

## Positive Work Environment and its Impact on Productivity

It goes without saying that in order to create a productive work environment, understanding what motivates people's is important. But what many managers do not realize is that different employees respond in different ways to a given management style or technique. For example, one employee may respond well and be productive under an authoritative management style while another employee may resent the manager and become less productive and satisfied. People are wired differently, and managers need to adjust their style accordingly. Many managers have the opinion that it is employees who should adjust to the manager and not the other way around. Unfortunately, this is an approach that often backfires.

In today's business world, when company loyalty is low and still declining, employees are more likely to be dedicated to a manager who understands and motivates them. Another factor that promotes loyalty is the work environment employees share with their colleagues. This factor can also be controlled to an extent by the manager. Here are some ways to promote a healthy work environment for workers and the organization as a whole:

### **Put yourself in their shoes**

Some of the world's most successful companies have placed their managers on the factory floor as part of their training. While this practice is rarely implemented in manufacturing today, the spirit of "let the boss work in the trenches" still works for many of today's top companies. Howard Schultz of Starbucks was known to pop into his company's coffee shops and step behind the counter. Sam Walton of Wal-Mart had a habit of driving around in his old pickup truck to personally visit his retail outlets. The point is, when managers spend time doing the job their employees are doing, they become better equipped to understand the challenges that come with the job and show more empathy toward their employees.

### **Provide positive feedback**

Managers should attempt to praise employees whenever possible, especially in front of other employees. Employee of The Month awards and other types of institutionalized recognition mechanisms are often used in big companies, but their effectiveness tends to decrease as employees perceive them as what they are: institutionalized and not genuine. Spontaneous and informal praise or rewards are far more effective. Instead of instituting an Employee of The Month program, empower middle management and even lower management to provide praise where praise is due, and supplement verbal or written praise with gifts or "tokens of appreciation". It has been shown that the motivational effect of a gift worth \$100 to an employee is more motivating than a \$200 cash bonus (so long as the gift's value is not overtly advertised.)

### **Lead by example**

The mentality of “Do as I say, not as I do” has failed time and again. This attitude was often prevalent with managers who came out of the ranks, especially in blue collar or government positions. Having paid their dues in order to climb up the ladder, they felt some justification in sitting back and barking out orders while others did the work. This approach rarely, if ever, goes over well.

A manager has to first and foremost set an example to his/her employees. A manager does not have to know more than her employees about all aspects of the job, nor does she have to have the final say in all decisions, lead by example in today’s knowledge based economy, has more to do with how to interact with fellow employees, how to collaborate and how one carries himself in the workplace. A manager who shares, collaborates, empowers and effectively communicates will more often than not, see the same positive behavior displayed by her employees.

Above all else, a manager must set an example for his/her employees. It’s not so much about knowing handholding them through the process of learning the ropes. Today, leading by example has more to do with showing employees how to interact and collaborate effectively. Simply put, managers who expect employees to behave in a certain way must themselves emulate the behavior they wish to see. A manager who shares, collaborates, communicates and empowers will, more often than, see these actions mirrored by those he/she leads.

### **Open lines of communications**

It is important that managers clearly communicate their expectations for each employee. Some workers prefer detailed guidance and meta goals, while others only need to know the desired end result, preferring to figure out the details on their own. Whatever an employee’s preferred style, seek to match it, and strive to be available should questions arise.

Another important aspect of communication relates to conflict resolution, crucial skills that a manager must acquire. While disagreements are common in the workplace, resolving them can often be a delicate matter, whether it’s a conflict between two employees, or between an employee and manager. Assume that conflicts are unavoidable and don’t be afraid to encourage employees to disagree with other employees or even with their managers. On the upside, the best ideas can sometimes come out of conflicts.

When it comes to providing a positive, nurturing and motivating work environment, a manager needs to adjust his or her management style. There are vast differences between employees, and a one-size- fits-all solution rarely works. Fortunately,



Psychtests offers several assessment tools that can assist a manager in understanding his or her employees' personality, preferred management and communication style. Contact us for a free demo of one of our assessment tools.