

Nancy Riesz, MBA

Being a Boss People Love to Work With

The statistics are staggering: 80% of the people who are unhappy at work say it is because of their boss! Could your employees be saying this about you? With all the present focus on bottom line, we sometimes forget it is people who are providing those bottom line results.

You cannot motivate others because motivation comes from within. What you can do is create the environment and incentives for your employees to want to do what needs to be done. This is not difficult to do. It starts at the top— with you! It continues by providing an environment that allows each employee to be at his or her best. It thrives by recognizing and respecting the whole person that comes to work every day. And rewarding him for what he does well.

So, how do you Mr. and Ms. CEO or Executive Director attract and keep great employees? The answer is basic, although not always simple. Let's start with R-E-S-P-E-C-T as Aretha Franklin says! Respect is about attention to, consideration of and relationship with your employees. It is about truly knowing each of your employees as a person, not the role they fill in your organization. We bring more than a physical body and intelligence to work. We also have heart and soul, emotions and dreams, feelings and opinions. You need to know and esteem the whole person and connect with each person.

How do you find out what is important in your employees' lives? By spending time with them. And, honoring their perspectives and regarding their values and beliefs even when they are not the same as yours. You also acknowledge they may do some things better than you.

Another way to show respect for your employees is to get out of your office and into the places where they work. Practice 'Management by Wandering Around.' Experience what they go through often enough so you understand and can show true interest.

One of the simplest ways to show respect for another is to ask their opinion. Employees often know how to do many things better, faster or cheaper – if given a chance. Ask them what is keeping them from doing the best possible job? And, what can you do to make things easier? The important element here is to incorporate their input into the final outcome. If you ask, but do not listen, you will lose respect. Speaking of listening, do you do most of the talking? You cannot learn about what is going on in your employees' lives or work if you are always talking. Unfortunately, employees report most of the conversations with their boss are one way, comprised mostly of them being criticized. They do not feel they are heard. Listen, listen, listen – and gain the respect of others.

Another important boss practice is to eliminate the attitude virus before it infects your whole department, site or organization. My experience has shown the most

expensive mistake we make is not letting those people go who are not good for the organization. An employee with a negative attitude, poor work ethics and habits or with a chip on her shoulder is definitely contagious and impacts performance and morale more than anything else. Even if she only “infects” one other person each day, the infection spreads exponentially until your whole staff is demotivated within a couple of weeks. Yet, the employee is not always at fault. You may be! Sometimes they do not have the skills or tools necessary to do the job well. If the problem is skill centered, provide the necessary training. And, make sure they have the essential equipment and right materials to do a great job in a timely manner. If the problem is attitude, be SPECIFIC about what behaviors and outcomes you expect and a time frame in which the change needs to take place. Make sure the employee understands it is up to him to make the indicated improvements. And, maintain a no tolerance policy with this. Deal with the employee kindly, compassionately and humanely, yet help them find a new job if the necessary changes do not happen. You are not helping anyone by keeping a bad employee on the job. In fact, what often happens is your best employees leave because they lose respect for you as a boss and are unwilling to put up with this behavior, by you and the infected employee.

A third recommendation I have for you bosses is to adopt what I call The 80/80 Rule. This “rule” says: spend 80% of your time with the 80% of your staff who do their jobs well. Nurture and guide these people and help them develop. Ignore the 20% that cause the majority of your problems and can take the greater part of your time and they will leave on their own accord. I have found that a difficult employee is just like a problem child. If he cannot get attention in a positive way, he will do whatever it takes to get your attention. Ignore the behavior and it stops as he has no audience. Or, he will leave to find someone who will give him the attention he craves. Another aspect of this “rule” is to focus on the behavior and outcomes you want

from employees rather than what you do not want. Rather than saying; “Don’t be late!” remind staff to “Be on time.” Because we receive what we focus on, encourage employees by complimenting what they are doing well. Help employees learn and develop by asking how they would do something rather than telling them how you would do it. Guide them to the best answers by asking more questions. And, remember, praise in public, criticize in private.

As the boss, you have the opportunity and responsibility to provide top-line performance and bottom-line results. It’s up to you. When you take the time to get to see your employees first as a human being and then in role they fill, you know why they are doing what they do in the way they are doing it, and what is important to them, both at work and home. Your employees will then feel respected and appreciated. Each person is special and so much more than what they do. Accentuate the positive. Recognize accomplishments. Reward quality work and excellent service. And, remember, the most important factor in any business is not the buildings or the amenities – it’s the people who are working with and for you. One of my favorite sayings is: Happy employees lead to positive bottom line results. We spend so much money on advertising, marketing, new equipment and beautifying the grounds, yet, the best strategy is to develop happy employees who create happy customers. It is up to you – your ROI depends on how you spend your time and energy.

Nancy Riesz, MBA, is an interpersonal effectiveness expert who teaches people how to work together ... better. Through her presentations, seminars, coaching, and writing, she works with people and their organizations to create places where people want to come to work, be bosses people love to work for, and helps people do more of what they do best. Nancy can be reached at Nancy@SuccessCatalyst.com, 513.325.8288 or through her Web site at www.SuccessCatalyst.com.