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EMPLOYEE TRUST – WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FEAR THE WORST

Have you ever asked yourself; “Is this employee being upfront and honest with me?” We may have a gut feeling or something maybe does not size up, yet we have no concrete evidence of deceit. This is a difficult situation as the repercussions of falsely accusing an employee may hinder a future of trust.

It seems sometimes as managers of employees that we have to cultivate a sixth sense in order to know what is happening behind the scenes with certain individuals or groups of individuals within our organizations. And for those of us who have that sixth sense....it can be a benefit and a curse. The benefit being that we can sense an issue and hopefully prevent it from growing into a problem. The curse is that we can sense a problem and then we have to deal with it. And if we don't act on that sense and deal with it, we kick ourselves later!

Experience typically shows that it is not advisable to ignore our sixth sense. When we ignore our senses or question our feelings, the doubt sets in and then we question our own abilities to know when something is not correct. This almost always backfires.

So what to do. First I will share what not to do. And that, my friend, is to not ignore the problem. Begin documentation. Not later, NOW. A sense of something not being quite right can come and go and be easily forgotten. Example: You discover an employee has not been completing assignments as expected. You think about this discovery and you recall a sense of this a while backand maybe more than one time. Darn it, why didn't you act on it at that moment? Perhaps you could have resolved this situation before it became a problem.

More of what to do. Step back. What if you would have documented this situation the moment you felt that gut reaction. A suggestion would be to have a private file on our PC or better yet a handy notebook (yes people still use these). Keep a notebook that is easy to get to. Jot down occurrences on scrap paper and move that information to the PC file or notebook. We must bring ourselves to be in the habit of noting things as they happen.



EMPLOYEE TRUST (cont.)

Now you can take action. When confronting an employee, one of the most important rules to follow is to focus on facts. A good measure to determine between what is truly factual and what is not is to ask yourself if the “fact” can be argued. If it can be argued, it is not a fact. Facts make for easier and honest communications. Facts will support you well in court. Example of a non-factual confrontation: “Joe, you are constantly coming into work late and signing in that you are arriving on time.” Example of a factual approach: “Joe, over the last 4 weeks I personally witnessed you arriving 15-20 minutes late on 4 occasions. These occurrences were on each of the last 4 Mondays. When I reviewed your timecard it shows that you are arriving on time.”

There are some efforts that we can take to decrease these types of occurrences. This includes taking some time to observe our employees’ behaviors more often. Spend time around them and listen; listen well. Sometimes by just taking the time to truly hear our employees we will prevent the bitterness that is often the result of dishonest behavior or even retaliation. As a next step we may choose to learn more about our employees’ needs. This can come in the form of simply asking, performing an employee survey or forming task groups to identify issues within our organization. Perhaps we will discover that training is needed. In some cases when employees are more confident in their work performance they will be less likely to act out or be dishonest. Assure that there is a real sense of the ability to openly communicate within our organizations. These are ideas that can work well in any size organization and across all industries.

It comes more naturally to some, but learn to listen to that sixth sense. Our senses grow as a result of years of various types of life and work experiences. Our instincts are a highly valuable resource right up there with our degree, diploma, and work experience and work history. Arguably they may be worth much more. By learning to trust our senses and value what we have learned, we will support our selves and our organizations by utilizing all of the skills we have to offer.