

# The Fine Line of Being a Boss and Friend



A lot has changed in the workplace since your father spent his 30 years being a company man. It used to be that bosses were just that, bosses. They commanded respect, called all the shots, were imposing and held your livelihood in their hands. The boss was the last guy you wanted to piss off.

While some things remain the same, there's a lot that's changed too. Sure, the boss is still the person in charge. But, if you're in a position of leadership, you've probably realized that how you go about your business and interact with the people you manage is vastly different from the model of old. Instead of barking orders, handing out disciplinary actions and leading by fear, you now have to play the part of mentor, friend, confidant and communicator. If it sounds like you have to be both a boss and friend in order to be an effective leader in the modern workplace, it's because it's true.

## Honesty

If you think about your closest friends, it's expected that you're honest with each other. The same goes for your relationships at work. If an employee isn't making the grade, they need to know. Keep in mind that when you deliver constructive criticism, you need to both be tactful and not beat around the bush. Your employees want honesty and transparency and it's your job to deliver it.

The same holds true for [communicating with employees](#) when they go above and beyond. If you notice someone performing exceptionally well, by all means let them know. At the end of the day, you're expected to be candid with your feedback

both positive and constructive.

## **There's No "I" in Team**

You're the one in charge, that's a fact. But guess what? You're in charge of a team. In order for your organization perform optimally, it has to be a total team effort. That means creating the space for everyone's voice to be heard in the decision-making process. When issues arise, it's imperative that you solicit feedback from everyone. Sure, some people's ideas won't be realistic, but the mere fact that they had a chance to be heard means the world and also helps them get on board with the final decision. At least they were heard.

## **Hang Out**

There's an ongoing debate about crossing professional lines when it comes to socializing and recreating with colleagues. The old guard maintains that work should stay at the office while the new school of thought encourages social interaction outside the office. While there's no defined line, studies have shown that engaging with your colleagues in a relaxed environment humanizes the experience and can actually be a catalyst for innovative ideas and candid conversations without fear of reprimand. So, maybe that Friday happy hour isn't such a bad idea after all.

BUT, the terms change when it comes to social media. It's absolutely fine to endorse someone for a skill on LinkedIn. However, overly engaging and Facebook and Instagram is never a good idea. First, doing so can be seen as an invasion of privacy. Second, if you're the boss that "creeps" or "pries," you liable to stir a hornet's nest and open yourself up to all sorts of negative accusations and outcomes. It can become an HR nightmare.

## **Keep it Professional**

We've all heard stories about working relationships becoming more... And by more we mean romantic. Though it goes without saying, this is something that's worth repeating. Even if there's an energy, mutual attraction, shared interests or whatever, mixing work with pleasure is never a good idea. The conflicts of interest, propensity for office rumors and not to mention people's lives are at

stake. So please, don't let interoffice romance ruin your career or someone else's.

## **Be Supportive and Empathetic**

Everyone that works for you is human. And with that experience comes hard times on occasion. If someone on your team is going through a tough divorce, the loss of a loved one or any other personal struggle, you need to be there for them. Maybe you're the only one they can talk to in a moment of need. Just the simple act of listening can be more meaningful than you might think.

If someone you manage comes to you and asks for help or advice, it's your duty to assist however you can. Not only is it the decent thing to do, it can often be the difference in the employee continuing to perform or not making the grade, or even deciding to stay with the company or look for other opportunities.

It's a fine line you're going to have to walk as a leader. The line between boss and friend. There's no plug-and-play formula that shows you exactly how to do it. With that being said, if you make a conscious effort to stay within professional bounds while showing everyone on your team that you're a human just like them, your entire organization only stands to benefit.

---

## **How to Deal with Difficult Employees**



If you're in a position where you manage an entire department or even just a small team you've certainly had to deal with a bad egg or two. Whether the individual wasn't a good fit with the company culture, chronically showed up late or had problems with authority, you had to deal with them somehow. Though it's never a fun experience, it's a reality that every manager is going to have to deal with at some point.

