

Promoting “Ownership” Among Employees at Every Level

Note: *This communication provides general information about human resources and employment practices issues. It not a legal opinion or legal advice. Readers should confer with appropriate legal counsel for their particular situations.*

Leaders often talk about “getting buy-in” and “giving ownership” to keep their teams motivated. It comes from firsthand experience – when people are invited to contribute their two cents to a decision or project, they’ll support its success or feel held accountable to its failure.

Research also supports the concept that when employees feel in control of their work environments, they’re much more likely to approach their tasks with enthusiasm.

But too many contributors can cause confusion and slow down decision making, so be sure you’re promoting ownership without risking productivity. You can encourage involvement without causing delays – let senior managers determine overall strategies while they, in turn, recruit and empower others to weigh in on key details.

Here are some strategies that have been successful for companies wanting to boost ownership among their staff at every level:

- **Recruit a diverse cross section of participants.** Don’t just tap into senior managers, who may be several layers away from the front line. Bring in folks who are experts in their realm, like a customer service rep who knows your customers biggest concerns, and technical gurus, who can suggest tools to automate processes that the “rest of us” may not even know exist.
- **Set outcome targets and evaluate often.** Give people the chance to set their own expectations. More often than not, they’ll set the bar high, push themselves harder, and follow through with commitments they’ve made. If they fall short, they can use the opportunity to discover what didn’t work and what coaching they’ll need to shore up their skill set. When they succeed, they’ll feel even more proud and be able to coach others to attain similar outcomes.
- **Give people choices.** Ideally, your employees are deeply engaged in their roles – and your company – so they’ll have several suggestions that will help them work smarter. Soliciting input and brainstorming solutions often reveals minor issues that your leadership hadn’t known about – or would know how to solve.
- **Communicate big news in a personal way.** Some changes don’t always lend themselves to employee participation in the solution: hiring a new CEO, merging with or acquiring a competitor or discontinuing a product or service line. In these instances, formulate a plan to hear individual concerns, calm fears, and sell the changes to promote companywide acceptance to the final decision. While individuals may not have a vote, they’ll know they had a voice that was heard.

BottomLine

When people feel their ideas are welcomed, they feel more valued by your company. This feeling of ownership typically leads to greater individual effort, higher team productivity and lower turnover. Promoting ownership boils down to two-way communication: listening to employees and responding in ways that demonstrate respect and support. Then, when initiatives succeed or fail, individuals are given a chance to learn more and teach others along the way.

If you would like more information about this or other human resources and employment practices issues, please contact Praxis HR via email at info@praxis.com by phone at 206.262.8133 or visit our website at www.praxishr.com.