

Communication

Bulletin TM for Managers & Supervisors

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

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The difference between good and great leaders in a word? Trust

How to build the most important bond with employees, colleagues

As a leader, your team's success relies on one thing more than anything else: trust.

Your team needs to trust you know the way, believe in them and will take responsibility regardless of outcomes.

"At its best, leadership inspires people to pull together collectively to achieve something great," says Lolly Daskal, author of *The Leadership Gap: What Gets Between You and Your Greatness*. "That kind of inspiration requires a trustworthy leader – one who treats leadership not as a source of power, but as a channel for serving others."

Building trust creates a community of devoted, empowered employees who will make your team and its projects successful. In her

research, Daskal found these actions build and maintain trust.

Stand – even alone – for principle

Trustworthy leaders stand up for the greater good, even when it goes against the prevailing trend or "the way we've always done it."

Sometimes the greater good is exactly what your employees want. Sometimes it's what the company needs. You gain trust by recognizing and fighting for the decision that helps most.

Help others be better

The best leaders don't just train or coach. They invest in relationships with employees

*Please see **Trust** ... on Page 2.*

Sharpen Your Judgment

'Old timer' says age prompted firing & sues

"Daniel Davis is suing us," announced Supervisor Eric Vanderweghe.

HR Manager Lynn Rondo sighed and closed her laptop.

"Daniel's termination was completely legitimate," said Lynn. "We set goals he knew he had to meet and he didn't."

"Daniel is saying that he was really fired for his age," Eric said.

"He thinks we purposely gave him impossible goals so we could get rid of him."

"How could we be biased against his age?" Lynn asked. "In fact, we had many younger candidates to pick from, but we hired Daniel.

"He just didn't work out, it's as simple as that," Lynn replied.

Did comment show bias?

"Apparently there were a few incidents with his manager," Eric explained.

"Go on," said Lynn.

"Daniel claims he was called 'old-timer' a few times. And Daniel saw an email where the CFO said he was seeking out some 'young sharks' to bring on."

When Daniel sued for age discrimination, the company fought to get the case dismissed.

Did the company win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.

The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The *Bulletin* helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

Trust ...

(continued from Page 1)

and colleagues. They support others' initiatives to grow and improve.

You want to nurture development and advancement – even if it means you'll lose good employees – by helping them find opportunities and training.

Face issues head-on

Trustworthy leaders don't sweep issues under the rug. They don't avoid difficult conversations or situations.

Instead, they build trust by acknowledging situations are difficult and need to be addressed so everyone can overcome and learn from them. Approach difficult situations as something you'll go through together, not something people will have to shoulder alone.

Tell the truth

It seems obvious that to build trust, you must tell the truth. But some leaders shy away from the truth when it's uncomfortable.

It's important to tell employees when they aren't meeting expectations – so you both can work on ways to improve – and when they're exceeding expectations – so you can work on ways to help them move up.

TECH CORNER

Take control of cluttered email folders: 6 tips to try

Good email management can improve your daily routine and help you better organize your life.

Start by tackling the bursting inbox, then maintain it daily.

Steps to a zero inbox

- **Do something with every email.** Either respond, archive, delete or schedule a to-do list if the email requires a more in-depth response.
- **Don't use your inbox as a to-do list.** Create tasks in a separate area.
- **Unsubscribe.** If you constantly delete

Equally important is truth from above. Be straight with your team about company information that affects them, especially if it's negative, such as layoffs or downturns.

Be steady under pressure

Not much is more reassuring than a leader who stays calm and consistent under pressure. Leaders who do the opposite – become agitated, frustrated and angry – in stressful situations build walls, not trust.

Instead, you want to maintain a calm vigilance in stressful times – perhaps your busiest season or when your team is taxed with unforeseen demand – to prove you believe the team can prevail.

Take responsibility

To build trust with your team, colleagues and bosses, you want to take responsibility at one important time and pass it along for another.

Point at yourself when your team falls short or makes mistakes. Give your team or colleagues the credit for successes.

Others rally behind leaders who share victories and take responsibility in defeat. Use both situations to help everyone involved learn from what worked and what didn't.

