



Are Your Employees “Clued In?”

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Supervisors and managers have to be many things – but first and foremost, they need to be good communicators. We’ve all heard it before – leadership doesn’t happen in a vacuum.

One of the best ways to squelch rumors and answer your team’s critical questions is through direct communication. Face-to-face communication builds trust and credibility while ensuring that your employees are receiving consistent messages.

One of the reasons people like to see you in front of them is so that they can watch you and say, “I think this person is sincere.” and “I think I can trust this person.”

Without it, people will do what you say, but probably not at their top speed.

Sharing information with your team also helps to build cohesiveness within the group. People working together tend to develop a camaraderie that springs forth, from in part, a give-and-take in communicating information.

This doesn’t mean you can or should tell everyone everything you know. Some information must, by its nature, be restricted. And keeping it that way is simply a part of your job. However, when there is a choice about sharing news, or not sharing it, playing it safe and keeping the information close to the vest may not always be the best choice.

If you’re struggling with what to say, or how much to say, seek some advice from your boss. Let him or her know what’s going on in your team and what could be gained by opening the door of communication a little wider. By having this discussion, you may discover that there are even more reasons to say something – or know for certain why you shouldn’t.

If you do have a green light to proceed, here are some things to remember:

- Say what needs to be said as plainly as possible and as soon as you can possibly say it. Tell people what they need to know. Waffling or soft-pedaling information only leads to misunderstanding.
- Give reasons for actions, not just policy references. If you can clearly explain why a decision to change has been made and what part each team member will play in the change, people will understand. They may not like it, but they will at least know why it must be that way. People want a real explanation. Give it to them.
- Be prepared. Know what you need to say and plan how you want to say it. If you stammer through your words, people will begin to wonder if you really know what you’re talking about.
- Stick to the truth. You can’t improve on honesty.
- Check for understanding. Don’t just take for granted that each member of your team got the message they needed to hear. Find out.

When change is affecting the way “things have always been done around here,” your employees need to know that there is a way to successfully navigate the change and still be a productive, valuable member of the team.

Never underestimate the importance of information and how important your role is in communicating it.

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More On Change...

Accepting change is easier for some than others

By Rhonda Williams

People who switch jobs want and expect change. Employees, however, frequently react negatively to being told they must change the way they do their job, especially by their boss or someone above their boss. Some resent having change being handed down “from on high” without being given the opportunity for input.

The first step in producing change is to understand that many employees are uncomfortable with change of any kind. Employees who are methodical, routine-oriented and change-resistant by nature, generally need extra time to adjust. Try to announce new plans to these employees as far in advance as possible. This gives them the chance to become committed team players. If you rush them, they might dig in their heels or resort to passive resistance.

Employees who want and need structure and detail may have questions about the change too. These employees could view the change as a veiled criticism of them or the way they’ve been doing their job up to now. For them, it’s important to explain in detail why the change is being made; and that the change is an effort to improve the way the organization operates.

Other more independent and self-managing employees like to do their job their way and may resist anything remotely resembling hands-on management. Calm and cool on the surface, they won’t argue with you, but they probably won’t do what you want either, unless you convince them the change was their idea, is in their best interest, or involve them in the decision making process.

Employees who can have the hardest time with change are often those in positions where extreme attention to detail and repetition is required. Employees most likely to embrace change are those in self-managing positions requiring the ability to shift gears and juggle tasks.