



The Frontline Supervisor

Helping You Manage Your Company's Most Valuable Resource – Employees
Solutions Employee Assistance Program 1-800-526-3485

Q - Another supervisor told me that one of my best employees frequently bullies coworkers when I'm not around. My employee is so gentle—I find it hard to believe he's a bully. Should I investigate or ignore this?

A - Ignoring this situation poses risks. If your employee engages in bullying behavior, it can harm morale and undermine team performance. Even worse, other employees may lose faith in your leadership if they think you've been duped into believing that this individual is gentle. This can breed cynicism and weaken your authority. Most supervisors eventually learn that when it comes to employees, appearances can deceive. A seemingly kind, thoughtful worker can come across as a demon to others. Investigate the matter by meeting privately with the employee—and then his coworkers—to gather information. Also, observe how this person interacts with his colleagues and look for evidence of intimidation or discord. You may want to visit the EAP to learn about the nature of bullying in the workplace

Q - I get visibly irritated when employees say one thing and do another. I'm not rude, but I make my feelings clear and I'm not very forgiving. I'm apparently disliked for being "mean." But how else am I supposed to handle substandard behavior?

A - You may have heard the saying, "The meaning of your communication is the response you get." You may not think you are rude, but what matters is what others think. If you frequently seem irritated with your staff, you make it tougher to build trust with them. The next time you get angry, experiment with a different response. For example, you can summarize the situation in a pleasant but perplexed tone and ask, "Can you help me understand how this happened?" Another approach: Define what constitutes substandard performance and then ask, "Based on that definition, do you think what happened here qualifies as substandard?" The more you invite employees to take responsibility for their actions, the more you will invite them to take charge of personal change. And by speaking in a calm, non-accusatory voice, you avoid appearing mean.

COMMUNICATION AND BEING A GOOD LEADER

Being a good leader means avoiding the pitfalls of poor communication. Good communication can be difficult under the best of circumstances, but especially difficult as a leader. The following are ideas reported on in "Being a Bad Leader: 5 Ways to Improve Your Leadership Abilities Through Communication" By Shari Alexander in TrainingMag.com.

There are five shortcomings you can avoid by improving your communication. As leader, it is essential that you have good communication skills and techniques.

1. Lack of energy and enthusiasm. If you're not interested and energetic about what your mission or project is, it will be hard to get your employees energized and on board about it. It's important for you to determine the positives about these things in order to communicate that with your staff.

2. Lack of clear vision and direction. Painting a clear picture of your goal for your team will help them see the future they are working towards. What will be different (better) if they achieve the goal? What will change and improve in the company? What positive feelings will they feel? Be as clear and detailed as necessary.

3. Don't collaborate. It's important to motivate a team in order to empower them. Collaborating with your team engages them in the success of any venture. Improve your collaboration skills by developing and agreeing on processes and responsibilities, as a group, ask for feedback, and communicate with all parties throughout the process.

4. Resist new ideas. Half of communication is listening. You don't have all the answers, but your team might. You may never learn the fantastic solutions your team has to offer if you keep talking.

5. Lack of interpersonal skills. Perception is key. If you are perceived as a grump, you'll be avoided, if you're looked at as open, you'll be approachable. Practice keeping your body language open and engaged. Avoid crossed arms, poor eye contact, and being distracted by other tasks.

We may think many of these things are obvious but it can be easy to lose sight of them in our everyday transactions. Taking the time to be aware of the above can greatly impact our leadership skills.

"A good leader inspires people to have confidence in their leader.

A great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves."

~Anonymous