Source: Lolly Daskal, lollydaskal.com

certain emails, take a minute to unsubscribe when unwanted ones pop up.

- **Block out time.** Don't leave your inbox open unless you're waiting for something important. Some business pros handle their inbox for 30 minutes at the start of the day and then move on.
- **Try plug-ins.** Boomerang lets you set a time for emails to reappear in your inbox at the time you need them.
- **Use your mobile device.** Use downtime, like waiting in line, to get rid of emails.

Source: techrepublic.com/article/top-5-ways-to-get-to-inbox-zero

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

■ Protect yourself – and staff – from bad information

Ronald Reagan was considered The Great Communicator. One reason is he followed his rule: "Trust, but verify."

We trust the information we get without verifying it. That often leads to poor decisions and opinions based on misinformation.

Bad information happens in three ways. Here's how to clean each one:

Method. Gather yours with intention, not haphazardly. Read all the details instead of gleaning. Listen to the whole story, not just the lead. Look at data.

Source. Find your three most reliable sources – those that are consistently accurate – and make those people or outlets your go-tos. Recognize that social media and opinion-minded posters usually aren't the best sources.

Information itself. Follow Reagan's advice. Verify before you act on it.

Source: Frank Sonnenberg, tinyurl.com/info468

■ What to do about critics

Everyone's a critic – and work could have the most.

Here's how to deal with the most persistent and even occasional critics in your workplace:

- **Consider the credentials.** Not everyone with something to say is qualified to say it. Consider if the critic has some authority on the subject.
- **Let them speak.** Whether the critics have credentials or not, let them speak their mind. Confronting those without credentials will only drag it out. You can learn something from those with credentials.
- **Turn the tables.** Use the criticism as a reminder of what you *don't* want to do: be that negative critic who brings others down. Instead, look for the positive side of what you perceive as flaws and share that with employees and colleagues.

Source: tinyurl.com/critic468

Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

1 How I tamed the email monster

Like most leaders, I had a lot on my plate every day, and I felt overwhelmed.

Some parts of my work were more overwhelming than others.

One in particular was demanding way too much of my time, energy and focus: email.

So I stopped. Yep, I stopped managing email ... for a time.

Then I revamped how I handled it.

Face to face was still best

I created an auto-response, encouraging the sender to get in touch with another member of my team.

In part, it reads: *Realizing that I prefer living in my genius 100% of the time and checking email is NOT in my genius, I have given it up #freedom.*

For work-related communications, I (and my company as a whole) switched to a messaging tool that's helped free everyone from mounds of email.

And I encourage people to talk to me face to face.

It's still the most effective form of communication!

(Suzy Baitz, founder of Poo~Pourri & Supernatura, shared her success on ThriveGlobal.com)

2 Training overload led us to find 'experts'

I was responsible for training employees on all our operations. But it was getting impossible to keep up.

We frequently made process updates, and I didn't have time to give employees enough training on those changes.

To handle the workload, I sent employees emails with instructions they needed to read on their own time.

As a result, they simply kept doing the work the old way.

Needed help from the whole team

I convinced my company to let me pull employees off the production floor to train workers.

Their co-workers listened to them, and they were able to take more time to show them step-by-step changes.

It was such a success, I was able to hire some of those trainers full-time.

Now, everyone follows the most up-to-date processes, so they're working more efficiently.

(Cathy Cox, Operations Training Supervisor, Holly Frontier Refining, El Dorado, KS)

3 Short-staffed? Here's how to make it work

Over the last few years, we've had multiple organizational changes that left us with fewer staffers.

I didn't want to overload employees, but the work had to get done.

Approached it as a team

To handle the challenges, I took a team-based approach.

I gathered my staffers and let them know what needed to be done. Then I asked if anyone was interested in a certain job.

They spoke up, and we discovered an upside to the changes: It's opened up doors for them to learn new skills.

Since they're learning to do tasks they're interested in, they don't mind the heavier workload as much.

We rotate the most popular tasks so everyone gets a chance to try them.

This approach has helped employees stay positive through the changes.

It's also improved teamwork. Employees readily help each other.

(Janice Herron, Office Manager, Chesterfield Environmental Division, Milton, FL)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

■ Candidate's social media is too much for us!

