

Employee Engagement & Company Culture Blog

5 Things New Leaders Say That Employees Hate

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Young leaders are faced with numerous challenges, but perhaps none are greater than learning to communicate and connect with employees. If they fail in those areas, they may find their teams underperforming and their own careers in jeopardy. Consider these points from [Gallup](#) and [Edelman](#):



- ✔ High-performance managers know what employees are working on and don't take a "laissez faire approach to management"
- ✔ Employees who believe their managers are ignoring them are 15 times more likely to be actively disengaged than engaged
- ✔ Effective communication with employees is critical to bottom-line success.

Of course, some young managers may worry that they'll be thought of as micromanagers if they try to communicate too much with their teams.

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“But there is a distinct difference between micromanaging and being involved in your employees' work lives,” the Gallup report notes. “Micromanagers take control of the process and the outcome. Great managers support employees by helping them define the right outcomes, then letting them use their unique talents to choose the process that works best for them.”

So, how do young managers strike the right leadership qualities and communications balance? Dianne Booher, a business communications expert and author of *What More Can I Say?* explains the bad habits to break:

1. **Avoiding conversations:** New leaders — often in an effort to save time — may rely on texting or email to communicate with employees, which can hurt collaboration. “They send an email or text that says, ‘This is what we’re going to do. Let me know if you have a problem.’ Who is going to do that?” Booher says. “They’re just going to go along with whatever the boss says.” Instead, Booher says a phone call or an in-person conversation is much more effective. Managers can be more encouraging of feedback from employees and learn from body language or tone of voice if there is a potential problem.
2. **Bad writing:** Young leaders may use technical abbreviations that other employees may not understand. While everyone gets “LOL,” for example, others may not understand that “AFC” stands for “automated flow chart.” “Young leaders often have developed some very bad writing habits from texting and emails. They may leave out all punctuation or use capital letters randomly. But when you’re writing formal documents or emails to your team, you need to make sure you’re very clear or employees become very confused,” she says.
3. **Being too general:** Offering feedback such as “You need to improve your performance” isn’t helpful to anyone and can lead to great frustration and disengagement from workers. Instead, Booher says it’s better to offer specific feedback as soon as a manager notices an issue. For example, if an employee isn’t showing initiative, it’s more helpful for a manager to point out a specific incident when the employee should have stepped forward and then outline why it was a problem. In addition, leaders will be better able to offer objective feedback if they’re forced to cite specific cases where an employee needs to improve, rather than just relying on a gut feeling.

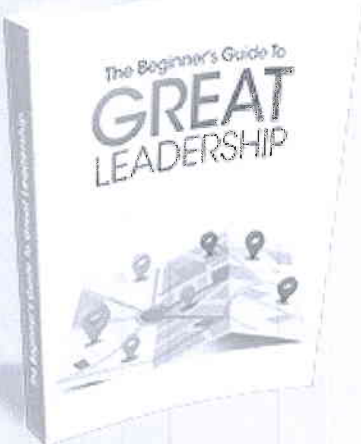
4. **Sounding insincere:** Young leaders were part of a generation that grew up hearing “good job” for everything from going down a playground slide to getting a good grade on a test. The result is that young leaders may also liberally sprinkle “good job” comments to their team, but Booher says that can backfire. “They go overboard with such comments. It sounds overdone to employees,” she explains. “These young leaders shouldn’t water down every achievement and pat everyone on the back for every small thing. Give accolades when they’re deserved.”

5. **Stalling:** “New leaders tend to want to put everything on hold when they come in because they’re not really sure about what is going on,” Booher says. “So they become a bottleneck.” She suggests that instead of new managers telling employees to “hold up” on projects or decisions while the leader gets up to speed, employees should be informed to “move along and keep the plates spinning.” While employees keep the business moving, new leaders can observe and learn as quickly as they can. “Just tell employees: Keep doing what you’re doing and I’m going to catch up,” she says.

Finally, Booher says young leaders will score points with their teams if they show respect for the work that employees have been doing. “Don’t tell them to always check back with you, when they’ve been doing the work before you got there,” she says. “If you do want them to consult you, be as specific as possible, such as telling them to inform you when they’ve spent a certain amount of money on a project.”

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