

Building Employee Trust

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Operating a company or organization without employee trust can be detrimental to the success of a business. It is imperative that employees feel respected in order to respect their management, feel respected and valued. Honesty, concise, clear and open lines of communication are a good start towards earning this trust.

Some steps that may be helpful in attaining employee trust:

1. Promises made must be promises kept:

- a. Managers must understand that employee trust must be earned. Promises should not be made if management knows or suspects that they may not be kept. It is important that if you make a promise, you intend to keep it. DO NOT make empty promises or you will lose credibility and trust. Once lost, it will be very difficult to recover it again.
- b. Too often management makes far-reaching promises and plans when the business is doing great and then pull back on promises when the business has a down turn. Be cautious with what you promise and make sure you are very confident that you will be in a position to deliver on them.
- c. By failing to deliver on your commitment, the trust you may have established is damaged and any future commitments will be met with a high level of skepticism.

2. Avoid over-reaching with your messages:

- a. Very often it is too easy to paint a rosy picture for your employees. You may want to “stretch” the truth and make the message sound better than what it really is. DO NOT make grand statements just because it will make the employee feel better and convey a message that they want to hear.
- b. Keep your message positive and honest. Communicate your company’s values, goals and objectives and make certain everyone is on the same page. This should apply evenly across the board during the business, good times and bad.

3. Follow through on your commitments:

- a. If you make a commitment, be absolutely sure that you will be able to deliver on that commitment.
- b. Employees are constantly observing the actions of their managers. They may not always voice their thoughts or concerns but it is up to the manager to understand if there is an issue brewing and react accordingly to acknowledge the employee or issue. Failure to recognize these employees and their issues can cause them to lose trust in your commitment to their concerns. They feel you are “speaking out of both sides of your mouth”.

4. Set the Example:

- a. Employees will normally behave in the manner that is prevalent in an organization. If you set the example of a hard-working, dedicated and conscientious work environment, employees will behave accordingly.
- b. Let the employee contribute with their ideas and participation. Teamwork is a great example to establish and pursue. Be sure to acknowledge great work and let employees know that their attitudes and work ethics are much appreciated.

5. Provide leadership and accountability:

- a. There should be no discomfort in admitting your own personal shortcomings. Create an honest and trusting environment by letting employees know that they can have an honest dialogue when discussing issues, personal problems and providing input to the process.
- b. “Toot” your horn at your successes but also let employees know when mistakes are made. Be cautious not to overdo either.
- c. Be careful not to create confusion by saying one thing and doing something totally different. “Talk the talk and walk the walk”.

6. Emphasize fair and equitable employee reviews and feedback:

- a. Provide positive combined with disciplinary feedback. If reviewing an employee's performance, be positive but fair. You can point out the positive activities but do not make the process a love fest. Point out any shortcomings that may need improvement along with the positive.
- b. Every employee wants to be rated as a super star but in actuality there are only a handful that fall into this category. Majority of employees fall into the AVERAGE category than do the super star or at the bottom of the scale.
- c. Do not play favorites and rate one employee higher than another based on your personal interests and feelings. BE OBJECTIVE.
- d. Document, document, document. Maintain fair and accurate documentation regarding any employee interactions which include positive accolades or work related problems. These documents will be very important should the occasion ever rise where a problem employee may to be disciplined or terminated.

To be a successful and trusted employer, you must always be prepared to hear what the employees say and sometimes, what they don't say. Listening and understanding your employee issues and behaviors will develop a strong trust and bond between management and employees. Without trust, any company will be hard pressed to be highly successful.