

# Retaining Your Employees

*Using Respect, Recognition, and Rewards  
for Positive Results*



**A Fifty-Minute™ Series Book**

PREVIEW

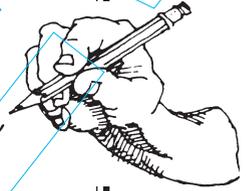
# Learning Objectives For:

## RETAINING YOUR EMPLOYEES

The objectives for *Retaining Your Employees* are listed below. They have been developed to guide you, the reader, to the core issues covered in this book.

### THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS BOOK ARE:

- 1) To communicate the importance of keeping employees—and keeping them satisfied
- 2) To introduce “the three Rs” of employee retention—respect, recognition, and rewards—and explain what each entails
- 3) To convey why respect is essential to keeping employees
- 4) To provide tools for readers to assess current efforts
- 5) To empower the reader to immediately begin improving the workplace



### ASSESSING YOUR PROGRESS

In addition to the learning objectives above, Course Technology has developed a Crisp Series **assessment** that covers the fundamental information presented in this book. A 25-item, multiple-choice and true/false questionnaire allows the reader to evaluate his or her comprehension of the subject matter. To buy the assessment and answer key, go to [www.courseilt.com](http://www.courseilt.com) and search on the book title or via the assessment format, or call 1-800-442-7477.

*Assessments should not be used in any employee selection process.*

## About the Authors

Barb Wingfield, founder of Morale Builders, works with businesses to provide a fresh approach to employee retention, and with owners and managers who want to keep their best people. She presents keynotes and seminars throughout the United States. She is a member of the National Speakers Association and the National Association for Employee Recognition. She is the author of *Reasons to Say WOW!!! A Celebration of Life's Simple Pleasures*, and has authored many published articles on employee retention and related topics. She is excited to hear about what has worked for you—and what hasn't—in keeping employees. You can reach her by email at [barb@moralebuilders.com](mailto:barb@moralebuilders.com) or visit her website at [www.moralebuilders.com](http://www.moralebuilders.com).

Janice Berry is a consultant and writer who helps clients communicate with their employees, customers, and prospective customers. Her areas of expertise include workplace trends and relationships, personal innovation, marketing communications, and software-related issues. An avid volunteer who motivates other volunteers, she is also the mother of two children, who never stop teaching her about the importance of respect. Janice can be reached by email at [janice@kjsl.com](mailto:janice@kjsl.com).

## *How to Use This Book*

This *Fifty-Minute™ Series Book* is a unique, user-friendly product. As you read through the material, you will quickly experience the interactive nature of the book. There are numerous exercises, real-world case studies, and examples that invite your opinion, as well as checklists, tips, and concise summaries that reinforce your understanding of the concepts presented.

A Crisp Learning *Fifty-Minute™ Book* can be used in variety of ways. Individual self-study is one of the most common. However, many organizations use *Fifty-Minute* books for pre-study before a classroom training session. Other organizations use the books as a part of a system-wide learning program—supported by video and other media based on the content in the books. Still others work with Crisp Learning to customize the material to meet their specific needs and reflect their culture. Regardless of how this book is used, we hope you will join the more than 20 million satisfied learners worldwide who have completed a *Fifty-Minute Book*.

# To the Reader

Congratulations on investing in the future of your business and your employees!

Did you know that more than 60% of people define themselves by their jobs? When people are introduced, the first question often asked is, “So what do you do?” It is no surprise that when employees don’t feel valued in the workplace, it affects the core of their being.

When you delve deeper into the issue of keeping your employees, you will understand the vital importance of three key concepts addressed in this book: respect, recognition, and rewards.

Think of this book as a buffet of ideas and suggestions that you can implement with your employees. Some of these practices make sense for all employees and workplaces, while others may not feel right for you, for whatever reason. Take what you can use and leave behind the rest. You can implement some ideas tomorrow, while others may take several months. Work through the exercises throughout the book and you will be on your way to becoming a hard-to-leave workplace. Use the suggestions and ideas that reflect your personality and fit your work culture, and make gradual, long-term changes. Enjoy the journey!



Barb Wingfield



Janice Berry

## *Dedications*

We would like to thank our family members for supporting us in writing this book: Bob, Brian, Erin, Brad, and Rebecca Wingfield; and Bruno, Zack, and Gina Paganini. We so appreciate the contributions of our clients and the friends and colleagues who inspire us with their accounts of what kept them happy in organizations and what sent them packing. Particular thanks go to the always-supportive Barbara Braham, the incredible BKBs, and to all the wonderful people at Crisp who made our dream come true.

# Contents

## **PART 1: Keeping Employees—and Keeping Them Satisfied**

The Importance of Retaining Employees .....	3
Finding and Keeping Employees: The Challenges .....	4
The Three Rs of Employee Retention.....	7

## **PART 2: Respect**

The Essential Ingredient of a Hard-To-Leave Workplace .....	13
Rule 1: Be considerate .....	14
Rule 2: Care about employees as individuals, appreciating their unique strengths .....	16
Rule 3: Always be fair .....	21
Rule 4: Trust your employees .....	23
Rule 5: Be worthy of trust .....	26
Rule 6: Involve employees.....	27
Rule 7: Make the workplace pleasant and safe .....	30
Summary: Reviewing the Rules of Respect .....	33

