

The magic formula to becoming a great boss

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



An old cliché states that employees don't leave jobs, they leave managers. A recent survey by supports this truism.

Of the 7, 200 adults polled, about half said they'd left a job " to get away from their manager." The same survey stated that managers account for up to 70 percent of the variance in whether or not employees engage. A report from reveals that engaged employees lead to higher productivity levels and reduced costs from turnover.

Not surprisingly, increased productivity and decreased turnover have a significant positive impact on the bottom line.

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But the obvious question is, just how do managers engage employees? We frequently work with first-time bosses, helping them to learn how to manage others and create high-producing cultures. As notes, inexperienced managers are likely to make mistakes by either becoming too friendly with employees or not getting to know them as people. Managers may also make decisions and then ask for employee input or fail to provide clear direction. Any of these can lead to employees leaving.

We have found that simple rules are easier for new managers to follow. So, if you're a manager, we've shared below what we call the " magic formula" for creating an engaging environment. Bottom line, employees want to be recognized, contributing members of a winning team, we say. Below, we break this down for the formula to being a great boss.

1. Make employees feel like a vital part of the team.

As a manager, you need to set goals for each team member that are specific and measurable. They should also tie to the overall goals of the organization. This means talking to your employees about your vision for the organization and sharing what you want to accomplish and what part they will play.

The next step is to give employees immediate feedback (both positive and negative) on their work products and behaviors. You need to meet with each employee one-on-one each week or two to review his/her progress toward the goals. For instance, Polly meets with her assistant, TJ, every Tuesday morning for an hour. The two use this time to review TJ's work, address questions, solve problems and set priorities for the next week.

Coaching and employee development are the focus: Polly makes sure to ask open-ended questions and listen to TJ's responses. By doing this, she can help TJ become a better problem-solver and find better solutions (i. e., " How do you think you might approach that?" or, " What are your priorities this week?" or, " What issues are you having with product development this past week?").

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At the same time, Polly makes sure that she is open to his ideas and suggestions. Encouraging dialogue is key to engagement.

If you do these things consistently, the employee will feel respected, listened to and invested in. Here are

2. Recognize good work.

Employees want to know that you are paying attention to them and noticing the things they do well. There are many forms of recognition; you can adjust these to fit the needs of the person and organization.

For instance, we have worked with employees who liked nothing more than to receive praise in front of colleagues or clients. For these individuals, it was the public recognition that was important.

We have also known others who found public recognition embarrassing. These individuals wanted to be thanked in a more personal setting. When you praise employees, then, make sure to include the following three components: 1) State specifically what they did that was praiseworthy; 2) Explain how their actions positively affected the company, a client or the team; and 3) give your personal thanks (" I want to thank you").

Consider forms of recognition other than praise. These might include incentive compensation, spot bonuses, gift cards, paid time off, opportunities for training or other kinds of learning, more responsibility, promotions, etc. Use your imagination.

In our office, we have " Beer Friday" each week. We knock off work around 4 p. m. to enjoy an adult beverage and conversation. This isn't a time to talk about work. Instead, the conversation tends to be more personal.

If you keep your praise and other forms of recognition specific, personal and creative, your employees will feel appreciated and engaged.

3. Make everyone feel like a winner.

The same goes for organizations. Employees want to work for an organization of which they can be proud. How do you build this kind of organization? It all comes down to culture, and leaders create culture.

Everything you do, from setting rules and policies, to the way you treat your customers and vendors, to the way you and your business interact with and affect your community, influences your culture.

It's important, especially to millennials that organizations "give back." So, find ways to let employees participate in community projects, local chamber of commerce events, foodbanks or Christmas mother programs.

Ask what they are passionate about and, when appropriate, support those efforts. We encourage our employees to participate in community service, which includes paying them when they are volunteering during normal work hours. This week, in fact, we and TJ will be parking buses and helping to wrangle more than 12,000 eighth graders at a community event. So, set a good example and invest your money and your time.

4. Treat employees fairly.

Do your homework and make sure your compensation and benefits are in keeping with the market. Invest in your employees' development. If possible, be flexible with schedules or give employees the ability to work from home occasionally. Polly makes sure that TJ has time to participate in networking and other groups that will prepare him for his next job.

That shows him we care about his future, not just this week's project. You must do what is right for the business, of course, but creating a work environment that recognizes the needs of employees can go a long way to creating an engaged culture.

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In today's increasingly competitive climate, managers can ill afford to create an environment that leads to employee malaise and turnover. Being a good boss takes a lot of work. So, there it is: The winning " formula" requires ensuring that your employees feel like recognized, contributing members of a winning team.