

Creating a sustainable company culture

Businesses performing well in the current climate recognise the opportunities that lie within the office walls... your key staff! Developing a healthy business culture will prove a valuable investment, helping you to retain, motivate, and propel key team members and your business. It all starts with strong values and capable leadership.

Fear is a massive barrier to innovation and improvement. Employees face many everyday workplace fears, including: fear of making a mistake, being made redundant, of public speaking, of dealing with a disgruntled client and fear of conflict.

Communication is an effective tool in minimising workplace fear. Through consistent, clear communication and greater employee engagement, you can develop an optimal mix of skills for the future, while fostering awareness, collaboration, and mutual trust. When your team feel trusted, their sense of belonging will grow, as will their confidence, their achievements and their resounding loyalty to you and your business.

1. **Express the business' core values.** If your team truly understand the principles behind the business, then they need not be governed by a set of defined rules. Grant them confidence to act honourably and sensibly of their own accord.
2. **Develop a strong sense of trust.** Be consistent, transparent, and follow through on promises. Relationships thrive on clarity and you'll get out what you put in.
3. **Openness from the top.** Encourage open discussions, and always air conflict. Accept that everyone is different and everyone should be comfortable telling you if they're unhappy or disappointed by your actions. Listen, show compassion and accept feelings whether or not you agree with them.
4. **Minimise fear of rejection, encourage appropriate risk-taking.** Your team will willingly experiment and thrive on developing better processes and products.
5. **Avoid blame, focus on problem solving.** Team members must be accountable for their mistakes, but blaming and shaming only destroys confidence and stifles creativity. Encourage people to openly accept personal responsibility.
6. **Optimism over pessimism.** Positivity spreads like wildfire... and setbacks can prove to be great opportunities. Be patient and find the positive outcome.
7. **Collaboration builds relationships and increases output.** Don't encourage narrow minded competitiveness. Collaborate and bring your team together.
8. **Healthy relationships are built on mutual respect.** This goes for your staff and your clients or customers - respect is fundamental. Especially the kind where you respect someone even if they disagree with you, annoy or oppose you.
9. **Let everyone have their say.** Dominant personalities can outshine quieter teammates. Encourage those less likely to put their hand up and make it clear that all opinions and ideas are treated equal.

10. Recognise effort and success. As the boss, you stand to learn a lot from your team. Be specific with praise, share the love and keep morale at an optimum.

Fear generally develops in an information vacuum. In the absence of truth, employees will assume negatively. Regularly communicate the state of your business, its future direction and any potential hurdles with your team.

Honest and clear communication will promote greater respect for your leadership. It can be a springboard to better performance for your team and your business.