



better work, better life

## MANAGEMENT ADVICE

### 15 Ways To Be A Better Boss.

As a manager, you are not only responsible for your company's fiscal assets – you are responsible for your company's human assets. How can you reduce turnover, increase employee productivity, and reward staff without sacrificing company profits? Here are some ideas you can implement today that will make you a more effective manager:

#### 1. Learn how to listen.

Some employers just aren't great listeners. A Gallup poll found that over 20% of American workers feel that their bosses hardly ever listen to their problems and concerns. And that can cause resentment.

When managers improve their listening skills, they tend to be more open to ideas and less rigid. By listening and possibly helping to solve employee problems, you will inevitably gain respect and get the most out of your staff. Here is what you can do to improve your listening skills:

- Ignore distractions. When an employee talks to you, give him/her your undivided attention. If you allow distractions to interfere, you may miss critical information or, more importantly, make the employee feel like a low priority.
- Repeat the message. If an employee makes a request or provides you with information, clarify what he/she said. That way, everyone is sure they got the right message.
- Be objective. If you assume information is trivial, you won't remember it. Do not pay more attention to some employees than others. When you listen to employees, pretend you are listening to the CEO.

#### 2. Encourage staff to take risks.

Let employees feel free to take prudent risks. You will find that employees at all levels can come up with good ideas.

#### 3. Be honest.

Let employees know you trust them, and be honest and open in return. Just one deception can destroy your credibility for good. Another Gallup poll of American workers found that most bosses do treat their employees fairly and honestly, but nearly 20% gave their bosses poor marks in that area. And that's too many.

#### 4. Recognize a job well done.

Everyone likes to know when they've done something well. Make your employees feel important every day. Don't be afraid to show enthusiasm for their work. And when one of

your employees does something outstanding, tell your superiors. Not only will the employee benefit; you will too.

### **5. Offer a challenge.**

According to a survey conducted by the American Productivity and Quality Center in Houston, the best motivator for employees is challenging work. Productivity and enthusiasm significantly decrease with boredom. A study just released by the Families and Work Institute showed that four of every 10 workers feel burned out by their jobs, saying they feel 'used up' by the end of the day. Your challenge is to keep them challenged.

### **6. Be flexible.**

In cost-conscious time, companies can not always compensate employees with generous salary increases. But there are other, less expensive ways.

Most American workers today say flexible hours are important to them. According to PR Reporter, one study found that two-thirds of working men and woman would reject a promotion if it required them to spend less time with their families. Some employers even allow employees to work at home. In fact, studies show that working at home increases productivity between 20 and 40 percent. Consider these alternatives, and keep your options open to other ways you can meet employees' unique needs.

### **7. Money isn't everything.**

A survey of 70 U.S. chief executive officers of Fortune 500 and Inc. 500 companies revealed that CEO's ranked pay as the most important factor to employees. To the contrary, most studies show that employees choose factors like recognition for a good job, personal development and challenging work as being more important than salary. Moral of the story? If you want to keep employees, a pat on the back may be just as effective as additional pay.

### **8. Be a straight shooter.**

Don't set foggy goals for your employees. People want to know what you expect of them. Give directions to employees in simple language. Tell them precisely what is involved and why you think they are best for the job.

### **9. Know when and where to criticize.**

Inform employees when they perform well and when they don't--but tell them immediately. Don't lump all your complaints in one session. A large number of criticisms are hard to accept.

Whatever you do, do not criticize employees in front of others. Highlighting failures in public will discourage innovation by everyone involved, and you will quickly turn colleagues into enemies.

### **10. Keep communication lines open.**

Clear, ongoing, understandable and unambiguous communication - that is what you should provide as a manager. Don't communicate just in times of trouble, relay positive news as well. Give employees information before, not after, important events. Encourage free speech. Remember, employees want a say.

### **11. Make workers feel important.**

The need to feel needed. We all have it. One study found that more than half of the employees surveyed felt their managers failed to make them feel important as individuals. Interestingly, 77% of these workers said they were thinking of looking for another job. Allow workers to contribute. Ask for opinions and advice. Reduce the number of autocratic decisions.

### **12. Be consistent.**

Workers can learn to live with any boss if they know what to expect. Keep them guessing and you will keep them looking--for another job. Inconsistent behavior breeds anger, frustration, dismay and disappointment.

### **13. Be impartial.**

Do not play favorites. Discrimination destroys morale and hurts productivity. Bosses who promote unfairly, and pass over the best and the brightest, quickly lose workers' confidence in them. Treat everyone the same, politely. Do not use one manner for some staff members and another for others.

### **14. Take an interest in employees' careers.**

Coach or counsel employees on how they can climb the corporate ladder. Take workers with real potential and fire, and be their mentor. Tell them how you started, and what you did to get where you are. Try not to sound superior or boastful, just helpful.

### **15. Know how to say "no."**

There comes a time when you can't be Mr./Ms. Nice Guy and you have to say "no." How? Just do it.

Explain the reason for your refusal so you do not seem unreasonable. Avoid making a snap decision unless time pressure forces your hand. If possible, tell the employee that you will consider the request and decide in a day or two. Take enough time to let the employee know that the request has had a fair hearing. We cannot always get what we want. If you relay that to your employees in a reasonable manner, you will lessen the blow.