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## Building Respect in the Workplace

### Have you witnessed any of these behaviors in your organization?

An employee blurts out that she is being treated unfairly, then storms out of the room. A worker becomes so angry his face turns red. An associate complains that no one knows what they are doing, and leaves a meeting in tears.

Are you spending more of your time refereeing employee disputes and trying to replace dissension and tension with teamwork and unity? The stress of workloads, deadlines and interpersonal conflicts can lead to emotional outbursts, childish behavior and misunderstandings. You can use the following concepts and tips to build a work environment that is conducive to respectful behavior and rational, positive communication.

### Identify problem areas

Try to identify the origins of disrespect in your workplace, and look for patterns. Some common problem areas include:

- \* Lack of regard for others' time (being late, canceling meetings)
- \* Different work styles/personalities
- \* Cubicle "etiquette" or noise
- \* Managers interrupting employees (in conversations or during their workday)
- \* Employees being rude to each other
- \* Errors being made due to lack of communication and resistance to working together

### Create the environment you want

Make sure disrespectful behavior is not tolerated anywhere in your organization. Senior executives and managers have to be on board for this to be effective and must model respectful behavior in the workplace as well as work with managers and supervisors to do the same in their departments.

You can bring the subject of respect into the open. Talk about it. Encourage work groups and departments to talk to each other about what respect means to them and describe what respectful behavior looks like. Employees can learn from the past experiences of their colleagues.

Also, help employees approach work situations with the idea that there is a positive intention behind the other person's behavior:

1. Getting the task done
2. Getting the task right
3. Getting along with people
4. Getting appreciation from people

### Train managers and employees to be good listeners.

- \* Listen with understanding; try not to judge or criticize.
- \* Make eye contact when someone is talking to you.
- \* Face the person who is speaking with an open, relaxed posture and acknowledge the speaker by nodding and leaning forward.
- \* Don't interrupt, fidget or tune out what the person is saying.

### **Coach managers and employees to become effective communicators.**

- \* Keep your communication (verbal or written) simple, direct, specific and clear.
- \* Pay attention to your non-verbal messages. What is your body language saying?
- \* Check your tone of voice. Do you sound the way you want to?
- \* Confront behavior, not values.
- \* Use "I" messages instead of "you" messages. Example: "I would like to finish writing the report before it's edited." Avoid saying, "You always start changing my reports before I finish them."

### **Keep the concept of respect visible *and* relevant.**

Whether through group meetings, articles in your company newsletter, posters in common areas or memos, the message of appropriate workplace behavior should be continually communicated. Remember that employees are much more likely to respond positively if the call for respectful behavior is relevant to their work experience. Use quotes and examples from real employees whenever possible.

## **Additional Information and Counseling Resources**

**Call us for the support that you need. 1-888-290-4EAP (TDD: 1800-697-0353) or go to [www.GuidanceResources.com](http://www.GuidanceResources.com). Agency ID: FEDSOURCE**

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