Sadly, many managers let these people hold them captive because they are afraid to take action of any kind to either correct a behavior or dismiss the employee if that is what is necessary. This hesitation can have negative consequences for both you and the people you manage. In order to keep that from happening we've laid out the best ways to deal with difficult employees below.

## **Effective Feedback**

Quality feedback, even if it is critical, is essential for handling employees that aren't performing up to standard. Where most managers spend weeks, months and even years complaining about employees and nothing else, good managers are willing to have difficult conversations and provide honest feedback if there are issues that need to be addressed.

How you go about providing this feedback is what makes all the difference though. Screaming, yelling and personal attacks only serve to add fuel to the fire and usually put the subject employee on the defensive. If you find yourself in a position where you're left with no choice but to have a difficult conversation with an employee, make sure you do so in a way that doesn't put them on the defensive and gives specific information on how they can improve.

## **Document Everything**

If you're faced with having to reprimand an employee or even let them go, you're going to need documentation of behavior that provides grounds for disciplinary action. In addition to writing down detailed accounts of incidents that happened, you'll need specific dates, times and names of people that were witness to the behavior as well. While you might feel like you're being too negative about an employee by writing everything down, you have to realize it's the prudent thing to do.

# Listen

If you're frustrated with someone you manage it's easy to lose sight of what's really going on. You might find yourself blinded by irritation, the seemingly hopeless state of the situation and the thoughts you already have in your head about the person.

When the time comes to sit down with this employee it's vitally important to be in a space where you're able to see things through their eyes. The reality is that your only chance of finding a solution is having a clear understanding of situation in its totality; that includes the perspective of the employee.

When you actively listen to someone, you'll often be surprised about what you can learn. Maybe the employee is having problems outside the office and you can recommend a place to go get help. Maybe you were unaware of some legitimate concerns they have that need to be addressed. Perhaps all this employee needed was just a chance to be heard and voice their opinion.

# Be Clear and Consistent

You should create a plan of action for the employee to correct their issues and also ask for their input on what they are willing to do to fix it. This will get better cooperation from the employee if they have a say in the plan. When you set expectations make sure they are ones you can stick to as well. If you expect someone to perform a certain task by a certain time you have to hold them to it. If you hold employees to expectations sometimes and other times you let things slide, you send mixed signals and the results can be devastating for your team or organization.

# Don't Be Afraid to Set Consequences

If you've worked through the proper channels of trying to be proactive and nothing seems to have changed, it might be time to make some consequences known. The conversation might be something like the following.

**Manager:** "We identified (issue) a while back and but we haven't seen much improvement. I still believe you can turn this around, but we are at a point that if

things aren't better by (specific date) than we won't have a choice but to (write you up, cut your hours, let you go, etc.)."

When people are faced with tangible consequences that could affect them negatively it's often the motivation they need to change. If not, as a manager you can rest assured you gave this person a fair chance.

## **Stay Professional**

When you're frustrated with an employee it's human nature to think negatively of them. You're going to be tempted to gossip or vent to your colleagues but that's the worst thing you can do. When you disrespect people behind their back you foster an environment of distrust and pollute other peoples' perception of the troubling employee. Simply put, avoid this type of behavior at all costs.

## **Be Courageous**

As a manager, you've assumed the responsibility of making tough decisions. There's nothing fun about having to fire someone but sometimes you're left with no other option. When you get to this point, don't put it off, don't make someone else do it and make sure you do it as professionally you can. Even though you're sure to feel bad, you have to remember you're doing the right thing and your team or organization will be better off.

No one is going to deny that dealing with difficult employees isn't any fun. As a manager though, this is part of your job. How you handle these tough situations is what makes all the difference. If you do nothing and continue let problems persist, you'll be causing yourself undue stress and you risk sabotaging your teams' morale and productivity too. You may even lose your best employees if the problem is allowed to persist. Instead, if you employ some of the strategies listed above, you'll set yourself up to handle these situations proactively and professionally in a way that is best for everyone involved.

