

December 2023

CHUKUNI
Communities Development Corporation



Serving the Red Lake
and Ear Falls Area of
Northwestern Ontario



Small Business Newsletter





Nurturing a Diverse and Productive Workplace: Balancing Employee Dynamics and Potential

In any workplace, the dynamic interplay between employees can significantly influence productivity and morale. Striking a balance between different work styles, capabilities, and personal circumstances is crucial to fostering a healthy and inclusive work environment. However, when faced with a situation where employees' performances vary, and external factors such as tenure, age, qualifications, and life choices come into play, it becomes paramount for management to navigate the delicate landscape with sensitivity and tact.

The Scenario

Consider a scenario where an existing employee's performance is steady, yet unspectacular, while a new employee demonstrates exceptional efficiency and skill, consistently exceeding expectations. As management recognizes the newer employee's potential and assigns them more projects, the existing employee, who has been with the company for a significant period, begins to feel undervalued and marginalized. Adding complexity to the situation, the existing employee has recently transitioned from one gender to another, prompting concerns about discrimination within the workplace.

Maintaining Equilibrium

In such a complex scenario, fostering an environment that acknowledges and appreciates the diverse strengths and contributions of each employee is vital. Here are some strategies that management can implement to encourage both employees while maintaining a respectful and inclusive work culture:

1. **Transparent Communication:** Establish open lines of communication with both employees, emphasizing the value each brings to the team. Regular feedback sessions can provide insights into individual strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring that both employees feel heard and valued.
2. **Tailored Project Assignments:** Recognize the unique strengths and capabilities of each employee and assign projects accordingly. While the newer employee may excel at swift project completion, the experienced employee's comprehensive understanding of existing workflows and processes can be utilized for complex and nuanced assignments.
3. **Acknowledgment and Recognition:** Implement a system that acknowledges and celebrates achievements and milestones for all employees. Recognize the new employee's stellar performance while also appreciating the

existing employee's dedication and loyalty to the organization. Regular recognition can reinforce a sense of belonging and motivation for both individuals.

4. **Professional Development Opportunities:** Offer tailored professional development opportunities that cater to the specific needs and interests of each employee. Encourage the existing employee to participate in training programs that align with their evolving role, while providing the newer employee with opportunities to further refine their skills and expertise.
5. **Inclusive Workplace Policies:** Ensure that the company's policies and practices promote inclusivity and diversity. Implement sensitivity training and awareness programs that educate employees on the importance of respecting colleagues' life choices and experiences. Establish a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and provide a safe space for employees to address any concerns related to bias or prejudice.
6. **Mentorship and Collaboration:** Encourage a culture of collaboration and mentorship within the workplace. Facilitate opportunities for both employees to learn from each other's unique perspectives and experiences, fostering a supportive and cooperative work environment.
7. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Consider offering flexible work arrangements that accommodate the diverse needs and circumstances of employees. Enable the existing employee to manage their workload in a way that aligns with their transition, while allowing the new employee to maintain their proactive work style.
8. **Constructive Conflict Resolution:** Establish a structured framework for resolving conflicts and addressing any tensions that may arise between employees. Encourage open dialogue and mediation sessions to ensure that any grievances or misunderstandings are addressed promptly and effectively.

Embracing Diversity and Respecting Differences

In today's multifaceted workplaces, diversity in terms of skills, backgrounds, and life experiences is an asset that can drive innovation and success. By fostering an environment that embraces this diversity and encourages mutual respect and understanding, management can cultivate a workplace culture that values the contributions of all employees. Nurturing a supportive and inclusive environment that allows each individual to thrive at their own pace and according to their unique skill sets is essential for fostering long-term employee satisfaction and organizational success. By prioritizing empathy, open communication, and a commitment to equality, management can create a workplace where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their best.



Dealing with Manipulative Employees and Customers

Make no mistake, manipulative people can damage your business. Navigating interpersonal dynamics is a crucial aspect of maintaining a healthy work environment. Unfortunately, manipulative individuals pose a significant challenge, whether they are employees or customers. Recognizing and effectively dealing with this negative behavior is essential if you are going to foster a positive workplace and ensure customer satisfaction.

So, where do you start? First, you need to become adept at recognizing manipulative behavior. Watch for individuals employing subtle tactics, such as guilt-tripping, gaslighting, or playing the victim, to achieve their goals. In employees, this behavior might manifest as a constant need for attention, credit-stealing, or undermining colleagues. On the customer side, this could include demanding unreasonable discounts, threatening negative reviews, or exploiting company policies.

Next, foster a workplace culture that promotes open communication and mutual respect. This is essential for preventing and addressing manipulative behavior among employees. Encourage transparency, collaboration, and a sense of shared responsibility. Create an environment where employees feel comfortable reporting concerns without fear of retaliation. By emphasizing teamwork and positive communication, you can create a culture that discourages manipulative tendencies.

Clearly define policies and expectations. This will provide a framework for your employees and customers alike, helping to prevent manipulative behavior. Ensure that your company's code of conduct explicitly addresses manipulation and communicates the consequences of such behavior. Make it known that manipulative actions will not be tolerated. This will create a deterrent for those tempted to engage in such behavior.

