



Empowering team members



Learn how effective entrepreneurs lead their employees and continue to grow their businesses.

Behind the names of some of the most successful business visionaries — Steve Jobs, Henry Ford and Bill Gates, to name a few — were thousands of smart, hard-working employees that transformed an idea into reality. Every manager and business owner knows the importance of having good employees, but too often, the topic of how to build up and retain employees isn't addressed as often as it should be.

Understandably, many small business owners are focused on issues related to growth, such as developing relationships and meeting targeted goals. Numbers and measurable outcomes are no doubt important, but if you don't have employees who are invested in your business, who you trust and can rely on, your task will be considerably more difficult.

Because the nature of a small business lends itself to a more intimate owner/employee relationship, small business owners have a unique opportunity to empower employees and make them a truly integral part of the operations and of the company's success.

Provide regular feedback

It's hard to understate the importance of providing employees with regular feedback, which is worlds apart from merely micromanaging employees. People want to know that they are doing their job right; they want to know that their work is lining up with the overall goals of a company. This is a big part of what employee satisfaction is all about.

Therefore, it's important to make regular feedback a part of your company culture. Schedule regular, weekly meetings with employees where you address issues, discuss what's working and what you need to work on. It's important to listen during these times. Keep in mind that feedback is not a process where you correct someone; it's a process of bringing them into alignment with your overall business goals, your vision and the process for achieving that vision.

Empower through education

It's been said that successful small business owners seek out and hire people who are smarter than them. It might not be good for your ego, but it's great for your business!

Because the business world and marketing landscape is changing so quickly, you need employees who can keep up with the latest trends and developments in your industry and the marketplace as a whole. The easiest way to stay current is to actively promote education outside of the workplace. Set up a compensation program where you will pay for an employee to get an industry certification or take a course that will enhance their knowledge of a niche web application that's making waves.

This is an investment that will have an impact on your business and directly bolster your employees. It shows them that you are invested in their growth and want to encourage them to expand their knowledge and credentials.

Challenge team members

Along with providing regular feedback and encouraging your employees to develop and hone their skills, it's important to challenge them to go above and beyond what's required of them. Instead of telling them what to do, have them define their duties. Ask them for feedback, and seriously consider their suggestions.

This will help create a sense of ownership, establish that what they say and what they do matters, and convey that they are more than an employee, they are part of the company.

Trust them

One of the biggest challenges many small business owners need to overcome is simply trusting their employees. No matter how skilled they are, how well they have proven themselves or how confident you are in their dedication to the company, it is still your company. You're the one who took the risk and built it up, and it can be hard to let go.

Just remember that at some point, a sign of success is that you have grown your business to the point where you can relinquish responsibilities to your employees. This will not only relieve you of work and stress, but serve as a huge boost to the employees who have been on this journey with you. It gives them a sense of being even more connected with the business, more integral to its success, and more likely to stay at your company.