---

# How to Increase Your Team's Productivity



Leading a team of people in the workplace is a monumental responsibility. Not only are you charged with maximizing productivity and efficiency, but it's your job to keep morale high, have an open door and make sure expectations are clearly communicated. If you're in a position of leadership you're sure to encounter difficult situations that hamper the productivity of your team. How you handle these challenges can be the deciding factor in whether your team is successful or not. Below we discuss our best strategies for managing your team effectively and making sure productivity is maximized.

## Communication is Essential

At some point in your career, you've probably had a [manager](#) that constantly made you feel like you were walking on egg shells. You never knew whether you were exceeding expectations or failing miserably. Simply put, this individual didn't communicate and trying to do so with them was difficult at best.

If your team is going to succeed, it's paramount that you not only clearly communicate with each member of your team, but make clear the expectations of up-front professional communication to everyone involved. If communication happens through [appropriate channels](#) in a safe space, job responsibilities are clearly defined and people feel empowered to ask questions or seek help, cohesiveness can thrive.

# Know Strengths and Weaknesses

Whether you want to admit it or not, as a leader you have strengths and weaknesses. While being aware of your own skills and shortcomings is essential, knowing those of each team member is vital as well.

Maybe someone on your team is great with analyzing raw data and numbers. You probably don't want to employ this individual to strategize a creative presentation. Leave that to the outgoing creative person that thinks outside the box.

When you create an environment that allows everyone to stay in their lane and utilize their innate abilities, you foster a freedom that allows everyone to feed off of each other and be excited about the work they are doing.

## Environment is Key

It has been widely documented that the physical environment in which people work greatly affects how they feel. Does your team function best in an environment where everyone has their own office and a door they can close or is a shared space that welcomes creativity and sharing of ideas better? Whatever your team's work environment is, it should reflect the culture of the organization and allow people to comfortably go about their tasks in the most efficient manner possible.

While the physical environment in which people work is key, having the necessary infrastructure in place is equally important. Making sure that your internet connection is solid, that IT help is readily available and that all systems are functioning properly and up to date allows team members to do their job with limited interruptions.

## Incentives

There is nothing more motivating than [incentives in the workplace](#). While monetary bonuses and rewards are always popular, there are plenty of other ways to motivate your team with minimal cost. If a deadline is on the horizon or a sales goal needs to be met, incentivizing your team with things like paid time off, a

catered lunch or skipping out of the office early on a Friday for happy hour can do wonders. Frequent rewards for a job well done keep everyone's spirits high, are motivating, and make people feel like they are working toward something greater than themselves.

## **Stay Out of the Way**

One of the struggles for almost every leader is striking a balance between managing and giving people the freedom to do their job. While it's important that you make sure each person on your team is performing as expected, creating the space for individuals to fully utilize their skills is important as well. When you build trust within your team and allow individuals the autonomy to do their best work, they do so with tremendous pride and your team can flourish as a result. This is also a key to keeping your best performers from looking for challenges elsewhere.

## **Mutual Feedback**

It's human nature to want to know how you're performing. Consistent feedback is crucial so that everyone is on the same page and expectations are met. Scheduling frequent reviews with each team member is a must.

During these reviews, it's important that the conversation be an open discussion about performance and anything that might be missing. This can go both ways however. As the manager of a team you need to have a conversation about a team members' performance, but taking it a step further and asking for feedback about the job you're doing as a leader as well can provide important insight. Ask them what you can do to help them be more effective in their job. You may learn about issues you hadn't even thought of. When professional back-and-forth dialogue exists that is helpful for all parties involved, your team only stands to benefit.

It's no mystery that leaders are needed in every organization. Without leaders to provide direction, motivation and oversight, most companies would perish. Some leaders are better than others though. If you find yourself in a position of managing a team or department, utilizing some of the tactics above can mean the world for your teams' productivity and set you apart as someone who is both respected and effective.

Do you want to learn more? Contact me, Jeff King, owner of [RQ Focus](#). I help business owners match with the right employee for their job opening in the [life science industries](#).

---

## How-To Manage Your Employee's Time Off



If you're like most hard-working Americans, chances are you laugh at the idea of working 40 hours a week. The reality is that you probably are the first one to the office in the morning and the last to leave in the evening. You probably even show up on the occasional Saturday morning or Sunday evening because you have no other choice. "Time off" is probably laughable to you but it's vitally important. Not just for you, but your employees as well.