## **PART 3: Recognition**

Redefining Recognition .....	37
Acknowledging Employees .....	38
Formal Acknowledgement .....	41
Feedback Matters! .....	42
Fostering Communication.....	46
Acknowledging Workplace Transitions .....	51
Enabling Professional Growth .....	55
Evaluating Performance .....	57
Summary: Recognition—Mastering the Basics .....	59

**PART 4: Rewards**

Types of Rewards ..... 63  
Fostering Retention Through Quality-of-Life Rewards ..... 68  
Enriching the Workplace ..... 73  
Creating a Fun Workplace ..... 75  
Celebrating in the Workplace ..... 81  
About Compensation ..... 84  
Summary: Recognizing the Right Type of Reward ..... 85

**PART 5: You Can Make a Great Place to Work!**

You Are the Key ..... 89  
Getting Started Means Getting Feedback ..... 90  
Making Your Game Plan ..... 93  
Additional Reading List ..... 98

PREVIEW

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1

Keeping  
Employees—and  
Keeping Them  
Satisfied

PREVIEW

# The Importance of Retaining Employees

The challenge of keeping employees: Its changing face has stumped managers and business owners alike. How do you manage this challenge? How do you build a workplace that employees want to remain with ... and outsiders want to be hired into?

Successful managers and business owners ask themselves these and other questions because—simply put—employee retention *matters*:

- High turnover often leaves customers and employees in the lurch; departing employees take a great deal of knowledge with them. This lack of continuity makes it hard to meet your organization's goals and serve customers well.
- Replacing employees costs money. The cost of replacing an employee is estimated as up to twice the individual's annual salary (or higher for some positions, such as middle management), and this doesn't even include the cost of lost knowledge.
- Recruiting employees consumes a great deal of time and effort, much of it futile. You're not the only one out there vying for qualified employees, and job searchers make decisions based on more than the sum of salary and benefits.
- Bringing employees up to speed takes even more time. And when you're short-staffed, you often need to put in extra time to get the work done.

How do you keep employees? You keep them satisfied enough to believe that their needs will be better met at your organization than anywhere else. It sounds straightforward enough—yet many employers aren't sure where to begin.

# Finding and Keeping Employees: The Challenges

For many employers, employee retention is the piece of the management puzzle that never seems to fall into place. Because of rapid change over the past decade, finding and keeping employees has become more difficult than ever.

It wasn't that long ago that employees were employees for life, aiming to get the gold watch upon retirement. They believed that the company would take good care of them if they did a good job. That mindset has changed. Layoffs, the disappearance of pensions, "reductions in workforce," and terminations have eroded loyalty on the part of workers—even for those employees not directly affected. Today's employees—especially younger ones—think more like "free agents," selling their services to the highest bidder and ever willing to entertain other offers. Some employees keep their resumes permanently posted on websites.

Economic boom years have created a nearly full-employment economy, leaving companies scrambling to find people and workers in a position to choose. Worse, skilled and unskilled workers are expected to remain scarce for at least two decades. Recruiting employees, therefore, cannot be put on the back burner until you need to replace someone.

Finding employees is even more difficult in certain geographical areas and in high-demand markets, such as high technology. Furthermore, finding employees is just a start. Other employers and recruiters know where to find good people and are aggressively recruiting them—even if they're already working for your company. Many employees today get calls from "headhunters" several times a month.

In many organizations, losing employees has a domino effect. When one employee leaves, others often wonder about opportunities elsewhere. Those other opportunities start to look better as employees pick up the slack for those who have moved on.

The new employee retention picture is not necessarily a bad thing, as it forces businesses to treat employees well and find more innovative ways to keep them. However, this scenario is a sea change from what business owners and managers faced in previous decades, and it requires adjustments and new ideas. By getting out in front of the curve, your business can become a hard-to-leave workplace for years to come.

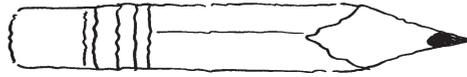
## Management Attitudes

Some of the largest obstacles to creating a workplace at which employees want to stay come from managers themselves. Following are a few of the attitudes and beliefs of management that can create or worsen retention problems.

### Have you ever thought or vocalized any of these?

- ❑ *“There’s nothing I can do—this is simply a part of being in business.”*  
Certain that employees will not stay, these managers feel that they have no choice but to take a “reactive” approach to keeping employees. In fact, one’s immediate supervisor is in the driver’s seat. Nobody influences employee satisfaction and motivation more.
- ❑ *“I pay them, don’t I? What more do they want?”*  
This ignores the reality that human beings need more than just a place to show up and collect a paycheck. They need a place where they feel that the work they do is valuable and they are making a difference.
- ❑ *“I can barely keep my head above water. When do I have time to work at keeping employees?”*  
Granted, you are struggling to meet deadlines, meet customer demands, and proactively manage change. However, if you don’t have time to keep employees, how will you find time to replace them and bring their replacements up to speed?





