

# THE POWER OF PRAISE



## Key steps for developing productive employees

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Creating a productive work environment can be challenging for managers if you don't have the right policies and personnel in place. If you are in a management position, then knowing how to keep valuable employees happy and how to weed out underperforming employees are crucial skills to learn.

Whether you need to reprimand an employee for shoddy work or praise them for outstanding work, it is important to carefully evaluate the situation in order to avoid a knee-jerk response.

### Managing difficult personalities

If an employee is struggling in one position, you may want to consider placing them in a different position. After all, the goal is to keep your employees happy. Happy employees are easier to manage, more eager to cooperate, and more productive.

Bear in mind that keeping employees happy is no easy task. It can take months to address everyone in the company and to make each person feel like a valued team member, but it's worth it.

When I served as general manager at a company with nearly 100 people, I discovered that talking with each employee to understand their personality, tendencies, and overall attitude is beneficial to the company as a whole.

### Curbing tardiness

Prior to my arrival, tardiness had become a growing trend for many employees. Part of the problem was that there was no system for monitoring absences or tardiness. Because the issue had never been addressed, it was starting to affect productivity and morale.

First things first — I immediately started keeping records. I informed my employees that there was a new absentee and tardiness policy in effect and that the policy would be enforced.

If an employee missed three or more days over a 30-day period, then I would dock them a full day of pay. If an employee violated the new policy and missed three or more days, then they would receive a warning. If the problem persisted, then they would be dismissed.

In return, I allowed my employees to choose one day off each month, in addition to their vacation time. I used an analog punch card machine and a big whiteboard to keep track of regular offenders. I was surprised to see that the chronically tardy employees were often those who lived closest to the factory, and those who commuted 30 minutes or more away were usually on time.

### Recognizing valuable employees

One unexpected benefit was the respect I began to receive from employees who were always on time, working hard, and putting in full days. Those who were responsible were distinguished from those who weren't.

When managing a large team, you should expect to manage a mixture of employees who require handholding and employees who are hardworking and reliable. Identifying and rewarding responsible employees is crucial in establishing a competent and productive workforce.

### Knowing when to let someone go

Employees who require constant supervision or delay productivity may require a change in personnel. When I started to notice that production of key products had slumped and daily back orders were piling up, I put everyone on notice.

My goal was to assemble the best and most productive team, and I knew doing so would require everyone's cooperation. Anyone who was not a good fit had the choice to leave.

When the biggest slackers left, my most hardworking employees applauded. I then started looking for more people I could depend on.

### Identifying the elite

I implemented a strategy to create the most efficient team. Since producing garage door springs has a two-week learning curve, I built a bigger production team than necessary. I hired three new employees to join the three existing employees. In time, it became obvious which employees I should keep.

When the day came to dismiss some employees, I had the advantage of having a trained person immediately available, which prevented a potential bigger slump in production.

With a new and more effective team in place, I praised the people who stood out. That strategy was successful.

### Rewarding the A-players

Eventually, people started to come to me — not to complain, but to talk. Mutual respect grew, and I was confident in and proud of my new team. Praising employees who did well was infectious. Others were motivated to work harder because they also wanted to be acknowledged.

I would walk the floor throughout the day, inspecting production and checking to see if there were any problems that needed to be addressed. During that time, I evaluated every individual. At closing time, the team would gather; I would praise the employees who had exhibited good teamwork and the team would recognize those employees with applause.

Offering positive reinforcement on a broad scale helped create not only a positive work environment, but also a more productive one. ■