

How employees and managers see things differently — and how to fix it

[Business](#), [Employee](#)



The employee experience is crucial to retaining and growing your workforce. Happy employees want to stay where they are and continue to do their best work. But when those employees are dissatisfied, they're likely to search for greener pastures.

The main issue plaguing a lot of companies is the disconnect between how higher-ups perceive their organizational culture and the reality that employees experience. The July 2016 , from VitalSmarts, questioned 1, 200 respondents and found that managers had a much more positive view of their corporate culture than did their employees.

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To maintain a culture that hosts a happy workforce, it's important for everyone to be on the same page. Here are some ways HR and leaders can bridge the management-employee gap.

Innovation vs. status quo

Managers will say they look to their employees for innovation, but according to the VitalSmarts survey, employees feel that their leaders really value obedience.

When the survey asked respondents to identify which norms reflected their company culture, employees were 54 percent more likely than their leaders to choose avoiding conflict and maintaining pleasant relationships.

Employees who said they followed those norms themselves also said they believed that agreeing with others and gaining approval are important for being liked.

Additionally, employees were 53 percent more likely than their leaders to say conformity was important in their company culture. In other words, they see their workplace as a place where people feel it's best to follow rules and make a good impression. That mindset, however, doesn't help foster an environment where innovation is nurtured. So, while managers may say they want innovation, they've instead created a culture of obedience, where employees are more prone to seek acceptance and be agreeable.

How can HR bridge this gap and inspire employees to innovate? The solution starts with communication.

Accept input from employees on all levels and encourage teams to be hands-on and engaged with brainstorming and problem-solving. Reward employees who think outside of the box and dare to try something different.

This is where HR and leadership can come together to effect change. By creating incentives and celebrating new ways of thinking and executing, HR is playing a key role in developing a culture of innovation.

Teamwork vs. competition

The survey results also found a disparity between employees' and employers' perception of competition. While leaders said they valued

teamwork in the workplace, employees felt that their employers really wanted staffers to compete with one another.

To build a culture of collaboration, leaders need to look at work on both a team and individual basis. The trick is for managers to enhance team collaboration while boosting individual performance. How does the team function as a whole? Are there breakdowns in communication between individuals? Is everyone on the same page?

Individual performance is still important, but leaders should facilitate an environment where employees work together effectively. Hold team meetings and encourage employees to speak up, ask questions and discuss any problems they may be having. Keep communication open and work transparent; that way, it's easy for co-workers to collaborate.

Review team roles and responsibilities with employees so individuals see what role they play and why they're important. Doing so will remind employees of whom they can reach out to. It will also show them whom they should work with for specific projects.

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Transparency vs. blind spots

Higher-ups also have a different view than employees when it comes to communication in the workplace.

Employees should feel encouraged to speak up and address obstacles preventing them from performing at their best, but the VitalSmarts survey

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proved otherwise. In the survey, leaders were 67 percent more likely than their staff to say that the norm at their companies was to speak up when a concern or question arose that could potentially affect performance.

To encourage a culture of communication, stay consistent with ongoing feedback and automated review cycles. More importantly, start to recognize employees in real time when they succeed. By celebrating great work, employers are motivating their staff to be their best and demonstrating how leaders appreciate each person.

Social news feeds can keep everyone up-to-date on news, accomplishments and company updates. The real-time communication on a social platform keeps everyone accountable, productive and inspired.

Transparency practices will also strengthen your culture of communication. They facilitate a positive working environment that encourages employees to be forthright and speak their minds when they feel that's necessary.

Create a culture where everyone is comfortable with addressing obstacles, so productivity can soar and performance can stay high. This way, everyone has a better chance of managing their responsibilities and achieving large-scale organizational goals.

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In addition, train managers to support a culture that celebrates failure. In other words, let employees know it's okay to make mistakes and miss goals. Instead of focusing on what went wrong, focus on what to take away from

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the experience. Managers should lead their teams to think about *problem-solving* , not just the problem itself.

When companies close the perception gap between higher-ups and employees, everyone can see eye-to-eye. As leaders come to better understand their employees' day-to-day experience, they will be more empathetic and compassionate when it comes time to listen.