

# 'Simple Seven' steps to increase employee productivity



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With the ever-increasing proliferation of information we have access to teaching us how to improve our productivity at work and indeed life, there is an irrefutable equation all self-help gurus and operational experts can agree on.

There is a definite and most times measurable link between a happy employee, improved productivity and increased profits. That's why most businesses are constantly exploring new ways to keep their staff happy, and therefore productive, all year round.

It is quite normal for your staff to experience highs and lows in their performance. Factors such as stress, personal problems and office politics all play their part. Some things are in your control to influence, some aren't.

If you're looking to get the best out of your employees more consistently, however, implementing certain measures can improve office relationships, improve your workplace culture, and boost productivity levels.

We now spend more time with our co-workers than we do with our family, so creating a happier, more focused workplace is important. It also isn't as difficult as you might think. And it isn't about salary increases.

Here are seven simple but smart ways to transform an underperforming workplace.

## 1. Introduce 'brain breaks'

Employers need to acknowledge that everyone is human and we all need a break from time to time. Short breaks throughout the day have proven to help the brain function more effectively, refresh your attention span and sustain concentration for longer periods. Breaks, even five-minute ones, reboot your focus so make sure that your staff have regular breaks throughout the day.

## 2. Encourage 'question time'

Sad but true – an employee may feel it is

better to do something wrong than to ask how to do something right! Not wanting to look stupid by asking the same question more than once, or not wanting to show a lack of specific knowledge related to what is expected of them, ensures many staff just don't ask questions they should.

They feel that if they hang around long enough, things will fall into place. You are the person in charge for a reason. Hammer the point home that asking questions is a good thing. Answering questions clearly and in a timely manner will keep the productivity going – and quell some fires before they start.

## 3. Celebrate every victory

A growing body of research suggests that the concept of "small wins" in the workplace is one of the key ingredients for successful employee motivation and one of the most effective ways to begin the process of changing your workplace culture. Small wins can have a disproportionate amount of power and influence beyond the achievement they represent. When an employee sees that every positive contribution to the team is acknowledged, he or she knows that their actions count and that what they do is really making a difference.

## 4. Small rewards make a big impact

You will be surprised at how powerful a \$25 gift card can be. It has nothing to do with the money or the monetary value but more the recognition of a job well done. You can spend small amount of money on your employees which are FBT free and also double as a business expense. A bonus given routinely soon becomes part of the expected compensation package. Casual incentives communicate to employees that you have noticed their efforts.

## 5. Stand by your 'family'

We are not talking about treating an employee the same way you would treat your immediate family, but consider this

notion. We all have family we struggle to agree with – but that doesn't mean we don't have their best interest at heart. The same should apply to your employees. Make sure your employees know that regardless of your relationship strength, you always have their back and are willing to stand up for them when needed.

## 6. Know your employees background

What motivates us commonly drives how we will perform at work. A university student working in the daytime and going to lectures at night has a different motivation for working than that of a single mother with two kids to feed. Understanding your employee's situation outside the workplace will allow you to structure a support system that is both beneficial and motivating.

## 7. Have social outings

Social outings as a group do two things that increase the productivity. First, they serve as a break. Even if you're only going out for short lunch, it forces your employees to get away from the office and relax their minds. This fosters a culture that encourages breaks (see point 1), which can actually lead to greater productivity. Second, they serve as a means for the team to get to know each other better. When your team members are more comfortable around each other, they're going to collaborate more effectively and work harder for the greater good.

While keeping customers and clients happy has been a focus of business success for years, ensuring employee happiness has not always been such a priority.

But if businesses want to be more productive and profitable, having happy and engaged employees is something every employer should strive for. ♦

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