



The Ultimate Guide to Bringing Out the Best in Your People



What is the essential element of building and running a successful business?

Providing the best products and services is central, but you'll never succeed at these goals without hiring the best people and getting the most out of them.

Let's start by looking at the big picture. The job of a leader is to inspire other people to be the best versions of themselves. We all have a past. We all have circumstances and history that have led us to where we are now. Where we go from here is up to us. As a leader, one of your jobs is to help your people grow from where they are to become the best version of themselves. But how?



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It starts with looking in the mirror. If you want to lead people in the right direction, you need to be moving in that direction. One of the first, most important steps is to care about people. Caring about the people you lead is part of leadership. When people see that you care for them, it helps build trust. Showing people you care for them is not difficult. Sometimes, it's as simple as asking someone how they are doing and listening to the answer.

People can tell if you genuinely care about them. When they know that you care, it also gives you the authority to deliver hard truth. When you do need to speak hard truth, you must be unequivocal. However, you have to do more than asking people to change. You have to give them the tools they need to make the changes you are asking of them. They need to know that you have their back and that you are rooting for them to succeed. And they need to know that you are willing to offer more than words, you are eager to invest in their growth.

Finally, inspiring others to be the best versions of themselves requires vulnerability. People don't flock to leaders who put themselves on a pedestal; they want real leaders. We are all human beings, and all of us have inherent flaws. When you accept that everyone, yourself included, has weaknesses to overcome, it makes you a more relatable, more effective leader.

Your Employees: Who Are They?

Too many organizations struggle with groupthink. Groupthink is the tendency for everyone in an office to approach problems similarly. Dissension from the majority opinion is discouraged, or even deemed unacceptable. If you want to take a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach to your business, you want groupthink. However, if you would rather have an environment where your people are free to develop innovative, creative solutions, groupthink is the enemy.

The world of business is always changing. The practices and processes that made sense yesterday may not work today. Andy Stanley says, "What got you here won't get you there." Meeting the challenges of business today requires creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. People who think and act differently approach problems differently. Different thinking ultimately leads to different, better results.



Focus on Feedback; Trust in Transparency

Increasing trust is an integral part of long-term success. Employees must trust leaders to make smart choices and lead the organization in the right direction. Leaders must trust their employees to follow through on their tasks. Trust is a vulnerability with each other, as evidenced by being open to one another about failure, weaknesses, and fears.

If you want to have this environment in your workplace, it will take a transparent approach. First, open the lines of communication. When you face difficult choices, include your employees in decision-making, and ask for their help and feedback. No matter your final decision, this will encourage your employees to rally around you and support your choice.

Does this sound like the type of environment you want in your workplace? Being transparent with your employees and keeping them updated about what's going on is a crucial step toward this goal.

Treat Everyone as an Individual

To an effective leader, employees are more than just a number. Every team member is an individual, and they are all critical to success in your organization.

When it comes to motivating your employees, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all incentive. Tailoring incentives to each employee is part of recognizing their individuality. How do you get to know your employees? Again, it comes down to trust. One of the most important things you can do is let your guard down so that your employees can get to know you.



Another technique is to get out of the office. Sitting around a conference table brainstorming can generate good ideas, but it doesn't encourage openness and relationship. Taking an employee to lunch or even just for a quick walk outside is an excellent way to escape the office's stress, encourage communication, and prime your brain to be more creative in the office.



If you want to keep your employees happy and productive, you need to know and understand them. You need to know when to challenge someone, and when to hold back.

Some of your employees respond well to challenges, while others prefer stability. Watch your employees closely and get to know them better. Observation is the key to building a flexible, powerful, loyal team.

Appreciate and Acknowledge a Job Well Done

If you've been a manager for very long, you should recognize the imperative to acknowledge and thank your employees when they do their job well. Most people respond positively to expressions of appreciation and value.

Some leaders may feel that expressing appreciation is a sign of weakness. Perhaps you think that people don't deserve any accurate acknowledgment for doing their jobs. While this is a legitimate viewpoint, when your employees feel that their contributions are valued and recognized, they feel like an essential part of the team.

Let Technology Serve Your People

Technology is an inescapable part of the modern workforce, no matter what your industry. When your employees have the proper technology and training, they can be more productive every hour they spend at work.

Different employees use technology in different ways and for various purposes. Some employees are more comfortable, familiar, and knowledgeable about technology than others. Because of this, and other factors, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all technology solution.

Today, most of us are accustomed to always having the powerful, portable computers that we call smartphones with us. Most of the tools of productivity we use every day are available on every phone or tablet platform. Because of this flexibility, many companies empower their employees to choose their own devices. Giving your employees this freedom is another way of expressing your trust in your employees.