Your company is only as good as the people on the ground and in the trenches. Your expectations are high and your employees take pride in the job they do for their own sake and that of the company. You probably have great relationships with most of them and your culture is one of teamwork and inclusion focused on a greater goal. Even if all this holds true, the number one complaint from employees across the board is not having appropriate time off to recharge so they are able to maximize productivity and efficiency while at work. Such begs the question, how do you balance maximizing productivity while making sure your employees can be at their best each and every day they come to work?

# **Be Upfront About Paid Time Off Policies**

In the modern workplace, employees see paid time off and benefits just as important as a competitive salary. If your competitors offer more attractive PTO perks, you'll struggle to hire and retain qualified people. It's paramount to make sure all employees know and understand PTO policies immediately during the hiring process. These policies should be clearly stated in the employee handbook and readily available for access upon request.

## **Forecast and Plan Ahead**

If you've been in business for any length of time, you likely have a good idea of when your busy and slow times are. This should directly affect how you manage PTO requests. If your busy time is the winter holiday season and all hands on deck are needed, your PTO policies and labor budgets should reflect that trend. Effectively writing, communicating and implementing these policies up front lets employees plan their time off in a manner that is best for them and also aligns with company needs and objectives.

## **Set Deadlines for PTO Requests and Approval**

While time off is essential for every employee's well-being, it's important that they communicate their requests well in advance so managers can aptly plan for their absence. Communicating these deadlines to all employees at once creates transparency and ensures fairness.

If many PTO requests are made at one time, it's imperative to have a policy in place for the priority in which those requests are processed. Whether your policy is first-come-first serve, based on seniority or some other metric, it needs to be made clear to all employees so that everything is black and white.

## **Incentivize Employees During Peak Times**

It's widely known that employees are tremendously more motivated by incentives than they are reprimand. Budgeting and forecasting for incentives like holiday

pay and bonuses is a great way to offer a win-win for your employees without sacrificing productivity. For those that want to take time off, the deadlines and policies have been clearly laid out. For those that are motivated to make extra pay, times like these are a great opportunity to cash in. The key once again is effective planning, policy setting and communication.

## **Make Your Schedule Rotational**

I'll say it again, transparency and communication are your best friends. Not everyone works Monday through Friday 9:00-5:00 on your team or in your organization. No one wants to be "on call" on a Friday night when they could be at happy hour or at their child's soccer game. This time is fleeting and spreading that responsibility equally and fairly amongst your employees ensures that everyone is on a level playing field.

## **Be Flexible**

Any reasonable employer makes time for deaths in the family or illness. That only goes so far however. Circumstances come up in your life. It's unrealistic to expect every single one of your employees to stick to a regimented rotational schedule without any room for variance. Allowing employees to reasonably switch days or shifts goes a long way in building morale within your team knowing that you've got their back and the favor will be returned someday.

It's important that these schedule requests be approved by a superior however. Having an open and balanced conversation with your employees about last minute schedule requests is essential for the health and productivity of the entire organization.

Everyone in the modern-day workforce wants to feel valued for the job they do and compensated accordingly. While higher wages are great, managing time off in a favorable, but efficient manner shows those that work for you that you care on a human level. With proper planning, policy setting and communication, accommodating PTO requests can make everyone of your employees feel valued and empowered. Good news for everyone involved.

---

# How-To Manage Different Personalities in the Office



Managers have more responsibility than overseeing project scope and client delivery. People Management can be the hardest tasks on a manager's job description.

Every employee is different. Successful managers recognize employee strengths and different types of communication required. This is not an easy task. You must first understand the different personality types.

According to Gallup's State of the American Manager: Analytics and Advice for Leaders report, there are 6 types of personalities.

## Personality Types

### **Judging**

Judgers want work to be neat, orderly, and established. They want the workplace to be predictable.

### **Perceiving**

Perceivers are more openminded than judgers. They can change to your office's situation and respond well to unpredictable events.