## FINDING AND KEEPING EMPLOYEES: A SELF-ASSESSMENT

Use the following questions to determine where you are now:

How many employees have you lost over the past two years? \_\_\_\_\_

How long did it take to replace each employee? \_\_\_\_\_

What challenges most affect your organization's ability to find employees?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What challenges most affect your organization's ability to keep them?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What other trends affect employee retention in your particular industry and/or geographical area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think you will be more or less challenged by employee retention in the next year? In the next five years?  
\_\_\_\_\_

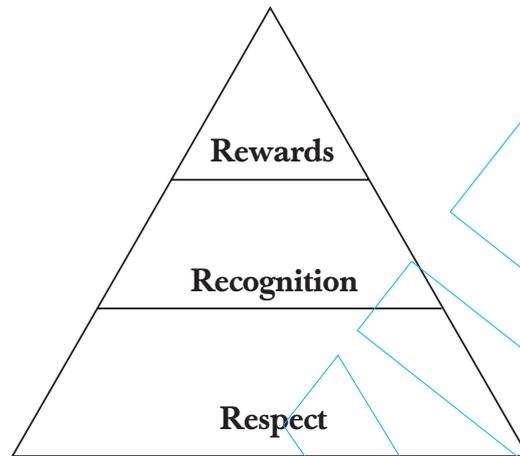
As an employer, how do you network in the community (for example, volunteer work, charitable donations, event sponsorship, or presence in professional organizations)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you involved in or associated with an educational establishment that most of your workforce comes from—a high school, trade school, or college? When top students are ready to graduate, do they have any reason to consider your company? Do you do things such as participate in career days, guest lecture for a class, or serve on a curriculum committee?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your answers to these questions reflect why you must keep the employees you now have, as well as where your recruiting efforts could be improved.

# The Three Rs of Employee Retention

To keep employees and keep satisfaction high, you need to implement each of the three Rs of employee retention: respect, recognition, and rewards.



**Respect** is esteem, special regard, or particular consideration given to people. As the pyramid shows, respect is the foundation of keeping your employees. Recognition and rewards will have little effect if you don't respect employees.

**Recognition** is defined as "special notice or attention" and "the act of perceiving clearly." Many problems with retention and morale occur because management is not paying attention to people's needs and reactions.

**Rewards** are the extra perks you offer beyond the basics of respect and recognition that make it worth people's while to work hard, to care, to go beyond the call of duty. While rewards represent the smallest portion of the retention equation, they are still an important one.

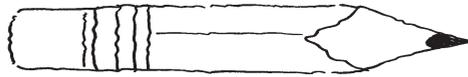
You determine the precise methods you choose to implement the three Rs, but in general, respect should be the largest component of your efforts. Without it, recognition and rewards seem hollow and have little effect—or they have negative effects. The magic truly is in the mix of the three.

## The Three Rs of Employee Retention (CONTINUED)

When you implement the “three Rs” approach, you will reduce turnover and enjoy the following:

- **Increased productivity**
- **Reduced absenteeism**
- **A more pleasant work environment (for both employees and you!)**
- **Improved profits**

Furthermore, an employer who implements the three Rs will create a hard-to-leave workplace, one known as having more to offer employees than other employers. You become a hard-to-leave workplace—one with a waiting list of applicants for any position that becomes available—purposefully, one day at a time.



## Do You Know What Employees Want?

Listed below, in alphabetical order, are 10 different things employees want in the workplace. Rank the items in the order in which you think employees find these items most important.

1 = most important      10 = least important

- \_\_\_\_\_ Appreciation and recognition
- \_\_\_\_\_ Feeling "in on things"
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good wages
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good working conditions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interesting work
- \_\_\_\_\_ Job security
- \_\_\_\_\_ Personal loyalty to employees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Promotion and growth in the organization
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sympathetic help with personal problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tactful discipline



## WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT: THE FACTS

Over the years, this quiz has been taken in many different types of organizations; and the results continue to reveal similar results:

### Employees Rank

### Managers Rank

2	Appreciation and recognition	8
3	Feeling "in on things"	10
5	Good wages	1
7	Good working conditions	4
1	Interesting work	5
4	Job security	2
8	Personal loyalty to the employees	6
6	Promotion and growth in the organization	3
10	Sympathetic help with personal problems	9
9	Tactful discipline	7

Are you surprised at the results? Many owners and managers are, as they assume good wages would be higher than fifth. People often say they leave a job for more money, and it can be a factor in the decision. However, other factors may first lead them to look in the newspaper and surf the Net for job opportunities.

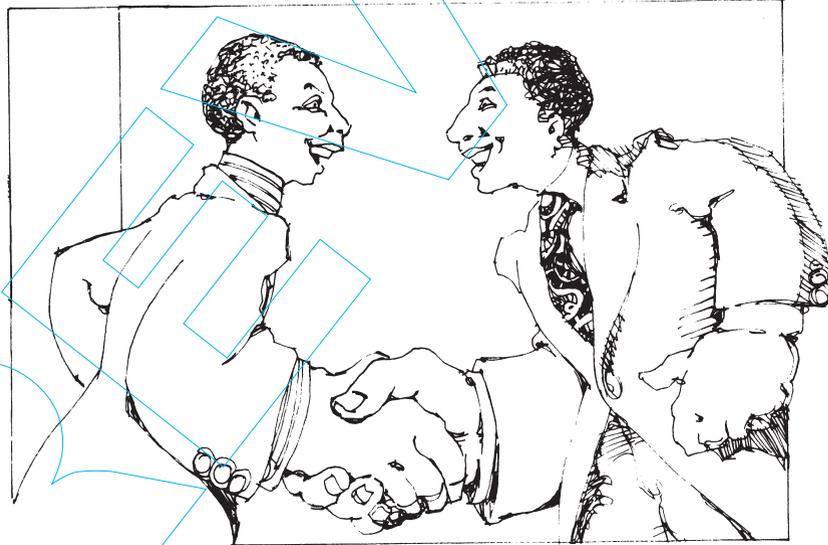
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# Respect



PREVIEW

# The Essential Ingredient of a Hard-to-Leave Workplace

Because employees spend many hours on the job, they need an atmosphere in which they are held in high regard—especially by their managers. When respect is absent, being at work feels uncomfortable. Every potential job represents an opportunity to get the respect an employee craves.

