last child off to college? Knowing your staff shows that you care about them, which is essential for employee engagement and a happier more productive workplace. It may seem simple, but just saying "good morning" daily and having weekly "check-ins" with staff can be meaningful ways of showing you care. Another good approach is to listen more than you talk.

Esteem

Take time to understand your employees' job responsibilities and their particular strengths as well as their challenges. Offering genuine and specific acknowledgment for a job well done will go a long way to inspire staff to work at their best. And having established trust, you will have a better framework for addressing areas in need of improvement with less employee fear and defensiveness.

Autonomy

Model trust by allowing your employees autonomy. Once you know their job responsibilities, strengths, and challenges, relax into letting them do their jobs and trust that they will do them well. Periodic check-ins will serve to address systemic problems and inter-personal issues. Balancing employee autonomy with regular oversight will

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convey your trust in your staff, which will contribute to their trust in you.

Meaning

We all want to feel our work is meaningful and satisfying. When you have taken the time to know your employees' strengths and goals, you can help guide them towards opportunities that will meet these objectives. Is your employee looking for advancement? Provide tasks that allow for a leadership role. Is your employee creative? Find opportunities, such as marketing or planning company events to allow this person to shine. Is someone particularly good with detailed-oriented work? Find a project that requires this kind of skill. Aligning your employees' goals and strengths with their work will deepen the meaning it has for them and result in greater job satisfaction, productivity, and trust that you have their best interests at heart.

Bottom line: developing employee trust is much like making a good friend—it's based on reliable and caring behavior, words, and demeanor. If you approach your staff from this perspective, and make diligent and transparent communication a cornerstone in your management style, trust will naturally follow.