## **Extraversion**

Extraverts are lively, energetic, and always looking for ways to interact with other coworkers. Extraverts are often involved in brainstorming sessions and work well with others.

## **Introversion**

Introverts are the opposite of extroverts. They would rather perform tasks by themselves. They are independent, reserved, and focused.

## **Thinking**

Thinkers are the analytical employees in the office. They will think of how to improve projects and are detail oriented. Thinkers are often experts in a single field.

## **Feeling**

Feelers are the opposite of Thinkers. A Thinker is compassionate, warm, and supportive. They often go out of their way for other employees. Their motivation is often for people, rather than facts.

# **How-To Manage Different Personality Types**

The first step is to assess, not assume. View every new hire as a blank slate. After you discover their personality type, you will be better able to manage for each employee's strengths and talents.

Some simple way to gain some insights as to their personality type is to ask them to describe a job or project that they really enjoyed, and ask them what specifically made it such an enjoyable experience. You can also ask the opposite question of a job or project they enjoyed the least and what made it so terrible. Their answer will give you clues as to what is most important to them and how best to manage them.

The Meyer Brigg's Personality test can provide a more accurate depiction. Speak with Human Resources to discover if testing is available for your employees.

Managers are the backbone of the company. Make it clear that your employees are all working toward a common goal. You may need to reassign your employee's tasks for their strengths. Doing so, might be timely but will contribute to the success of the project.

By narrowing down your employee's strengths, they will feel more successful and appreciated. Everyone wants to feel appreciated. Your team could work harder for you which increases productivity. Do not punish your employees in public if they are not achieving their goals.

Learning to manage different personality types can be rewarding and improve employee happiness and the productivity of your company. If you are hiring, know what skills you require. As a recruiter, I can help create appropriate personality questions to find the best employee for the job position.

---

## **How-To Get Your Boss To Support Your Ideas**



Business owners want their companies to grow and eager employees move the company forward. If you want to advance your career, it is important that you promote new ideas for business development.

If you have a new idea for your employer - great! However, any great idea can be dismissed if it's not presented well. Do your homework. Your boss will take your idea more seriously if you are prepared.

# Align the Values of the Company

The most imperative step is to ensure your idea aligns with the company's core values. For example, Patagonia clothing company is committed to using environmentally friendly methods to create their products. An accepted pitch probably aligns with sustainability. Before pursuing your project, make sure that it withholds the values of your company.

## Examples of Core Values

- A commitment to sustainability and acting in an environmentally friendly way
- A commitment to innovation and excellence
- A commitment to helping people less fortunate
- A commitment to building a strong community
- A commitment to immediate customer service

# Get the Support of Your Co-Workers

Enlist the support of your co-workers. This could be staff that would also work on the project and benefits from the results. To achieve your co-worker's support, try testing the concept on reliable team members.

Your boss could also be impressed with your ability to lead team members. Communication, management, and passion are necessary in leadership positions that could be a career goal.

# Have an Idea of Why the Project Will Benefit the Company

Every project requires company resources. The project might cost the company money, employee hours, or new software. You should be able to answer why your project is worth company resources. If you cannot answer this question, then it is almost certain that your idea will be dismissed.

Pursuing an efficiency solution or new source of revenue, could send you on the fast track to advancing your career.

### **How the Project Will Benefit the Company**

- Increase revenue
- Reduce expenses
- Improve efficiency
- Solution to problem that the manager has been trying to achieve
- Help your team become more successful

## **Be Flexible with Feedback**

Your boss will have questions and feedback to your idea. That is a good thing! If they did not like your idea than it would have been dismissed. Be prepared to make modifications to the project and take shared ownership.

---

## **Risks Great Business Leaders Must Take in Order to Succeed**



Good leaders are often reliable and hard workers. However, what makes a good leader become great is their ability to take risks.

Risks can be a scary word to many of us. When we take a risk, we could lose

something valuable. Great leaders see opportunity in failure and potential from the learning experience. If you want to be a great business leader, you will have to take risks at some point.