Arm your employees with the knowledge and skills they need to identify and address manipulative behavior. Conduct training sessions that educate staff on the various tactics manipulators use and provide guidance on how to respond appropriately. This might involve assertiveness training, conflict resolution workshops, or coaching on effective communication strategies. Equipping employees with the tools to navigate these situations can significantly reduce the impact of manipulation.

When dealing with manipulative customers, it's crucial to establish clear boundaries. Clearly communicate your company's policies and limitations. If a customer is making unreasonable demands or threatening negative reviews, calmly but firmly assert your position. Establishing and maintaining boundaries helps prevent customers from taking advantage of your business while preserving the integrity of your products or services.

Whether it's an employee or a customer, keep detailed records of manipulative incidents. Document specific behaviors, conversations, and any actions taken to address the situation. Having a thorough record can be valuable if you need to involve human resources, legal counsel, or take further action to protect your business.

In some cases, addressing manipulative behavior may require professional intervention. Human resources professionals, psychologists, or conflict resolution experts can provide valuable insights and guidance. If manipulative behavior persists, don't hesitate to seek external help.

Dealing with manipulative employees and customers is a delicate task that requires a combination of awareness, prevention, and intervention. By fostering a positive company culture, establishing clear policies, training employees, setting boundaries with customers, documenting incidents, and seeking professional assistance when needed, you can effectively navigate the challenges posed by Machiavellian behavior. As a result, you will promote a healthier work environment and maintain strong, respectful relationships with your customer base.



Coach's Corner - Eight Ways to Stick To Your New Year's Resolution

Sticking to your New Year's resolution can be a challenge, but with the right mindset and strategies you can increase your chances of success. Here are some tips to help you stick to your resolution:

1. Set realistic goals: Make sure your resolution is achievable and specific.
 - What are the small and manageable steps to help you work on it?
2. Write it down: Put your resolution in writing and keep it somewhere visible, like on your fridge or as a screensaver on your phone.
 - What is the best way for you to keep your resolution top of mind?
3. Create a plan: Having a detailed plan will keep you organized and motivated to achieve your resolution.
 - What does your plan include?
4. Share your resolution: Tell your friends, family, or a supportive community about your resolution.
 - Who are the people in your life to help create a sense of accountability and provide support and encouragement?
5. Break it into smaller milestones: Instead of focusing solely on the end result, break your resolution into smaller milestones.
 - What are some of the milestones included in your plan? How will you celebrate these milestones?
6. Track your progress: Keep a record of your progress. Seeing how far you've come can be incredibly motivating and help you stay committed.
 - How will you track your progress?

7. Stay positive and resilient: Understand that setbacks and slip-ups are a normal part of the process.

- What have you learned from your setbacks or mistakes?

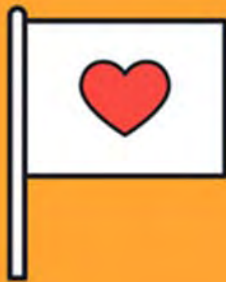
8. Stay focused on the why.

- Why did you make this resolution in the first place? How will things look when you have succeeded?

Remember, sticking to your New Year's resolution requires dedication, perseverance, and patience. Be kind to yourself throughout the process and celebrate every step forward, no matter how small.

Paul Abra,
Motivated Coaching

5 WAYS TO SHOW YOUR EMPLOYEES GRATITUDE



SEND THANK-YOU AND APPRECIATION NOTES

Encourage your team to send thank-you notes to others by equipping them with sticky notes to share on a public board, or engage in a web-based platform that sends ecards for appreciation and recognition. Whatever the method, set the example by sending out thanks yours often and with good cheer.



CELEBRATE TOGETHER

Whether it's for a birthday, national holiday or workplace milestone, celebrations are a great way to show your team gratitude. They encourage employee participation while showing that these occasions are worthy of taking time during work to recognize them as a team. Celebrate with a potluck, a catered meal, or even a workplace party, depending on the scope of the occasion.



MAKE A RECOGNITION BOARD

A large bulletin board in the break room can be used for employees to post public thank yous or other notes of appreciation for all to see. If your office has an employee portal online, you can share shout outs electronically for the team to see and share alongside other workplace news.



ENCOURAGE & REWARD INNOVATION

By inviting your team to participate, ask questions and make suggestions, you say, "Thank you for being part of this team. Your voice matters." By recognizing the potential of your team, you show that you value their needs and ideas on how to make the organization stronger. Create task forces, leave suggestion boxes out, and host brown bag lunches for dialogue.



OFFER A WELLNESS PROGRAM

Wellness programs help your team feel healthier and happier at work and when they go home. You can offer rewards for participating in wellness activities, or engage in a web portal that provides wellness support and tracking, and even develop workplace events like walking groups and healthy brown bag lunches to make it a social activity.

LEARN MORE ABOUT EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION:

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“Connect the dots between individual roles and the goals of the organization. When people see that connection, they get a lot of energy out of work. They feel the importance, dignity, and meaning in their job.”

- Ken Blanshard

SAVE THE DATE



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