Put simply, respecting employees matters more than anything else does. Without respect underlying your actions and communications, even your best efforts to improve the workplace will have little effect.

Respect is not a series of handy tips you can apply on occasion; it's something that must underlie your relationships with your employees. Treating employees with respect takes time, effort, patience, and self-control. You will find the investment well worth your while in increasing employee retention and satisfaction.

**T**he following section covers the “seven rules of respect.”

Rule 1: Be considerate

Rule 2: Care about employees as individuals, appreciating their unique strengths

Rule 3: Always be fair

Rule 4: Trust your employees

Rule 5: Be worthy of trust

Rule 6: Involve employees

Rule 7: Make the workplace pleasant and safe

# Rule 1: Be considerate

To be considerate—the most basic expression of respect—is to be thoughtful of the rights and feelings of others. Following are some tips to help you be more considerate:

- **Take time to say kind things to and about others.** We are often unintentionally stingy about expressing the positive thoughts that run through our minds, yet far too generous with critical and negative thoughts.
- **Never bad-mouth team members.** If others are doing so, change the subject or say something positive or neutral.
- **Eliminate profanity.** It sets a negative tone for the workplace and makes some people very uneasy.
- **Don't yell at people.** This is unpleasant even if you're only trying to get their attention from afar. Yelling is demeaning. Go to people you wish to address and speak in a normal tone of voice.
- **Practice good manners.** As manners become more rare, their presence at work is critical. Whenever possible, greet people in the morning and acknowledge them when they leave for the day, and say “please” and “thank you” often.
- **Help employees feel included.** For example, when a higher-up, visitor, or employee from another department approaches while you are talking to an employee, be sure to introduce everyone and make small talk that includes everyone.
- **Put yourself in others' shoes often.** Consider workplace situations from the other person's perspective. It's not enough to think about what you would do in the situation.

If you break Rule 1, whether intentionally or not, be sure to apologize for your actions. This will *not* make you look weak. Employees will see you as a caring human being who makes mistakes and is willing to take responsibility for them.

## CASE STUDY

Debbie, the principal of a new elementary school, gathered the staff prior to opening day and shared with the teachers her vision for the school. Her goals were to respect the children and set high standards for the students and parents. She told her staff, “Every time you speak to a student, imagine that student’s mother or father standing right behind the child.” Many years later, one of the teachers told Debbie that that one statement changed forever how she interacted with the students.

If you varied this practice slightly and imagined your mother or father standing beside you—how would you measure up? How would your parent feel about your interactions?



## Rule 2: Care about employees as individuals, appreciating their unique strengths

People have a basic human need to feel important. To build a hard-to-leave workplace, you must meet that need for every employee. When you know and care more about employees, you can enjoy the rewards of your efforts in many ways. Check (✓) any of the following benefits you would like to achieve at your place of work:

- Uncover the information you need to move past any biases and recognize each employee as valuable.
- Better gauge who is best for which task. Many managers routinely call on the same people to do the challenging, interesting work, ignoring employees who could bring fresh talent and expertise to the tasks.
- Learn new things—many of which may help you in other areas of your career.
- Better appreciate the differences among people. Different abilities, personalities, backgrounds, and beliefs strengthen your team.
- Help employees to grow by their standards, as you'll know their goals and preferences.

### *It Starts with You*

It's natural to value employees who are most like us, but the challenge is to respect *all* employees. To appreciate individual differences, you must become aware of your biases and assumptions. To keep employees, it isn't necessary to *change* every bias or assumption, but you must know what they are so you can get past them.

Imagine a bowl filled with a variety of apples, from Macintosh to Granny Smith to Golden Delicious. Each has a different mix of colors and attributes (sweet, tangy, soft, firm, and so on). All the apples are wonderful and serve a purpose. Your workforce is much like this bowl of apples. Knowing which apple to use to make a pie versus making applesauce—just as knowing which employee is best suited for a particular assignment—makes the end result better.

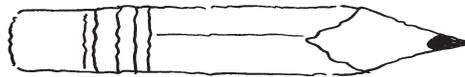
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# ELIMINATING YOUR BIASES

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Choose a particular employee you find challenging, and pick a day when you will have plenty of face-to-face contact with that person. Observe your responses to the employee.

1. When you see the employee, how does your body feel? Are your shoulders and neck tight? What is your “gut” feeling? Do you feel your energy level rising or falling? Are you relaxed, or does your body seem to want to move away?
2. What about your face: Are you smiling? Is your brow furrowed or your jaw clenched?
3. What thoughts go through your mind when you first see this employee?
4. As you converse with the employee, continue to notice your thoughts. Are they based on facts or on assumptions? Are the assumptions positive or negative?
5. How do you feel? Threatened? Interested? Annoyed? Inspired? Impatient? Why?
6. Do you find yourself responding to things unrelated to the job, such as (but not limited to) the person’s gender, weight, race, or age? Be honest.
7. Examine biases that are related to the job, and challenge each. How do you feel this employee stacks up with regard to traits, values, and talents you consider necessary for this job? Are they really necessary—or only if the job were done the way you would do it?
8. Which thoughts relate to ways in which the person differs from you? For example, if you are an extrovert, you may be put off by employees who keep to themselves. If your peak time of day is late afternoon, you may be annoyed at the co-worker who comes in each day whistling merrily. Beware of thoughts that start with phrases such as “Why can’t she ever ...?” or “Why does he ...?”



## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Once you have cultivated self-awareness, you can more easily find things to value about your employees. Pick the employee you know the least and spend a week trying to learn more about him or her. Consider asking the person to lunch to uncover as much information as you can. At the end of the week, see how many of the following questions you can answer:

How does the employee feel about change, suggestions, and new opportunities? Does he or she enjoy taking risks?

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Is the employee an introvert or an extrovert? A leader or a follower? How affected is he or she by others' critiques and compliments?

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Why does the employee work in this city, industry, company, and job?

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What is the employee's professional background? Where did she or he work before, and doing what?

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What are the employee's values and work ethic?

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## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Who are the important people in the person's life? Do you know the names of and some details about them?

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What amuses the employee? What offends him or her? What are favorite topics for discussion and topics best avoided?

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What does the person like to do outside of work? (You can use this information, for example, to clip articles for the employee on topics of interest.)

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What were the most enlightening discoveries you made this week about the employee?

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Rule 2: Care about employees as individuals . . . (CONTINUED)

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## HONORING THE WHOLE PERSON

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Your employees are individuals with different values, backgrounds, needs, and personalities—and lives beyond their jobs. When you respect staff members, you acknowledge these lives by showing interest in the whole person.

Following are some tips to honor the person behind the job:

- Appreciate employees' community involvement and accomplishments. This shows your commitment to the workforce and the community as a whole.
- Help employees when they're struggling personally or professionally, focusing on how the situation affects them, not you. Extend the courtesies they need to care for themselves and their loved ones. Your compassion and loyalty will be repaid many times over.
- Find a way to remember important dates and facts about employees, such as a contact management software program or even a notebook, with a few pages dedicated to each employee, to help you remember details. Also, note employees' birthdays and other important dates on the calendar you use most.
- Let an employee's family members know how much you appreciate his or her dedication and work. This could be accomplished either verbally or in writing.
- Recognize family members' contributions, accomplishments, and important days, such as the birth of a child. Betty, a business owner, sent flowers to the home of Nick, an employee whose spouse had received a promotion. This token of recognition told Nick that Betty valued his whole family.

## Rule 3: Always be fair

To build respect in your workplace, you must be fair. Fair treatment involves dealing with employees on their terms—not treating them poorly due to bad moods—and striving for equitable, just treatment.

### *Meet People Where They Are*

With the knowledge you've acquired in Rule 2, meet people on their terms. If you find it hard to relate to someone, the problem often starts—and can end—with you. As mentioned, most managers find it easier to relate to employees who are like themselves. Because it's harder to relate to those who differ, managers tend to appreciate and communicate with these employees less. These employees, in response, like their jobs less and give less to the organization.

### *Monitor Your Moods*

Try to stay aware of your moods. People can be ruled by bad moods, which leads them to create a negative atmosphere or make poor decisions. If you know you are in a foul mood, you can try the following:

- Take your thoughts less seriously, realizing that your mood is shaping them.
- Make no major decisions until your mood improves. When you're in a blue mood, things often look much worse than they are.
- If possible, nudge yourself to act as if you're having a good day. Sometimes this can help you get past the tough period. If you can't talk yourself into a better mood, be honest with others about it, taking responsibility for the problem.
- If you know you're about to "snap," head it off. Take a brisk walk or find an empty room to sit in for a few minutes. Even a brief snack or drink break can provide a needed diversion.

### *Try to Treat All Employees Justly*

Obviously, you will tailor respect, recognition, and rewards to the individual in question, but be sure you're not showing favoritism to those employees with whom you get along best or who are most like you. Aim to treat everyone as equitably as possible.



## TOWARD JUDGING PERFORMANCE FAIRLY

Many things affect how well an employee does a job, and most of them are within your control. Reflect on a particular employee you feel may not be pulling his or her weight, and consider the following questions, to be sure that the employee is getting what she or he needs to do the job well.

**Does the employee:**

**Yes No**

- Have the required skills to do the job?
- Have adequate training?
- Understand how this job fits into the work of the organization as a whole?
- Get feedback from you on a regular basis about how well she or he is doing?
- Have the proper resources to do the job?
- Feel trusted to solve problems in different ways—and to make mistakes on occasion?
- Know specifically what you expect—every day, today, this week, this year?
- Understand where to find additional help and resources?
- Believe that your door is open when she or he is stumped?
- Feel valued by you?

## Rule 4: Trust your employees

The simple act of trusting people makes them perform better and with confidence and enthusiasm. Conversely, when people do not feel trusted, they become overly cautious and lacking in confidence, and they will either live down to your expectations or look for a workplace in which they will be trusted.

Many managers respond to today's fast-paced environments by trying to seize the reins of control. Instead, it is important to back off and give people a chance to add value. Your workplace will be hard to walk away from if you share the information, responsibility, risk, power, and spotlight with your employees.

Following are some steps you should take to increase your trust in your employees:

➤ **Believe in them, and be sure you're communicating this.**

This means *all* employees, not only the highest performers. Moreover, don't assume that people need to be coerced into doing good work. If this seems to be the case in your workplace, spend extra time on each of the rules of respect.

➤ **Encourage people to ask questions, seek better ways to do things, and take risks.**

Learn to say things such as "As long as the job gets done," "No problem," and "Whatever you think is best."

➤ **Stop solving people's problems.**

Solving problems for others expresses a lack of trust and prevents people from developing the confidence and competence they need to handle the problems next time. Instead, ask questions, empower them to solve the problems, and know that they will come up with the answers.