Question: We did an online search for a job candidate and found posts that border on racist. We should disqualify him immediately, right?

Answer: Not necessarily. But keep both sides of this issue in mind, says Eric Meyer, an employment law attorney at FisherBroyles.

If you uncover racist behavior in your online search, it might not affect the candidate's ability to do the job. But if you bring him on staff and there's an incident, you put yourself at risk for legal backlash because you knew his racist tendencies and hired him anyway.

On the other hand, almost everyone has posted something online he or she shouldn't have and it doesn't truly reflect who he or she is, Meyer says.

Your best bet is to decide the kind of content that disqualifies candidates – and enforce it across the board, Meyer says.

Source: tinyurl.com/social468

LIGHTER SIDE

■ Never say never – and more 'never' advice

At work and in life, we often say, "Never say never."

Here are some other "nevers" to keep in mind:

- Never keep up with The Joneses. Drag them down to your level. It's cheaper. – *Quentin Crisp*
- Never answer an anonymous letter. – *Yogi Berra*
- Never slap a man while he's chewing tobacco. – *Will Rogers*
- Never, under any circumstances, take a sleeping pill and a laxative at the same time. – *Dave Barry*
- Never get annoyed if your neighbor plays music at 2 a.m. Call him at 4 a.m. and tell him how much you enjoyed it. – *Peter Darbo*

Source: Reader's Digest.

COMMUNICATION NEWS

Dealing with the bully next door (or cubicle)

There's a bully lurking in your hallways. Wondering how can we be so sure? Sixty million Americans are affected by workplace bullying. It happens nearly everywhere.

The problem for leaders is most bullying happens out of their sight or by slight measures, so it's often difficult to detect. Even worse, 30% of bully victims don't tell anyone.

Prevent bullying

The best way to deal with bullying is to prevent it. These tips will help:

- **Check your culture.** Highly competitive companies or departments are ripe for

bullying. Winner-take-all situations encourage people to mentally push around others. Better bet: Set group goals and reward teams for accomplishments.

- **Train.** Everyone from front-line employees to the C-Suite needs to know what bullying looks and sounds like, and what to do if they witness or experience it.
- **Create and enforce consequences.** Bullies are often superstars, and leadership sometimes overlooks their behavior because they value their performance. It's critical to establish behavior expectations and punish and/or terminate *anyone* who violates them.
Source: tinyurl.com/bully468

Interruptions mean they're not getting your point

How can you be absolutely certain that your instructions or message is sinking in with staffers?

Answer: Keep track of how many times they interrupt you while you're explaining a process or new project.

They're trying to tell you something!

Lots of staffer interruptions can signal a communication problem.

The problem may be they're not paying enough attention, they missed the point

of prior instructions, or that you're going through instructions too quickly.

And the opposite can be true ...

Sometimes not getting any feedback or engagement from workers is a sign they've tuned out and don't care.

Signs of people checking out are a lack of nods, eye movement and smiles.

By the same token, yawns and fidgeting are sure signs they're zoning out. Better take a break and go back to key points later.

Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes. The company won when a court dismissed Daniel's case.

Daniel's attorney argued the "old-timer" comment and the CFO's preference for "young sharks" showed the company was biased against Daniel's age, and his alleged performance problems were just an excuse to fire him.

But the court disagreed. It said the company had clearly set performance metrics for Daniel to reach, and he failed to do so.

There was clear documentation supporting the reason for Daniel's termination.

The court went on to say the "old-timer" comment was just a stray remark. As for the CFO wanting to bring on "young sharks," the court

determined that was unrelated to Daniel's firing – the CFO was talking about hiring for a junior sales position.

Analysis: Keep paper trail of decisions

The company kept solid documentation to show Daniel's performance issues were why he was let go.

However: Comments such as "old-timer" have caused trouble for companies. Remember that a few offhand comments about someone's age, race or gender can be used to show bias.

(Based on *Downey, Bonner v. Adloox*. Dramatized for effect.)

Quotes

There is more power in telling a little than in telling all.

– Mark Rothko

It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret.

– Jackie Joyner-Kersey

What seems today inconceivable will appear one day, from a higher stand point, quite simple and harmonious.

– Max Planck

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