Learn some of the most common risks every great business leader faces:

## **Risk Failing**

We all risk failing when we try something new, but failing is not always a bad thing. Your efforts are the key to success. Successful business leaders can view failure as learning process.

**Failure accomplishes two very important objectives:**

1. We are willing to embrace risking failure by doing something risky. You can't be successful unless you try!
2. We discover the proper expectation mentally. Plan for the best but prepare for the worst. This allows the opportunity for recovery and another attempt.

## **Risk Admitting that You Don't Know**

We are conditioned to have quick and confident answers. Unfortunately, if we are always providing an answer, we will never have the opportunity to learn from other perspectives.

For business leaders, the risk of saying "I don't know" can be the opportunity to engage a team. Use the opportunity to gather new ideas with group discussions and brain storming sessions.

## **Risk Losing Everything**

Whether you have been in business for forty years or one, every company makes financial risks to get ahead. Sometimes, the choice can be a plunge. However, a successful business leader continues to take smart risks from the knowledge of previous learning experiences.

# Risk of Stepping into Unfamiliar Territory

Stepping into unfamiliar territory starts from day one of opening a business. You will continue to expand your boundaries as your business expands.

Stepping into unfamiliar territory could include providing a new product or service, opening a branch office, or hiring a team. We must make changes or our company will remain stagnant.

## Risking Being Misunderstood

Thinking outside of the box can cause people to question your sanity! As a business leader, your character will be questioned at some point. After all, your decisions are possibly affecting the future of the company. Nevertheless, stick to what you think is right. You did not become a leader by being just like everyone else.

---

# How-To Keep Employees Engaged With Their Work



Every empowered team has one thing in common - they are engaged with their work. Achieving engaged employees may seem simple. Unfortunately, only 32 percent of workers are engaged in their jobs. As a business owner, this is a frightening statistic! We want employees that are passionate about their careers.

As a recruiter, I seek candidates that enjoy their career field. However, after I find the employee, it's up to the business leader to keep them happy. Learn six tricks to keeping your employees happy at work.

## **Be Transparent**

Transparency should be core in a company's values. It develops trust and productivity within the organization.

To be transparent, make important information available. This does not mean that you should broadcast your company's finances. Instead, create charts on the progress of meeting company goals.

You can also trust employees to make decisions. This may seem scary at first. After all, you are loosening the reins when an employee starts making decisions. However, they will become more invested in company operations and will learn to take ownership of their projects.

## **Take Responsibility for Mistakes**

Nobody wants to take blame for something that was not their fault. It will be very difficult for you to maintain the respect of others if you do not take responsibility for your actions.

Apologize when you know that your decision was not best for the company. Your employees will appreciate your honesty and you will gain their respect.

## **Make Training Available**

Employees who are enthusiastic to learn are some of the best additions to your team. Make sure training is available to help their skills develop. This could be webinars, online courses, mentoring, or job shadowing. These passionate employees can potentially be your managers and directors. By providing training and learning options you increase the chance they will want to stay on your team.

## **Allow Individuality in Dress Code**

Suit and tie attire are a thing of the past for most jobs. Allow your employees individuality in their clothing -within reason. You can provide guidelines for what is appropriate such as no t-shirts, jeans or sandals. However, small changes that allow self-expression can make employees feel more engaged in their job position.

## **Thank Employees for Good Work**

Everyone likes to know that they are appreciated. Acknowledge your employees hard work. For large projects, you may choose to reward an employee with a gift certificate, bonus, or extra vacation time.

See [20 Techniques for Acknowledging Your Employee's Good Work](#) for ideas on thanking employees for their good work.

## **Provide Flexibility on Hours**

Different employees are more productive different hours of the day. If your office allows the flexibility, provide your employees with a two-hour window for coming to work. For example, your employees must start work between 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM. They can leave from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM. This flexibility works for employees that workout in the morning or drop their kids off at school. It can also attract potential employees that have a long commute or have to deal with a lot of traffic that might not otherwise consider your company for employment.

Take the time to build a company with engaged employees. You may find that you have a decreased turnover rate, increased productivity, and you have a team that is easier to manage. Not to mention, you will build a healthier, happier working environment.