Encourage Intelligent Risk-Taking

We've all heard that making mistakes and learning from them is one of the primary keys to success. Leaders are often asked to tolerate mistakes to create a learning organization and avoid the paralyzing fear of failure. However, making mistakes is not what leads us to success; it's smart risk-taking.



As leaders, we need to cultivate a culture of smart risk-taking. But first, we must define what we mean by smart risk-taking. When everyone in your department is taking significant, unnecessary risks, it can jeopardize the business.

The best leaders encourage their followers to take risks within clearly defined boundaries. When an employee feels that going beyond the limits is appropriate, a risk-review procedure can help you evaluate the risks and rewards. An organization that encourages smart risk-taking can push the boundaries of the normal and do something extraordinary.

Define the Mission

Your mission is the central purpose of the organization. It's the driving force behind every action you take. The mission statement encapsulates your long-term goals. The best mission statements do more than encapsulate your purpose; they help inspire and rally your employees around a common goal.

When you develop your mission statement, consider what makes your company unique. While a vision statement expresses a company's long-term goal, a mission statement answers three questions: Who are you trying to reach? What are their needs? How will you meet those needs?

No matter what else you do, the actions you take as an organization communicate what you value. Those actions do more than express the values of your mission statement; they demonstrate them.

For the most part, your employees will do what they think you want them to do. Communicating your intentions and mission is the best way to focus their efforts.





Let Autonomy and Freedom Reign

Think of your role as a manager. Do you want to spend your entire day micromanaging your employees, or would you prefer instead to give them the freedom to solve the problems you give them? Micromanaging your team can send the message that you don't trust them. If your employees feel like you don't trust them, they have no reason to go the extra mile for you.

You can't just allow your employees to do whatever they choose. Complete freedom is not a useful definition of autonomy in the workplace. Autonomous employees should be working in isolation with no guidance. If you want workplace autonomy to be valuable and practical, you must clearly define the tasks, and then release your employees to accomplish those tasks. Workplace autonomy communicates your trust and respect for your employees. Giving your employees autonomy delivers the message that you see them as a dependable, integral part of the organization.

How do you measure employee effectiveness in an autonomous organization? The number of hours someone works doesn't define productivity. When your employees are ready to make their schedule, all that matters is that they do their job well and complete tasks on time. When you give your employees the ability and authority to choose how they work, it demonstrates your trust in them and your commitment to putting your employees first.

Help Your Employees Do More

If you aren't pushing your team to do more, your organization may be less productive than you hope. However, if you drive your employees too hard, they may get burnt out and shut down. Pushing your employees to do more is a balancing act, but when you do it correctly, they will look back and be surprised that what they've accomplished.

Some leaders give their employees tasks to complete just for the sake of keeping them busy. Busy work may keep them productive in the short term, but it's not a recipe for long-term success. If you want to be an effective leader, share these two elements when giving your employees a task:

- Tell them what you expect them to do and what the timeframe is.
- Give them a sense of purpose behind the task.

When your employees understand why their tasks are important and how they contribute to the organization's overall success, it helps motivate them. Sharing the reason behind the job can motivate your employees to go further.

Before you can tell your employees the reason, you must understand yourself. If you can't explain why a task is, and how it contributes to the organization, you should stop and reevaluate it.



Hire the Best People

"Hire the best people" is excellent advice, but this simple statement says nothing about accomplishing it. Today, the standard method of choosing a new employee is with a job interview. Unfortunately, many job interviews do little more than follow a predictable script. Everyone knows the standard question and the usual answers. The typical job interview does very little to answer these two key questions:



- Does the applicant have the ability and desire to contribute to the goals of the organization?
- Do they have the ability and skills to do the job you're asking of them?

If you want to discover the answer to these questions, a job interview is not a useful tool. What's better is to watch them interact with the people they will eventually be working with. It's not just about assessing a potential employee; it allows your applicant to get a more accurate picture of your business.

Finally, every applicant should be free to ask questions. The questions they ask can tell you a lot about a person.

Every business needs the right people to excel. Additionally, team members must work together as highly functional units. If team members don't work together, failure is in the future of the company. You build a good team by recognizing that your team is comprised of humans and that everyone wants to make a contribution. You build a good team by learning about each other's strengths and weaknesses and passions and letting team members operate in their strengths.



Putting the practices described above to use provides opportunity to bring out the best in your people, and take your business to the next level. It starts with you! You model what it means to work with others. Working together with others makes the difference between a team that gets things done and an extraordinary team.

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