

## **Building Human Capital - Your Major Business Asset**

Even the smallest companies deal with people, and an essential ingredient to being a successful business owner is good interpersonal skills. It is important that you build strong relationships — not only with your clients and customers but with your employees. In fact, your ultimate success may be determined by how you navigate these relationships.

It takes everyone involved to make a business successful, and as the leader in your business, you're responsible for ensuring that each employee understands his or her importance to your business's success.

Here are 10 tips to help you build strong and positive relationships with your employees:

1. **Preach trust, and be worthy of their trust.** Again and again, studies have shown that business environments with high levels of trust foster significantly more creative and more productive employees; this in turn drives business profits. Therefore, make trustworthiness a top priority in your company. Preach trust to your employees, and then conduct yourself so as to be worthy of their trust. When employees rely on and have confidence in the integrity of their superior(s) and their colleagues, they will feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns. The result is an increased focus on common goals and teamwork.
2. **Treat your employees with respect.** Treat each employee with respect and consideration, regardless of their status within the business. Listen to what they think and feel, then show them that you've listened by taking action based on their input. Even if you don't agree with them, never announce so in a team setting. Honest and open communication encourages respect, and a clear, mutual respect will engender trust.
3. **Periodically admit your weaknesses.** Employees will respect you more if you're candid about your strengths and weaknesses. Your employees are looking for a leader and a mentor, not a superhero or a robot. Admitting to an employee when they are stronger at a task than you will encourage them to do their best.
4. **Keep your promises.** If you promised to give someone a day off in exchange for overtime, it is your responsibility and obligation to give it to them when they ask for it. Breaking your word is one of the surest ways to erode trust. Conversely, staying true to your word is one of the best ways to build it.
5. **Support your team.** When employees know they can depend on management's integrity, their trust and faith in the company as a whole grows. Employees want to have confidence and faith in their employer and the company, and they will work harder when they do. As a business owner, it's your job to stand behind your employees.
6. **Lead with your heart.** When your employees understand that you care about their well-being, a bond will form. Do your best to exhibit goodwill and patience. Strive to be a good teacher and communicator. Show tolerance. By leading with your heart and supporting your employees throughout the workday and beyond, chances are good that your business,

and you, will benefit – often in both financial and personal ways. You may even find that staff respond with their hearts at a time when you as the boss, need it most.

7. **Create growth opportunities.** Consider it your obligation to provide an interesting work environment and professional growth opportunities for your employees. Encouraging them to continue their education or professional development, and paying for it, also shows your support. Your employees will work harder and more effectively with this level of support.
8. **Don't just act interested, *be* interested.** Take a sincere interest in your employees, their professional goals, their families, their personal hobbies, and their passions. When employees feel that you're truly interested in them, they'll be far more dedicated to their work and to the company's success.
9. **Say thank you.** You can never express too much appreciation for the work your employees do. One of the biggest motivators is a simple "thank you". Be specific in your praise, focussing in on something they did with a particular client or job assignment.
10. **Be an open communicator.** Strive to keep the lines of communication open between you and your staff. Many successful managers make it a regular point to solicit their employees' concerns and ideas. Invite them to lunch or out for a drink after work, just to listen. You never know what you may learn, what novel idea someone may have, or how this simple gesture may benefit your business.