



The Employee Wish List

Labor Day means summer activities wind down and children get ready for a new school year. Labor Day also sparks a renewed commitment to honoring the work of employees in a national tribute to the contributions workers make to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country.

There is something to be said for honoring the contributions employees make to the strength, prosperity and well being of a company. It is increasingly reported that employees feel undervalued and disrespected at work. When asked what factors contribute to these feelings they often say poor leadership and an array of related issues. Poor leadership is one of the top reasons high potential employees leave companies. In fact, this problem is so significant there are on-line calculators to help determine the cost of poor leadership to a company. Given this, it behooves the savvy leader to develop deep understanding of what is required to recruit and retain employees dedicated to enhancing the strength, prosperity, and well-being of a company.

In many interactions with employees I've discovered what I refer to as "The Employee Wish List," consisting of philosophies, skills, and behaviors employees desire to see in their leaders. This is what workers say, "Gwen, I wish the leaders in my company would...."

Be Positive Role Models – Employees get cues for how to function at work by watching what you do. Leaders must be mindful that they are always under the watchful eye of employees. You must be a positive role model for employees. They learn how to respond to an array of workplace situations by watching what you do.

Communicate Expectations Clearly – Employees need leaders to describe in detail what a "good job" looks like in order to understand expectations. Confusion related to poorly communicated expectations costs companies time and money. Say clearly what you mean and mean what you say.

Monitor Employee Relationships – Employees want leaders with the courage to confront team dysfunction and dysfunctional individuals. Leaders must monitor employee relationships to ensure work teams yield desired outcomes. In addition, it is imperative to quickly coach off teams or outright fire poor performers. In the void of true leadership, employees work to the level of the poorest performers and high potential employees leave.

Create Positive Work Environments- Employees long for positive workplace environments. The leadership theory of "emotional labor," states there is a direct relationship between how employees feel about their employer, co-workers and immediate manager and the quality and quantity of their work. If this theory is true leaders must do all they can to ensure employees feel valued and respected at work. Don't forget the impact of a positive physical workplace environment as well.

Recognize Employees – Employees need leaders to thank them for their hard work. Think of at least 100 ways to thank employees for their good work and dedication to your leadership and the organization. You will be amazed at the credibility you gain as a leader for simply saying thank you to those who work with and for you.

Labor Day provides an opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work of your employees. Don't forget to thank them for all they do to ensure the success of your company. I encourage leaders to take note of this wish list and as you continue working with employees to achieve business goals, do what you can to make their wishes come true.