



The Care & Feeding of Your Staff
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Ask anyone who has left a job what they want in their next position and they'll likely answer: "To be appreciated, to make a difference, and to know that my work counts."

They may not be aware that what they are actually craving is a stronger leader, one who believes in them, sees their potential and has their back.

People who choose to seek new employment are typically not leaving the actual position, rather they are moving away from a weak, ineffective or demeaning leader.

Don't fool yourself into thinking that a hefty paycheck and periodic bonuses will keep your employees producing at the top of their ability. Everyone — I repeat, everyone — needs to be seen, heard, and appreciated.

I hear the following from leaders: "I know I'm doing a great job and don't need to hear it all the time, why should my team need this constant reinforcement?"

Annual reviews are not enough. They are a challenge to prepare and deliver. They then go into a file with little if any follow-through or accountability. Your people need more from you.

Look around. See your team's dedication, creativity, tenacity, hard work, loyalty. They flourish through hearing what you see in them. They deserve your genuine interest in who they are, what their goals are and what motivates or fulfills them.

Want to be a stronger leader for your team? Here are my Top 7 Tips on what's important to them.

Respect. Imagine being in a position where you're asked to give your all but you don't feel the respect of your supervisor. Though seemingly unimaginable to those reading this article, it happens, frequently. How does one show respect? Dedicate uninterrupted time and focus, seek opinions, give feedback and demonstrate appreciation.

Make a difference. Everyone has ideas. You simply need to ask. According to Alex Hiam, author of *Business Innovation for Dummies*: "What people want most is the chance to make a difference...when your ideas are heard and one of them actually gets implemented, it's such a boost." Give your employees an opportunity to change the way things are done. You don't have to have all the answers.

Attention. There's that in-crowd of one or a few people who have the boss's focus. It can be superstars or those who need the most help. Others feel left out. Check in with all people on your staff at least weekly. Look them in the eye, stop other activities, and seek to know how they are. Over time, this tells you who they are.

Responsibility and Trust. Possibly the hardest part of being a leader is delegating work that you know you can execute faster and more efficiently. This isn't growing your team. They want to continually move forward. They crave your trust. They want more responsibility. You crave more time to do what you do best—lead. Start small, be selective, trust and verify. The more you give to your team, the more you all thrive.

Autonomy. Trusting your employees to know where, when and how to accomplish their goals increases productivity, creativity and longevity. Daniel Pink, author of *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, says, "Let people figure out the best paths to the goal, rather than breathe down their necks all the time." Establish a mutually-beneficial schedule of keeping all parties informed and on track.

Vision. Your people want to know what their future holds. Where is your company going? How does it fit in with industry standards? What opportunities are ahead? Where will you be a year from now? How will their work specifically contribute to this? What is their career path?

Safety. Safety doesn't exist naturally in all organizations. Safety means protection from bullies at all levels, safety to speak their mind without repercussion, safety that their job is not in jeopardy, and physical safety in the work environment.

The care and feeding of your staff not only makes for a more enjoyable work environment, it enhances your bottom line. I challenge you to become the leader your team craves. It's a win/win for all involved.

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