

Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

# Making use of your assets: encouraging, receiving and using employee feedback

Soliciting meaningful and constructive feedback is vital in improving workplace relationships and practices. Although it's commonplace for managers to give employees feedback, receiving their ideas and input is equally important.

Programs that encourage employee feedback not only build trust and loyalty but inspire and motivate employees to be the best they can be. They also help track progress and improve employee retention. Managers and people leaders who take a less-traditional leader-follower approach to giving and getting feedback often discover that employees are more responsive, positive and respectful towards each other and those in charge. By effectively encouraging, receiving and making use of employee feedback you'll:

**Capitalize on new opportunities:** Your employees have a wealth of knowledge that may, for whatever reason, be overlooked. Because those on the frontline deal directly with the community, suppliers and clients, they can often spot trends or uncover solutions to problems you may not even know exist. Don't underestimate the weight of their opinions or ideas: you'll glean invaluable insights that can shape the direction of policies, processes and the success of your organization.

**Improve productivity:** A happy worker is a productive worker. As a leader, your goal should always be to inspire and influence employees to reach their optimal potential. Your employees' attitudes, opinions and goals should be the foundation of any plan designed to motivate, excite and challenge workers and ultimately improve job performance.

**Identify effective practice:** Managers often juggle several tasks and responsibilities at once. As a result, it can be difficult for you for you to know which management practices work and which don't unless you are told by your employees. Asking for detailed employee feedback on job tasks, processes, and new projects helps organizations achieve best practices, identify weaknesses and eliminate what doesn't work.

**Self improve:** Managers who encourage and respond to employee input grow more self-aware and show a greater willingness to stop and assess their own performance as well. It's never easy to accept criticism, but encouraging feedback—good or bad—shows courage, humility and strength of character.

**Invite two-way communication:** At the end of the day, most people just want someone who'll listen. Active listening improves mutual understanding, trust and most importantly, demonstrates that you value people's input. Listening to feedback will bridge the gap between your employees, their needs and expectations, and will encourage further feedback. It will also help build an environment where workers feel comfortable approaching you voluntarily with invaluable ideas, critical challenges or keen insights that can be crucial to the success of your team and organization.

**Build trust and loyalty:** Integrating your staff's insights into the fabric of the organization creates loyalty. Employees who contribute to the well-being of an organization are invested in its success and have more incentive to stay for the long haul.

**Take it in then Take Action!**

Merely receiving feedback is not enough. To be an effective manager, you must compliment feedback with action. Nothing is more frustrating than when feedback falls on deaf ears. Implementing feedback will help build employee morale and trust, thereby increasing retention.

Employees want to be heard but are often afraid to confront superiors. Providing workers with tools and platforms to express themselves is integral to the success of any feedback initiative. Encourage feedback with:

**Phone and internet hotlines**: Like employee satisfaction surveys, anonymity is essential as workers are much more likely to offer up honest and candid feedback.

**Face-to-face meetings:** Whether you're inviting employees to participate in brainstorming sessions or informal lunch meetings, face-to-face meetings are a personal way to give and get feedback. By eliminating the ambiguity of e-mail and voicemail, you can engage with employees on a deeper level.

**Help Feedback Flourish**

Some key points to remember when soliciting feedback from your team:

**Demonstrate value:** Show your employees why their input is necessary and how they can make a difference. Once you use their input, direct them to a website, report or poster that illustrates any changes that were made because of their concerns or suggestions.

**Encourage**: Don't wait for your employees to come to you. Encouraging opinions is a sure-fire way to show them you genuinely appreciate their input.

**Give credit:** Did a specific employee provide you with a groundbreaking idea? Give credit where credit is due.

During a time of economic uncertainty, employees look to you to provide them with job security. When financial incentives aren't in the budget, you must find other ways of motivating and inspiring your employees. The easiest and most effective way of demonstrating appreciation for them is by getting their feedback and taking action to show employees you were listening. Your organization and your employees will thank you.

If you require support to deal with a sensitive employee situation, contact LifeWorks·fgi to find out more about the consultation and training services your Employee Assistance Program provides.

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