➤ **See your role as supporting and enabling, rather than restricting and overseeing.**

Part of the definition of trust is refraining from interfering with people.

#### Rule 4: Trust your employees (CONTINUED)

- **Give people the freedom to choose how—and even when, if possible—they do the work.**

This is especially important when the work isn't interesting on its own. Communicate up front your guidelines and expectations. Then be sure to back the decisions of others, as long as they are within these expectations.

- **Tolerate failure.**

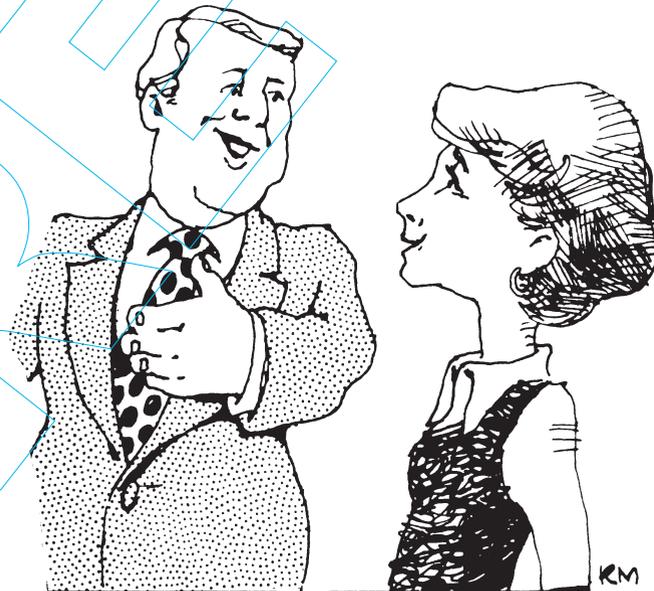
Know that employees' approaches will occasionally fail, and don't become controlling or negative when this happens. Focus on what to do differently next time. We learn from our failures.

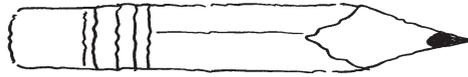
- **Be positive.**

Focus on what they did well, what will be learned from the situation, and how hard they tried.

- **Put your trust into action by delegating.**

Don't be afraid to delegate a task just because an employee might handle it differently than you would.





## THE VALUE OF TRUST

For this exercise, remember a specific instance in your career when you did not feel trusted ... and another in which you were trusted completely to perform at your best.

	When I was not trusted	When I was trusted
What was the situation?		
How was your performance affected by the other person's level of trust?		
How did you feel?		
How creative were you?		
How capable did you feel?		
How was your morale affected by the level of trust you received?		

Now that you have seen how trust affects an employee's morale and performance, what specific actions can you take today to show your trust in your employees?

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## Rule 5: Be worthy of trust

Anna, a marketing communications manager, works closely with John, who manages the organization's graphic design department. One day she asks John about a wood carving on his desk with the letters "DWYSYWD." John's answer, "Do what you say you will do," is met with a broad smile. "Of course," says Anna. "This is exactly what you are known for." She realizes that this is a big part of John's success managing a diverse staff of artists. They all trust him and regard him highly, because they know he will always keep his word.

John understands what many managers don't: that employees take personally your ability to keep your word. If you change your story or forget what you committed to, your employees conclude that they don't deserve to be treated with integrity. To master the art of doing what you say you will do, observe the following principles:

- **Underpromise, but overdeliver.** Nothing creates hurt feelings more quickly than promising an employee something that never happens. Be sure to promise only what you can deliver—and move mountains to deliver it.
- **Be clear—with yourself and others—as to what you are and are not committing to do.** When you make any verbal commitment, keep a log for future reference. In a quickly changing workplace, you simply cannot count on remembering every detail, no matter how good your intentions. After a conversation, you can also send an email or memo confirming your understanding, in case you have not communicated as clearly as you intended. You can also keep these as a reminder to yourself.
- **Walk the talk.** Live by the things you say to employees. In one company, David, the vice president of marketing, held a meeting after reading about the importance of a marketing organization being "nimble." He indicated that he wanted everyone to be nimble this quarter—to respond quickly and effortlessly to the marketplace. However, in this department, employees were granted little autonomy to take advantage of market opportunities. David wanted to approve everything and spent weeks deliberating decisions. Over the quarter, workplace frustrations were compounded by employees' anger that the extremely controlling VP had thrown out a slogan he would never let them live by.
- **Be a model of integrity.** Your employees are watching how you conduct yourself, and they are poised to follow your lead. What's more, if you are not honest or ethical with others, they assume you will not be honest or ethical with them.

## Rule 6: Involve employees

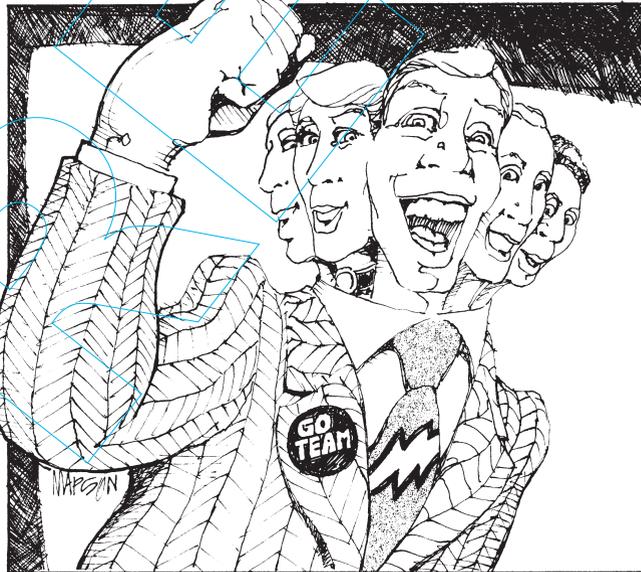
Each of your employees is an asset, with value beyond specific job duties. When you involve everyone in the workings of your business, you fully tap into this value, while giving them a vested interest in the organization and the job. This increases loyalty and satisfaction.

