

WHAT EMPLOYEE WANTS FROM A LEADER

AN OFFICIAL CLIENT UPDATE OF PT HEADHUNTER INDONESIA



A while ago, I had a chance to do a phone interview with Bayu, an energetic sales professional in the manufacturing company. I was searching for a talent to be placed in a managerial position at one of my company's clients, and Bayu seemed like a perfect potential candidate.

When I asked why he wanted to move from his current company, he told me about his rough relationship with his manager and this made him consider finding a new job opportunity. These are some of the lines that I remember from him during our interview:

"I don't want to work with a boss who doesn't respect their team."

"My boss is very selfish."

"He's very close-minded with feedback from his team."

Bayu's story about his relationship with his boss is not unique. Every once in a while, we hear stories from someone like Bayu, someone who has experience working for bad leaders—those who can rise to the top

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of the management position despite their inability to effectively manage their team.

According to the survey held by McKinsey & Company, 75 percent of participants chose their leaders as the most stressful aspect of their job. This survey clarifies that leaders strongly impact employees' psychological safety at work. Working with bad leaders can lower employees' motivation to work which leads to having a weak work performance. A good leader, for instance—someone who can guide his team—can minimize employees' frustration with their work, and as a result, employees feel happier at work and more motivated to work.

Reflecting on my interview with Bayu and gathering some research about what employees expect from their leaders, these are some suggestions for leaders to consider to create a healthy working relationship with their team:

Key Leadership Skill: Ability to listen

According to "The Top 5 Qualities Employees Want In A Leader," there is an unmet need in the modern workforce for leaders who can listen. Leaders need to listen to their employees because it will create space for employees to voice their opinions on business decisions and actions, creating an environment of improved employee morale and engagement.

Based on a LinkedIn survey of nearly 14,000 employees worldwide, only 8% of employees reported that their mid and senior-level leaders are practicing this skill "very well." Leaders need to enhance their ability to listen. Through listening, leaders can generate potentially great and profitable ideas.

Leaders need to implement an employee listening strategy. This could

be done through an integrated approach that includes employees' involvement in decisions and improving the organization by incorporating employees' ideas. Another good strategy is providing one-on-one discussions. It gives employees a chance to speak directly with their leaders and encourages them to discuss any topic related to work.

Key Leadership Skill: Respect

Research said that 57% of employees quit their jobs in 2021 because they felt disrespected at work.

Based on a study from the Novak Leadership Institute at the University of Missouri, the way leaders communicate with their team members matters, especially if it's delivered respectfully because it can have positive outcomes for organizational success.

Treating everyone with respect is the fundamental foundation of any relationship, but most leaders have difficulties expressing it. According to Harvard Business Review, leaders can demonstrate respect more consistently.

Leaders can start to show respect by valuing diversity. It can be shown by recruiting their team from diverse backgrounds and treating them equally. This way, leaders can be more open to hearing diverse perspectives and opinions from different backgrounds or personalities.

Other ways that leaders can show respect are by staying in touch with individuals' issues and concerns, helping teams resolve their conflicts, and giving honest feedback. This will help leaders to establish a culture of respect if they do it consistently and continuously.

For instance, leaders do not just remain silent when team members have conflicts. Leaders help their teams to resolve their problems. A respectful leader is aware of team conditions and willing to mend conflicts. They are aware that conflicts in a team would become a source of frustration that encourages feelings of disrespect.

Key Leadership Skill: Good Management

A successful company is a result of good management. Good management is led by a good manager. Good managers can improve employee satisfaction by supporting employees and helping them perform at their highest potential. Good managers know how to delegate responsibilities. They're not trying to micromanage their team or control too many aspects of an employee's day.

Micromanagement is avoided by a lot of employees. Not being given control and freedom at work makes employees frustrated. Micromanaging managers can make employees feel that they lack autonomy. Being accustomed to receiving orders from leaders drives employees to lack initiative and only become "order takers". As a result, employees who have out-of-the-box ideas for the company's progress can give up their intention to propose their ideas because they are afraid that their leaders will reject them. In the end, employee creativity is hampered because there is no opportunity to develop it.

Meanwhile, good management practices can have a positive impact on the company, such as increasing employee productivity and motivation and fostering a positive work environment.

Another example of a company that has a good management system is when the managers believe in the spirit of collaboration. One key to solving challenging business puzzles or finishing difficult projects is recognizing that very little gets accomplished in business without the support of other people.

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Indra Nooyi is one of the successful leaders who have exemplified these qualities. She is known for her leadership as the former CEO of PepsiCo, one of the world's largest food and beverage companies. Nooyi was known as a leader who actively listened to their employee's concerns, ideas, and experiences. She was also considering diverse perspectives and this way impacts a culture of respect within the organization.

As a leader, Nooyi supported their employees to perform at their best potential. For example, she encouraged her team to find an alternative to the expensive ingredients and did not stop motivating them until the alternative arrived. Another thing that Nooyi did was send out thank you letters to the parents of her employees, saying how proud the company is of their children's contributions. She did that to make her employees feel happy and motivated. She shows her respect to their employees with meaningful appreciation.

Conclusion

Everything starts with the leaders as they are the foundation of a successful business. To have a successful business, leaders must know how to work collaboratively with their team.

However, many leaders are still struggling to work with their teams and don't even know where to improve.

Based on my research and the case study I have presented above, leaders can start to exercise their listening skills to be more receptive to ideas and suggestions that might solve business challenges. From the perspective of employees, there's nothing more fulfilling than having a leader who listens and values your ideas.

All good relationships, professional or personal, must have a sense of mutual respect. In this case, both employees and the leaders need to work respectfully. This means respecting each other's boundaries and communicating in a way that doesn't humiliate one another.

My last suggestion for leaders is to avoid micromanagement as it doesn't truly help your employees to grow and learn. Give your team clear guidance and let them have a sense of autonomy without watching over their shoulders too much.

Good relationships between leaders and subordinates create an environment that encourages employees to work well. In this way, a positive work environment will be formed and employees can unleash their potential and creativity at work.

To all leaders, you can start to reflect on your practices and seek feedback from your teams to find out whether you already have these all key leadership or you still need improvement or development support.

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