

Fostering a positive workplace environment improves retention, morale

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Supervisors and managers are “climate makers,” regardless of the positions that they hold. Their communications and actions play a key role in determining how employees feel about their jobs and the overall organization. The impact that they have on morale ultimately can result in the retention or turnover of valued employees.

Although their spheres of influence may differ, there is a need for management at all levels — from the first-line supervisor to the CEO — to regularly focus on the effectiveness of their interactions with employees. The following include a number of tips that individual supervisors and managers can apply in assessing whether they are fostering a positive workplace climate:

1. Increase your credibility as a leader by consistently “walking the talk.” Monitor your actions to ensure that they are aligned with the expectations and values that you communicate.
2. Choose to bring a positive outlook to the workplace. As a leader, you set the tone for your employees. Your optimistic attitude and an expectation of successful results can become a self-fulfilling prophecy that influences outcomes.
3. Approach each interaction with respect. Act in this manner, regardless of the circumstances or of the employee’s position within the organization.
4. Take responsibility for your actions and control your emotions when faced with frustrating situations. Use self-restraint, pause before reacting, and focus on whether your comments or actions will produce desired results.
5. Recognize that one of a leader’s greatest assets is the ability to communicate with employees at every level of the organization. Assess your effectiveness in areas of your communications, including your words, tone of voice, body language and listening. Use this self-awareness as a springboard for improvement.
6. Show that you care and value employees as individuals. Remember that the small things you do often make a difference in relationships, such as celebrating birthdays, sending cards on happy or sad occasions and having discussions about favorite sports or hobbies.

7. Communicate with employees on an ongoing basis about their job performance. This feedback enables employees to gain an understanding of what is required to meet job and organizational expectations.

8. Assist employees in understanding ways to resolve workplace conflicts. Develop an expectation that differences of opinion will be handled in a respectful manner. Help employees identify behaviors that facilitate problem resolution, such as listening to understand others' points of view, and those that are unacceptable, such as name calling and making accusations.

9. Avoid tendencies to act on assumptions that can damage relationships. Take time to gather and analyze relevant facts before making decisions.

10. Demonstrate receptiveness to organizational changes in your communications with employees while also portraying a realistic picture of what the change process may involve. Be proactive in identifying ways to be supportive of employees and to gain their input when implementing these initiatives.

11. Show appreciation for employees as a routine part of your day-to-day interactions. Act on the belief that employees will do their best if their contributions to the team are recognized.

12. Understand the value of providing negative feedback in private. Criticizing employees publicly can create a sense of embarrassment among all who are present and diminish their respect for you as a leader.

13. Encourage humor when it provides employees with an opportunity to enjoy work, relieve stress and create a positive work environment. Communicate that humor is unacceptable if it involves harassing actions or comments.

14. Create a workplace that is inclusive and values diversity. Consider diversity as a factor in establishing work teams and committees. Individuals from differing backgrounds and points of view can serve as resources to one another and enhance the overall quality of decision making.

15. Recognize that listening is essential in understanding others' perspectives, needs and expectations. Develop a habit of listening and establish this as an expectation for employees.

16. Keep employees informed by continuously sharing information. Educate employees about their jobs and broaden their understanding of the organization and business as a whole.

17. Delegate effectively to provide mutual benefits for employees and for management. Delegation provides opportunities for employees to develop skills and demonstrate their abilities and for management to have a more experienced and productive work force. Successful outcomes depend on a number of factors, such as establishing mutual expectations and implementing processes that enable management to influence results.

18. View your own leadership development as a process of continual growth. Be proactive in reading books and articles and pursuing other learning opportunities. Solicit input from

individuals who will help you “look in the mirror” and from those who you respect for their leadership qualities.

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