### *Creating the Big Picture*

Employees enjoy their jobs more and become more valuable if they grasp the big picture of the industry, organization, department, and specific job. This information is often circulated at the management level, but not shared with those who do most of the front-line work.

Big-picture information may not be shared because managers assume that employees aren't interested. While a few employees may prefer to focus on the "micro level" of their position and duties, most want to understand—and tell their friends and families about—what their company, industry, and department does.

Some managers want employees to focus on their jobs and not be "distracted" by high-level information. In fact, it is much easier to focus on your work when you know why you're doing what you're doing, why management makes the decisions it does, and where the company hopes to be in the future.



## Rule 6: Involve employees (CONTINUED)

### Be sure your staff understands the following:

- What challenges and trends affect your industry and organization.
- What the organization's goals are and how you will know when you reach them.
- How the department measures success, and how it is doing according to those criteria.
- What other departments are doing. You may wish to bring different employees to each interdepartmental meeting you attend. You may also want to pair them up with employees in other departments or locations who are doing similar jobs and can share tips.
- How their jobs fit into the mission, goals, and accomplishments of the organization—and beyond it. People need to feel that their work matters!
- Be fair in keeping employees in the loop. It can be very hurtful for an employee to feel that everyone but he or she knows what's going on.

## Getting Feedback

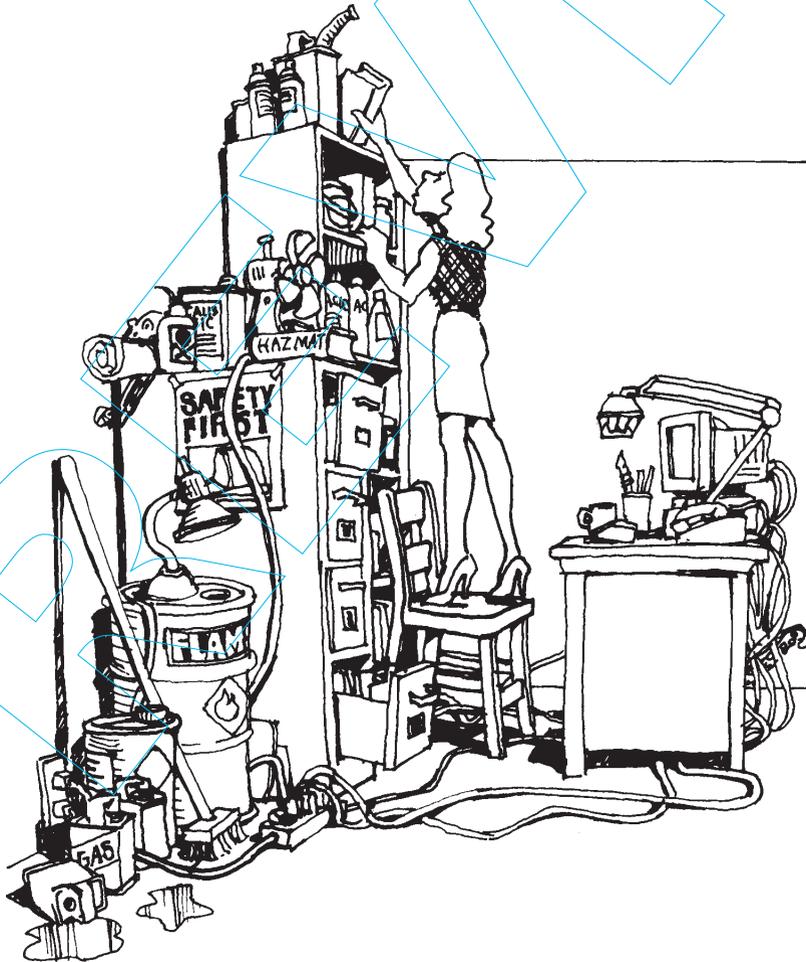
Getting and using employee feedback is essential to involving employees. After reviewing the following suggestions, check (✓) at least two that you plan to implement at your workplace:

- ❑ Ask for general input about how the business or department is run. You can do this in many ways, including one-on-one conversations, focus groups, surveys, and suggestion boxes. Employees welcome the chance to share their opinions. Don't ask, however, unless you genuinely care and intend to follow through. If you ask for employee input without making changes or providing feedback, morale will go downhill. In one organization, an employee wondered whether the suggestion box was emptied directly into the garbage each week, without anyone reading the suggestions.
- ❑ When challenges arise, consult employees who have faced similar challenges during their careers. Ask these employees how they handled the challenges, and listen to the responses. This will convey your respect, while teaching you valuable lessons.
- ❑ Involve employees in decisions about budgeting and work distribution. Employees will be much happier with your decisions when they have been asked for input. Involving them makes your job easier, as employees are less likely to complain about decisions when they have had a role in shaping them.
- ❑ Let employees recommend potential new employees and—if they're interested—assist with interviewing and hiring. This says, "I value your judgment," and makes them more apt to help the new employee succeed.

