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Online Report
for Managers, Principals, Team Leaders and Internal Consultants
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**Is your workplace like an Agatha Christie movie?
How to build trust and improve efficiency through good communication.**

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Is your workplace like an Agatha Christie movie?

Some workplaces are like Agatha Christie whodunits...a lot of people's time is spent thinking or talking about 'who done it' or 'who is going to do it'. The drama can be so great it detracts from business as usual - sometimes for days and often for months or even years.

It truly amazes me how much time and energy is wasted in workplaces simply because people are not told what is going on and therefore feel the need to fill in the gaps for themselves.

Usually the presumptions and stories that are made up cause far more damage, fear and concern than the reality of what is going on within the organisation. This is all taking place because a manager/supervisor has not communicated effectively.

You see people need to know and if they don't know, they will make it up. In today's world, people can often find out more about what's happening in a remote village on another continent (through the internet or television) than they can about their own workplace. People love drama - and the more realistic the better. They also like an end so most shows finish in 60 or 90 minutes or the following week. In the workplace, drama can continue to play out, spiraling into low morale and disillusioned workforces simply because management has not spelt out clearly what is going on.

Some managers might say "my staff can ask me any questions they like, any time". Yes that is right, however, leaders don't wait for things to happen. Leaders take the initiative and start the communication process.

Case Studies on Communication

1. Business Reorganisation

As part of my research I recently interviewed a HR Manager for a diverse group of companies. He told me that the business is being reorganised and people are going to be retrenched. The management team has given everyone a lead time of 6 months and a salary incentive to stay on until the reorganisation is complete.

In this case, the company is telling people as much as it knows at any given point in time. There is still the uncertainty of change, but people know what is happening and have a timeframe for it. This has led to more stability for the organisation during the change, and a level of trust from the workforce who know what is happening.

2. Manager taking action

One of my coaching clients is a manager in a professional services firm. He is keen to change some of the business processes and has traditionally had a style of 'just doing it' without consultation. In the past this has led to conflict with his manager.

Although his suggestions would probably be great for the business, I asked him what message it would send to his manager if he made changes without communicating first.

We discussed the importance of building trust and goodwill within working relationships. It works like a bank account that you continue to credit so that when you need to, you can withdraw from it in the future.

My client decided to discuss his ideas with his manager to preserve their long term relationship. At the same time, his manager has acknowledged his valuable contribution and welcomed his willingness to offer suggestions for improving the business. It was a win-win for everyone.

Trust or Fear

Communication builds trust. Why is trust so important? Because it creates harmony which means that people can do their job and not be preoccupied with fear. Trust cannot coexist with fear. Fear is blinding. Fear stops people every day from achieving even the simplest things in the work place. It could be fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of someone leaving, fear of not being able to deal with people's reaction, fear of being sacked or fear of losing a customer. Fear won't go away but as a leader you can refuse to give in to fear. I recall a book I once read (by Susan Jeffers) 'Feel the fear and do it anyway'. Be open for yourself (to relieve the tension of holding it in), for your team and for your organization.

Ask yourself if the fear of 'telling it how it is' is worth the pain and disappointment in yourself that comes from withholding and not communicating. Charles Handy, an author and management consultant, says that "to have efficiencies and other benefits we will have to rediscover how to run organisations based more on trust than on control (fear)".

Main takeaways

- Tell them the truth even if it's not good news
- Tell them what you know and a timeframe for key decisions
- Keep communicating - once is never enough
- Consider the views of others Implement ideas to show you appreciate their contribution
- Focus on building trust
- Recognise your fears and do it anyway

Free offer. How is the communication in your workplace? Self assessment.

If you would like to be sent a free self assessment tool and learn to improve your management and business then reply to this email with "Self Assessment" in the subject line.