



The Power of Permissions

Imagine a work world where you know precisely what your employees are thinking. Are they thinking about leaving? Do they have good ideas they're hiding? Are there barriers to their productivity? These vital bits of information are available to leaders if they develop a relationship with their employees founded on trust and transparency.

Of course, our employees can be told they can trust us, but they won't believe us until they have tested it in small ways. To open that door for your employees to trust you, start by permitting them to be open and honest with you.

This direct relationship begins by empowering your employees to provide you with the necessary information to create an environment in which they feel safe and secure.

Second, give them stability in your relationship. Don't leave your employees wondering which version of you they will experience today. The Bible instructs us in Matthew 5:37 to let your yes be yes and your no be no. In other words, be a consistent and transparent leader whose employees feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics without wondering if you have a hidden agenda.

When employees lack a sense of security about their work or leader, they jump to conclusions about their employment status. Fear leads employees to question their value to the organization and often conclude they're disposable.

The granting of permissions gives the employee a framework to share their feelings and concerns with you, their leader. With this information, the leader can address these concerns and create a safe environment where employees can be productive and highly engaged.

A lack of security and safety will disengage employees from their work. A disengaged employee will attempt to lower their visibility in the organization, reduce innovation, and generally avoid the potential for making an error that could result in job loss.

A sense of psychological safety encourages employees to be open and honest. Transparency is critical to creating a sense of safety, thereby improving retention.

As you permit your employees to share their concerns, questions, and aspirations, these permissions eventually develop into expectations that the employee will be open and honest with you on all matters. This permission-to-expectation dynamic creates a culture where ideas and concerns can be shared without fearing punitive retribution.

Here are some examples of permissions that leaders can give to their employees to create this relationship of transparency:

Tell me when you feel unsafe, confused, or threatened.

Tell me when you have an idea for improvement.

Tell me when you don't feel competent in an assignment.

Tell me when you're interested in taking a different role.

Tell me about things, people, policies, and lack of resources that prevent you from making daily progress in your work.

Tell me when you have a personal challenge that may affect your work, such as childcare availability, transportation issues, or other personal relationships or matters that make it difficult for you to do your job.

Tell me when my expectations of you are unclear or unrealistic.

Tell me when you feel unsupported or misunderstood.

Tell me when you're having trouble with a colleague that you can't work out alone.

Tell me when you're uncertain about your value, future, or status with me or the organization.

Tell me when you hear a rumor that is concerning to you.

By establishing an open and honest relationship with your employees by granting permission to speak up, you engage your employees in a safe environment that promotes dependability, efficiency, and innovation. Eliminate the element of fear for your employees. The Bible reminds us that there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. Lead your employees to be fearless.

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