

## Like Seeds in Fertile Soil Work Environments That Nurture Productivity

In a business world where company loyalty and morale can't be boosted by simply dangling a bonus like a carrot, employees are more likely to be dedicated to a manager who understands and motivates them. Another factor that promotes loyalty is the work environment. This factor can be controlled to an extent by managers. Here are some ways to promote a healthy work environment for workers and the organization as a whole:

### Put yourself in your employees' shoes

Some of the world's most successful companies have placed their managers on the factory floor as part of their training. While this practice is rarely implemented in manufacturing today, the spirit of "let the boss work in the trenches" still works for many of today's top companies. Howard Schultz of Starbucks was known to pop into his company's coffee shops and step behind the counter. Sam Walton of Wal-Mart had a habit of driving around in his old pickup truck to personally visit his retail outlets. The point is, when managers spend time doing the job their employees are doing, they become better equipped to



understand the challenges that come with the job and show more empathy toward their employees.

### Provide positive feedback

Managers should attempt to praise employees whenever possible, especially in front of other employees. Employee of The Month awards and other types of recognition methods are often used in big companies, but their effectiveness tends to decrease as employees perceive them for what they are: institutionalized and not genuine. Spontaneous and informal praise or rewards



are far more effective. Instead of instituting an Employee of The Month program, empower and encourage middle management and line management to provide praise where praise is due, and supplement verbal or written praise with gifts or “tokens of appreciation”. It has been shown that the motivational effect of a gift worth \$100 to an employee is more motivating than a \$200 cash bonus (so long as the gift’s value is not overtly advertised).

### **Lead by example**

If children think that “Do as I say, not as I do” is worthless advice, so will employees. This attitude was often prevalent with managers who came out of the ranks, especially in blue collar or government positions. Having paid their dues in order to climb up the ladder, they felt some justification in sitting back and barking out orders while others did the work. This approach has rarely, if ever, gone over well.

A manager has to first and foremost set an example for his or her employees. A manager does not have to know more than his/her employees about all aspects of the job, nor does he/she have to have the final say in all decisions. Leading by example has more to do with how to interact with fellow employees, how to collaborate, and how to conduct oneself in the workplace. A manager who shares, collaborates, empowers and effectively

communicates will, more often than not, see the same positive behavior displayed by employees.

### **Open lines of communication**

Managers need to clearly communicate their expectations for each employee. Some workers prefer detailed guidance and goals, while others only need to know the desired end result, preferring to figure out the details on their own. Whatever an employee’s preferred style, seek to match it, and strive to be available should questions come up.

### **Resolve conflict effectively**

Another important aspect of communication relates to conflict resolution, a crucial skill that a manager must acquire. This means dealing with disagreements before they escalate further, respectfully listening to the opinions of everyone involved, and working together to come up with a mutually-beneficial solution. On the upside, the best ideas can sometimes come out of conflicts. Assume that conflicts are unavoidable and don’t be afraid to encourage employees to disagree with other employees or even with their managers.



PsychTests offers several assessment tools through their **ARCH Profile** system that can assist a manager in understanding his or her employees' personality and work style. These include the **AMPM (Advanced Multi-Dimensional Personality Matrix)**, **EAPT (Employee Attitude and Personality Test)**, and **CAMOP (Career Motivation Profile)**. ☞

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