---

# How-To Develop Great Customer Service Skills



The quality of a company's customer service can determine the fate of a business. After all, loyal customers can be your most reliable form of revenue. You often receive more return business and improved relationships with your customers. Your customers can be both internal to your company, or external. Some positions within the company serve other departments so they would be your customers as well and anyone who buys what your company sells.

There are some universal qualities that create great customer service. Make sure your employees are equipped to perform these duties.

## **Patience:**

It is easy to get frustrated with customers. After all, at some point, you might feel like you are answering the same question 100 times per day. However, patience is fundamental to providing high quality customer service. Stay patient. The experience is new to your customer.

## **Attentiveness:**

When you are attentive, you could gather valuable customer feedback. For example, if you receive repetitive complaints about not being able to configure the settings on your device or program, that could lead to a product improvements that makes that process much easier and intuitive. That would solve your customer's complaints and hopefully lead to a better product.

## **Knowledge of the Product:**

Your customer service representatives must have a deep knowledge of how the product works. That way, they will be prepared to answer your customers questions.

Your customer service representatives do not need to know how to build the product from scratch but they do need to have a functional perspective of the products. Consider providing your employees with free samples and company discounts so they have experience with the products.

## **Ability to Handle Surprises:**

Sometimes the customer support career is going to throw you a curveball. You might not have come across the customer's problem before.

When this occurs, your employee may need to send the customer to someone with more knowledge in that area. Make sure they know who to send customers to in specific situations.

## **Time Management Skills:**

Your customer was probably excited about their purchase and wants the product functioning as quickly as possible. Do not waste time on the phone and try to get directly to their issue.

Sometimes, your employee will not be able to solve their problem. Teach them to recognize when they cannot solve a problem and what to do in those situations. Great customer service is efficient.

Superior customer service should be a priority for your business. If you spend the time training your employees and gathering valuable customer feedback than you could see an increase in revenue and the reputation of your company.

---

# How-To Build Strong Leadership Skills



Strong leadership is a learned skill. Depending on the type and size of business, there are always methods to improve. Whether you are a business owner, executive, or manager, it is important that you are always analyzing your team's response to your management.

The following methods could help you improve your leadership. Doing so can lead to happier and more productive employees.

## Be a Positive Role Model

Do not expect your employees to work any harder than yourself. Employees often use management as criteria for their own work ethic. When you are working, think about how you would like your employees to act. If you are on Facebook every hour then you cannot get frustrated with employees who are constantly checking their social media notifications.

## Find a Mentor

Nobody knows it all. Find a mentor who has also served as a business leader. You can seek tips and guidance from their experience.

# Encourage Creativity

If employees are given the flexibility to use creative thinking, you may be surprised by the insight that they can bring to the table. Creative thinking can be intimidating for many employees. However, new ideas could be what makes your company unique among competition.

## How to Influence Creative Thinking in the Workplace

- Use an “idea first, measurement second” mindset. Eventually your company must be data-driven but allow flexibility for new ideas.
- Use innovation teams to come up with new ideas.
- Reward employee with bonuses if their idea is used.
- Create a positive work environment so employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas without criticism.

# Study Past Leaders

Most business leaders spend their time looking forward. Unfortunately, some of your most valuable lessons can be learned from the past. Study past leader’s successes and failures. After all, history repeats itself.

## Great Modern Entrepreneurs to Learn From

1. Elon Musk
2. Steve Jobs
3. Oprah Winfrey
4. Walt Disney
5. Bill Gates

# Be Humble

Great leaders admit their mistakes and share credit for successes. If you play the blame game, eventually your employees will look for employment elsewhere.

People want to feel respected.

## **Communicate Effectively**

As a leader, you probably get very busy. Nevertheless, you cannot build a great team without maintaining time to communicate with your team.

Occasionally, ask your employees how they are doing. Your employees should feel comfortable confronting you with questions and concerns.

Strong leaders can build great companies. If you are in a leadership position, focus on improving your skills to help lead your company to success.