

Managers have tough role in any business

Over the last 20 years, more and more Americans have grown dissatisfied with their jobs. According to the Conference Board, a business research organization, the number of dissatisfied workers has grown consistently over the last two decades.

In the late 1980s, 61 percent of workers said they were satisfied with their jobs. Today, that figure is less than 50 percent. For managers, this can be an alarming figure, particularly when considering recent research suggests a direct link between profits and worker satisfaction. The more satisfied workers are, the research supports, the better the company does.

So what's a manager to do? There's no magic wand to wave that can make an employee satisfied at work. Because each employee is different and companies both large and small tend to boast a diverse group of workers, it's almost impossible to make everyone happy. However, there are steps managers can take in an effort to boost morale around the office.

- **Set a good example:** Managers are often in a difficult spot. A middle manager, for example, might not be involved in big decisions, but is involved in dealing with the people affected by those decisions.

To make things go smoothly, a manager must set a good example. For instance, many offices

boast summer Fridays, wherein Fridays during the summertime are half days. However, if the company recently had to lay workers off as a result of the economic crisis, perks such as summer Fridays might no longer be offered because there's simply too much work and too few people to do it. Managers can set a good example by adhering to these rules, giving the impression that they're part of the team, too, regardless of their job title. Workers often feel alienated when asked to adhere to rules that their bosses get to ignore. Keep spirits high by following the same rules as those working under you.

- **Be courteous:** Managers typically don't want to be told what to do, and the people they manage are no exception to those feelings. While some cases call for instruction and prioritizing, always be courteous when asking employees to do something.

Most workers know what their job entails and what needs to get done, so instruction is often not even necessary. On the occasions where instruction is necessary, a "please" or "thank you" can go a long way to keeping morale high.

- **Be careful if creating a competitive environment:** Many managers tend to feel a little competition never hurt anyone, and that's true more often than not. However, competition and comparison are two different things. If you put

two employees in a competition and both perform well, congratulate both, regardless of whose work might have been better. While it's OK to recognize the one whose efforts proved extraordinary, it's counterproductive to turn a competitive environment into one where employees feel as if they're always being compared to one another. Managers are supposed to put workers into situations where they can thrive. Routinely comparing one worker to another is more likely to create animosity between coworkers than a positive environment where each person contributes positively in their own way.

- **Respect a vacation or off day as just that:** Thanks to cell phones, the Internet and a host of other technological advancements, it's now easier than ever to get in touch with employees who are out of the office. However, that doesn't mean this should be the norm, especially when workers are on vacation or simply taking a personal day.

Even for employees who are satisfied at work, being contacted on scheduled time away can give the impression that their time isn't as valued as the company's bottom line. Unless it's an absolute emergency, let employees enjoy their time away from the office.

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