## Rule 7: Make the workplace pleasant and safe

Another frequently overlooked facet of respecting employees is making the workplace pleasant and safe. How the workplace looks and feels sends a message to employees about their value. If leaders in your industry were to tour your place of business today, would you feel comfortable having them spend time anywhere, with no changes at all? If not, it's not good enough for your employees, either. Clean, cheerful facilities with needed supplies on hand can boost spirits and make work easier.

A fresh set of eyes always sees things differently. Consider finding another business owner or manager who also wants to build a hard-to-leave workplace. Discuss beforehand what you'd like the person to consider when she or he walks through the workplace, and meet afterward to candidly share perceptions.



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# ASSESSING YOUR WORKPLACE

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**The Physical Environment:** Consider how your workplace fares according to the following questions and check (✓) any to which you can answer yes. Be sure to assess work areas, the break room, restroom, the supply or copy room, and other facilities used by employees.

## Yes

- 1. Is physical safety ensured?
- 2. Do employees have a locked place for personal items and other belongings?
- 3. Is the building well ventilated, with clean air to breathe? (Plants can help achieve this, and they make the workplace look more pleasant.)
- 4. Can employees easily access food and drinks?
- 5. Is there enough lighting, including natural lighting?
- 6. Are employees comfortable? Is the temperature appropriate? Is the noise level appropriate? Is furniture ergonomically friendly?
- 7. Is the workplace clean?
- 8. Has color been used to make the workplace pleasant? Blue has a calming effect; green reduces stress; red increases alertness, but can make people edgy; and yellow creates a harmonious feel, but too-bright shades can make people uncomfortable.
- 9. Can employees personalize their workspace to some extent? (Some manufacturers even provide this by letting line workers paint portions of machines they use in their favorite colors and styles.) In no case should personalization be allowed that would make the workplace uncomfortable for anyone else.
- 10. Is it easy to work the copier, mail a package out, locate supplies, and use the telephone system?

How does your workplace measure up? Each of these factors affects the overall workplace atmosphere.

**MORE**

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# ASSESSING YOUR WORKPLACE

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**The Human Side:** Also consider the human side of the workplace. You can affect it by following the rules of respect outlined here, and by being enthusiastic about the organization, your staff, the future, and people's accomplishments. Ask yourself the following questions about your workplace:

1. Does it feel positive? Are employees upbeat?
2. Is it free of any sexual harassment?
3. Do you work to eliminate discrimination—among employees, too—based on age, gender, race, religion, place of origin, appearance, educational levels, ways of speaking and acting, sexual preferences, and political affiliations and beliefs?
4. How are people interacting? Is there tension or awkwardness? Which people are close? Who inspires the others, who follows, and who is more of a loner?
5. Is it fast-paced, slow-paced, or somewhere in between?

**Outside the Workplace:** Next, look beyond the work area.

1. Is your organization's location easy to access for commuters?
2. Is the neighborhood and parking lot safe and secure?

Finally, have you considered your employees' overall health and safety? Some organizations, for example, outlaw smoking breaks and smoking inside the building, but do not have programs to help interested parties stop smoking. Others have comprehensive wellness programs.

# Summary: Reviewing the Rules of Respect

You must always keep respect in the forefront, and working to achieve the seven rules outlined here is a good start. Treating your employees with respect will greatly influence your ability to create a hard-to-leave workplace.

Select true (T) or false (F) for each of the following statements related to the seven rules of respect:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I can build respect today if I put my mind to it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. My staff should not be concerned with details about how the organization and industry are doing—it will distract them from their jobs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I don't need to introduce visitors to employees unless the employees need to know the visitors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I can better deal with employees if I know what my biases are.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. It's okay if respect isn't my strong suit; we praise people and offer good benefits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. It's fine to trust employees and let them do their thing—as long as they don't mess up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Failing to follow through on promises to an employee erodes respect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Using employees to help interview and select new employees lets them know I value them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Workplace surroundings do not factor into the respect level shown to the workforce.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. If an employee's performance suffers, I need to do what I can to help the person do the job well.

## *Answer Key*

1. **False.** Building respect takes time and patience. You can, however, get started today!
2. **False.** A major component of respect is involving people in details about the organization as a whole. Employees actually focus better on their jobs when they can fit what they know into the big picture.
3. **False.** It is common courtesy to introduce people you're talking to if you don't think they know one another. If you're not sure, try a simple, "Albert, have you and Jane met?"
4. **True.** It's not the whole picture, but it will give you a head start in moving past those biases and treating everyone fairly.
5. **False.** You must grant respect if you hope to keep employees, regardless of what else you're doing.
6. **False.** It's when a trusted employee makes a mistake that your respectful attitude matters most. You must give people room to make mistakes.
7. **True.** You need to keep promises to employees.
8. **True**—as long as they're interested in doing this. Many employees appreciate involvement in decisions that affect the department.
9. **False.** The surroundings very much send a message to employees about how much you respect them.
10. **True.** Managers play a big role in each employee's performance.

### **How many correct responses did you have?**

8–10: You've really grasped the basics of respect. If you're putting them into practice, you're well on your way to building a hard-to-leave workplace!

5–7: While you've mastered some of the rules of respect, this is an area that needs work. Spend a few days working on each of the seven rules before moving on.

0–4: You have a long way to go in building a satisfying workplace, but it's great that you care enough to be reading this.