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Personnel Notes

"Communication" by Linda Gregurek

Communication...is it all talk? It certainly shouldn't be. In our busy world, we have a tendency to always talk about what we need to do, but few of us actually go through with it. As managers, you know how important it is, but because of your busy schedule, you don't make the time to communicate or listen to your employees. Communication is a training process. If you communicate with your employees, they will eventually open up to you. You should listen to your employees' ideas, questions, and even complaints. It takes a concentrated effort on your part as an employer. Employee morale plays an important role in everyday business. It helps to keep good, loyal employees. With the employee market as it is today, it's a key to successful business.

One on one discussion with supervisors, plant workers and administrative staff encourages open lines of communication. If an employee feels comfortable having a conversation with you, they will also feel comfortable coming to you with a new idea or even a complaint. Managers and supervisors should promote open communication by having regular staff meetings. In these staff meetings, management should listen to the positive as well as the negative with an open mind. The employee may have something to say that is really bothering him or her and it should not be treated as something trivial. Too frequently, employers underestimate the importance of each employee's everyday role in the success of their companies.

OFFICE GOSSIP

While any kind of gossip is ultimately destructive, if it's occurring in your office, you should consider the kinds of things that are being said. It could lead you to very important information on how your employees feel. Gossip and rumors are started for several reasons. Employees thrive on speculation and misguided thought when receiving either conflicting information or no information at all. Keep your employees informed. Make them feel they are a part of the team. Give them a pat on the back. Let them know that you know they are doing a good job and you appreciate what they accomplish on a day-to-day basis. Creating this type of culture in the workplace leads to better employee morale and eliminates the need for counter-productive gossip.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

There are many different ways to make sure internal communication happens in our everyday operations. Employee handbooks play a very important role in communication. With these handbooks, the employee knows exactly what you expect of them and how those expectations

relate to company policies. Company newsletters are another way of keeping the employee up to speed on what's happening in the company. Bulletin boards can be posted throughout your facility with all kinds of information. People will stop in passing and read an inter-company memo because they truly are interested in what's happening. It's a plus to have it translated for those who speak a different language. Of course with the technology world as it is today, inter-office email is a great resource for communicating memos, information or just a simple thank you for help on a particular project.

Suggestion boxes are another great idea for all employees. Form a committee to review the suggestions each week. You may be able to implement some of them while others may not be feasible, but look at them all, regardless. Respond to the employee that made the suggestion, outlining your intended actions or explaining why the suggestion can't be implemented. Taking action on the suggestion is not always as important as communicating to the employee that you have listened and responded.

Last but not least, always have an "Open Door Policy." Anytime an employee has the ability to walk into your office to discuss an idea or a problem, a wide line of communication has opened for you and the employee. Make the "Open Door Policy" a part of your employee handbook. Sometimes we are so focused on revenue and the bottom line that we forget the people who make it all happen. Communication is a major part of creating a successful work environment and maintaining healthy employee morale. Make focusing on good communication a team effort and see what a difference it makes!

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