

# Walk: Bosses must be good role models

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of employee motivation.

The first observation is to evaluate how the "boss" models the behavior she is seeking in her employees. Here are five steps to increasing employee performance as well as increasing your personal effectiveness as a business owner or manager.

## Check your attitude.

Do you complain about your customers, the work hours or the work setting? Do you make excuses, moan and groan about inadequate tools in your business, your competition or the community? Do you see the cup as half full or half empty? Or do you have an attitude of gratitude? Are you thankful for the constantly ringing telephone as well as the slow periods that give you time to get things done that you might not otherwise?

Attitudes are just like a disease. They are contagious. Employees constantly watch and evaluate the boss' attitude at work. Check your attitude and see what kind of message you are sending to your employees.

There's a good chance whatever attitude they "catch" comes from the boss. In turn, that attitude will be transmitted to your customers and clients. If you want to develop employees with an upbeat, positive can-do attitude, then you consistently must have this attitude too.

it is important for the boss to role model this behavior as well. If the boss is going to come back late from a luncheon appointment, then the boss too must call in and inform the staff of the delay.

Courtesy runs both ways. Using communication and reliability establishes strong parameters that say everyone in this business abides by the expectations and work ethic agreed upon.

## Respect and confidentiality

Nothing destroys a business culture faster than gossip, disrespect and negativity. Your employees deserve to be treated with respect. Barking orders, making demands in a condescending voice, belittling and making jokes about an employee is a sure way to sabotage your business culture.

Practice speaking to your employees as if they were your most important customer and see what happens. Business owners and managers who have engaged in this communication exercise of speaking to their employees as if they were the most important customer have had mind-boggling results.

Employees are suddenly more positive, energized and enthusiastic about their work. Loyalty increases as does the reported level of work satisfaction for the employee.

# Changing the business culture

Business owners and managers who wish to change their business culture can do so by remembering one critical concept and by engaging in five important steps. The one critical concept to remember is the fact that you as the business owner or manager are a role model for your employees. Employees tend to emulate the attitudes, responses and behaviors of the business owner or manager.

Regardless of how much money you have spent to develop fancy mission statements, the element that has the greatest impact on employee performance



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*Walking the Talk*

is the example you set for your employees. I frequently conduct interviews with business owners and managers who are concerned about the low level

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## Problem-solving capabilities

Many business owners confide that they wished their employees could be counted on to deal and manage problems more productively. I frequently hear the comment "common sense is so uncommon." How do we develop this ability in employees?

Many managers are fearful employees will either alienate the customer or "give the store away." With just a little bit of coaching, role playing, strong parameters and guidelines, most business owners and managers can provide their employees with the tools needed to resolve 95 percent of the problems arising daily.

Customers are grateful when empowered employees can fix or rectify problems on the spot. Customers hate taking time and energy to push problems up the ladder of authority in search of a resolution.

## Work ethic

If you wish your employees to come to work on time, stay for their entire shift and honor the time breaks allowed, then

## Ask for feedback

Ask your employees to tell you what your customers complain about. Always be open to receiving negative feedback from customers and employees. Many times employees don't know how to solve problems proactively.

Make it clear to employees that any time a customer complains, it provides the business with an opportunity to improve. Becoming defensive, denying there's a problem or getting angry doesn't help anyone. Role modeling positive behaviors that are receptive to bad news gives you a better chance of making sure you get the bad news before it gets buried or hidden.

In Northern New Mexico, we want to engage in good business practices. It's what makes our visiting guests want to come back time and time again, and these improvements help make Santa Fe a better place to live and do business.



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