

Is your work place working?

Why positive employees translate into bigger profits

Michael Harrison

When you walk into your office, are you greeted with smiles, jokes and a feeling of well-being? Or is there silence, grumbling or negativity? Being aware of and understanding the attitude of your workforce is essential to the success of your business. Negativity in employees leads to increased staff turnover, customer complaints, errors, accidents, and more, all of which can severely impact the bottom-line. Alternatively, having a positive work environment and good morale, can result in higher productivity, revenue and lower employee turnover.

Negativity breeds negativity

Everyone experiences occasional feelings of anger, fear, and frustration. Normally they are fleeting and of no serious consequence. But when negativity becomes a habit for an individual, for the team, or worse still, for the entire organization, it dramatically affects productivity and thereby the profitability of the enterprise.

As Gary Topchik puts it, negativity is a 'virus' that spreads rapidly from one person to another (Topchik, Gary, Purging Workplace Negativity), and must be stopped before it can spread to cause irreparable damage to the organisation's morale and productivity.

Negative attitudes employees experience at work may result from:

- Excessive workloads
- Lack of faith in management competence
- Fear of technology
- Anxiety about job security
- Lack of challenge in their work
- Insufficient recognition for the level of contribution and effort put into the job

How to stop the negativity?

Communicate! When dealing with negative individuals, teams or departments, give negative employee(s) ample opportunity to vent their feelings and thoughts. As they share their gripes,

listen quietly. Repeat what you think is being said to ensure you are communicating effectively.



Stop the flow of gossip at its source! Gossip creates animosity, tension, and ill will. When dealing with the gossiper, speak to them directly. Invite them to join you to meet with the individuals that are being talked about. Usually, the gossiper will stop spreading the rumours and not gossip again. Also, have additional special projects to help the gossipers re-channel their energies.

Start at the top! As a manager, the attitude of a workplace starts with you. You do not have the luxury of wearing your negative emotions on your sleeve. Your every move is being watched and emulated by your employees. Therefore, you must be positive, consistent and predictable in the way you interact with your employees and how you deal with life's challenges.

Happy employees mean a happy company

The importance of a positive attitude in the workplace seems obvious. Good morale inspires employees to put in time and effort that, in turn, increases productivity. Attributes such as enthusiasm, self-awareness, truthful expression, attention to detail, ability to take constructive

criticism in the right spirit, result in multiple benefits to the business.

If you look at your employees you know who the positive people are. They are typically smiling, productive, popular, and respected. Some reasons employees have a positive attitude are:

- Knowing what is expected of them
- Having the right materials and equipment
- Being given an opportunity to succeed
- Receiving regular recognition/feedback
- Feeling that management cares about them as a person
- Having a mentor or someone encouraging their development
- Sensing that their opinions matter
- Feeling that they are important to the company
- Respecting their fellow employees who perform quality work
- Having close relationships with co-workers

How can you foster good morale?

Employees that are trusted, cared about, told the truth, guided, coached and enabled with tools equipment and good processes and training always seem to respond well.

Here are some other specific things you can do to encourage positive attitudes.

One-on-one meetings. Connect with individual team members on a periodic basis to find out how things are going— both at work and life in general. Casual meetings will establish deeper relationships, trust, and loyalty, as well as help you know the current status, strengths, and limitations of each employee.

Team meetings. Frequent team meetings serve to keep all employees informed. Knowing where the company stands in its revenues and

profitability help employees understand the "big picture," know what they are working toward, and address what needs added attention. These meetings also provide a terrific forum for voicing ideas, and concerns.

Delegation of responsibility. Have each employee take responsibility for some task. Delegating responsibilities for keeping operations running smoothly gives everyone the feeling that they are contributing toward a greater good. Be careful of overburdening some with too many tasks, but if done casually and regularly, delegating responsibility should help create a stronger sense of teamwork and shared responsibility.

Training programs. Staff retention and morale can be positively affected with the introduction of a training program. Whether this program includes brown-bag lunch sessions or formal classroom education, employees recognize training as a company's investment of time and money into improving the knowledge and skill sets of the employees and will feel a stronger sense of commitment and appreciation to their company.

Your business can literally rise or fall based on the attitudes of your company. A positive morale gives employees a reason to want to go to work. If someone dreads going to work, they will probably find ways not to be there by taking sick days or, worse, looking for another job. Morale is important to monitor and, if you're having a hard time keeping a pulse on the attitudes in the workplace, get the opinions and perspectives of some managers and senior team members. Finally, remember that workplace attitudes start at the top. Stay enthusiastic and positive at the workplace— positive attitudes are contagious and can lead your company to success.

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