

How to improve management/employee relations

Just like a marriage, a healthy work relationship takes effort. Your relationship with your boss, peers and subordinates also takes effort. It must be one of mutual respect, trust and openness if it is to work.



» BY JEFF DORAN

In order to build a trusting, respectful culture, management must treat all employees openly and honestly. Actions speak louder than words. You must not only say how you want people to behave, but also show them. If you want people to be on time for work, you must be on time. If you want people to be courteous, then you must be courteous. It's common sense. If you are not willing to practice what you preach, then you won't see the results you are looking for.

Some companies create special events to establish a cohesive bond with employees. One such event is called a "Culture Retreat". These are off-premise getaways where everyone from new hires to senior level management takes part in a variety of culture-building activities and discussion sessions. Culture retreats are a big motivator for employees and are highly anticipated events. Employees really like the fact that they are able to mingle with people from all different parts of the company and rub elbows with senior management.

Big events are great for pulling together larger groups of people for a common purpose. However, it's the daily interaction that can make or break management/employee relations. So, how do you maintain a trusting relationship with your staff? Here are some key management practices that should be incorporated in your routine.

Delegate authority – Involve employees in decision making. Create self directed, multi-divisional teams. Give employees the authority to make decisions that ultimately affect them

and you will see big improvements in engagement. Xceed Contact Centre, a large Egyptian outsourcer, has recently established various committees to address everything from pay and benefits to creating more fun in their centres. Employees are solving their own issues and developing programs that are extremely well received.

Always do what you say you are going to do – Integrity. In a former life, as the owner of an outsource call centre business, I asked a client why they liked dealing with my firm. They said, "That's easy, you did what you said you were going to do." It didn't seem like that big of a compliment at the time, but it was one of the biggest compliments I ever received from a client. I soon came to realize that broken promises and unfulfilled obligations seemed to be the norm back then. By simply delivering on our promise, we stood out as the exception. As a manager, it is critical to live up to your word, no matter how difficult. Building a reputation as someone who does what they say they are going to do creates unparalleled trust, enthusiasm and integrity.

Listen to your employees – really listen to them. How many times have we attended seminars and been told we must "listen deeply to" and "be present for" our employees. Well, there's a reason for this. If employees are bringing issues to the table and they feel management is dismissing them, they will become disengaged and resentful. Performance will suffer and management will struggle to improve results. Listening to your employees shows common courtesy and professionalism. It's not your job to resolve all their issues, but if you are attentive to employee concerns, they will be



much more appreciative and supportive.

Always follow-up and recognize achievements. What better way is there to show how much you appreciate your employee's efforts than to give them company-wide recognition? One company uses their intranet to post customer compliment letters and the entire company can read all about the great work done by the front line staff. This helps build tremendous pride and satisfaction.

Create a supportive, non-threatening environment. When Graham Kingma, vice-president of Customer Service, joined The Shopping Channel, he wanted to build more trust and collaboration. So he made a pledge to answer all employee complaints emailed to him. He answered over 2,000 emails in six months. He may not have been able to resolve every issue, but by responding to each and every message, he created tremendous respect, credibility and trust with staff. Soon, the number of complaints dropped and the emails turned into helpful suggestions.

By developing better management/employee relations, you will forge a tremendous amount of trust and respect with your staff. This not only improves employee satisfaction and engagement, but it increases employee support for management decisions. This makes management's job easier and creates a healthier, friendlier, more productive work environment.

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