

Value Your People

Your regard for people shines through in all of your actions and words. Your facial expression, your body language, and your words express what you are thinking about the people who report to you. Your goal is to demonstrate your appreciation for each person's unique value. No matter how an employee is performing on their current task, your value for the employee as a human being should never falter and always be visible."

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What things can you as a leader do to demonstrate your regard for people "in all your actions and words"?

Know and use employee names. Everyone likes to be recognized as an individual and called by name. Certainly your regular customers do and your employees do as well. Introduce them to customers and visitors when appropriate. Failing to do so implies they're just part of the scenery instead of key contributors to the success of your operation.

Learn about employees as individuals. Get to know them, their life situations, their dreams and plans, their goals in life. This does not mean you are to become their friend or confidante, but it does mean you have enough interest in them as individuals to try to understand their situation, their needs, and motivations.

Greet employees daily. You should never fail to greet employees when you see them each day. You don't like to be ignored as if you were unimportant, and neither do they.

Share your time with employees. As busy as you are, make time for your employees. They have questions, concerns, and needs that should never be ignored. Be open and approachable. When you are not, when they are afraid to come to you for fear of your reaction, you are kept in the dark about what is really going on in your team. If any employee is monopolizing your time or is a "high maintenance" employee, do not be shy about letting him know the inappropriateness of this behavior.

Recognize each person's strengths and weaknesses. None of us is the perfect manager, server, retail attendant, etc. Don't expect your employees to be. Learn each person's strengths and weaknesses. Capitalize on the strengths and help each person overcome their weaknesses. The time you invest in helping an employee develop his or her skills and abilities is well worth the effort and will be appreciated far more than you'll ever realize.

Be involved in the workplace and work processes. Do not create a hostile work environment by failing to adequately engage with your employees. Without your ongoing guidance and direction, petty dissensions and friction will grow among the workers of your team as they struggle to figure out who must do what.

Look out for your peoples' welfare. Make sure your employees get adequate work breaks, that their workspaces are set up for comfort and efficiency, that they are properly trained and equipped for their jobs, that you adjust work schedules when possible to meet individual needs, that you resolve pay discrepancies quickly, that you get back to them to resolve issues they've raised. Make sure they understand their benefits, taking the time to explain the details to them.

Treat employees as adults. When you treat employees like children, they will act like children. Don't talk down to them or treat them as if they're immature. When you give people responsibility, most will reward your trust. Those who demonstrate they can't be trusted should be encouraged to move on.

Show respect. This is critically important in the way you speak, the tone of your voice, your choice of words, and your body language. Your respect for others cannot be faked. You must sincerely value people to treat them with respect at all times.

Do not take advantage of people. Employees are not your servants and should not be expected to perform personal services for you. If you delegate tasks, make sure there is value in it for them, either in enhanced compensation or a genuine learning opportunity.

Demonstrate the common decencies of human interaction in all your dealings. Be kind and courteous. Give your people the benefit of the doubt. Don't be quick to take offense or become upset. Maintain control of your temper and reaction to events.

Thank employees often. How easy is it to say "Thank you"? It costs nothing and it reaps great rewards. The only requirement is that it must be sincerely given.

Say goodbye at the end of the day or shift. A farewell is a common courtesy that you would extend to family and friends, if for no other reason than as an acknowledgement of departure. The members of your work team, who you depend on for your success, should receive no less a courtesy. Again, the need for sincerity is absolute.

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