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7 ways to empower your team to reach their full potential.

A long-term employee retention strategy.

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A long-term retention strategy.

There are a number of benefits by implementing employee development. At the top of the list are the following:

- Your employees will have an increased trust in managers and the company as a whole
- You'll have a higher employee retention rates
- Better alignment between your employees values and the company mission, vision and values
- Your employees have improved confidence in decision making

"We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve."

Bill Gates



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1.

Communicate the company vision and mission.

For your employees to get behind the company's goals, they must understand where exactly they fit into them. Managers must be able to communicate the company vision and mission along with the ways their teams contribute to them.

Have a well defined mission statement and share it with your employees.

The mission statement should convey what you believe in just a couple of lines.

Leave what you make/sell/do out of it. A mission statement is a vision of the future, not what you do now. Your mission statement expresses "what" and "how" you will fulfil the company vision. Inform your team of what is needed to make the vision a reality and how you are going to make it so?

Explaining your vision or mission.

Keep it simple and precise. Your explanation should include context for where and how your employees contribute to the mission. This will allow them to determine if the vision and mission aligns with their personal values. If it does not align with their values they will not trust or believe in it, and without their trust and belief there is no development. If they are aligned, this can provide the baseline motivation they need to work confidently towards the Mission and Vision.



2.

Establish clear expectations.

When you hire someone, in most circumstances you will check their abilities and measure their skills, background and experience to engage in the role successfully.

As you know many hours are spent ensuring that the person is right for the role. Based on that knowledge you have good reason to expect them to perform at a certain standard.

It's important to understand that your employees need you to communicate what level of output you want to see from them in order for them to succeed. Without this guidance, the mutual expectation is lost.





Communication with your employees.

Communicate your expectations by including the following

- Clearly define objectives for the projects you assign and the key indicators you will use to measure success. These tools will help both you and the employee to determine if they are performing to the required standard.
- Set a timeline of how and when you would like to see and discuss their progress, and what could happen if that progress is not being made. Knowing this allows the employee to come to the table prepared for the discussion.
- Set milestone dates and hold employees accountable to them. Providing these deadlines gives employees the chance to strategise and prioritise in a manner that suits their working style.

This knowledge really is power for your employees. Knowing what is expected of them allows them to set boundaries.

Boundaries help people focus and keep their energy directed to the task at hand. The most successful way to do this is set goals. One of the more effective ways of setting goals is using the SMART method: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound. This framework allows you to keep goals simple and easy to track.

3.

Delegate.

Delegating ownership of tasks or projects is one of the easiest ways to empower your employees, allowing them to hone their time management and leadership skills.

Start small by giving them a non-critical task to ensure they can meet expectations. Then progress from this point, allowing them to try something they are interested in and/or that is significant to your business. Giving them a bigger piece of the pie shows them once again that you trust them to own it, and if you set expectations, they will have the boundaries they need to establish the right goals to meet or exceed them.



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4.

Allow autonomy.

Employees cannot develop a sense of self-governance, find assertiveness, nor trust their intuition if they are micro managed. They must be allowed the autonomy or space to shape their working style so that they can perform their best.

Give them the information they need to make good decisions, but then let them actually make those decisions.

Allow autonomy but don't isolate.

It's important to note that autonomy doesn't mean employees should work in isolation. Feedback and discussion are vital to shaping and solidifying their thinking. Allow them to talk out and test their strategies.

Be the Safety Net.

Autonomy also does not mean that employees should work without a safety net. They may have some level of fear in making key decisions at first. They should know that you'll be there to help them if they stumble. Even if they fail, give them constructive feedback and space to self-reflect and understand where things fell short, learn from that, and learn from this moving forward.



5.

Feedback.

How you provide feedback makes all the difference. Each employee is different, and so the approach you take will be better received if flex to meet their personality. Here are a few suggestions to make the feedback you give aid their development:

- **Don't wait.** If you notice a need for praise or correction, don't wait to give it. This allows the recipient a better opportunity to recall and relate to the event that warranted the feedback in the first place.
- **Be specific.** Point specifically to the things that met or exceeded expectations so they understand the measure of what excellent really is. If you're addressing a behaviour issue, specifically state an observation of that behaviour and its specific impact on others.
- **Be sincere.** Your feedback should come from a sincere desire to want to help the employee succeed.
- **Be consistent.** Meet regularly to create a cycle of feedback on which they can rely upon. If you go weeks between communicating, you can lose the thread that keeps performance on point.



6.

Resources.

Whilst observing your employees performance, communicate with them to understand what resources could move them to the next level in their development. Some possibilities are as follows.

Continuous learning.

If your company uses self-improvement or career-builder courses, help your employees identify which are most beneficial to them. Allow them the flexibility to work the courses into their regular work schedule to increase the likelihood they will complete them. If you don't have in-house programs, allocate funds in your budget for professional courses that can support employee learning.





Tuition reimbursement.

Tuition reimbursement plans are another great resource that supports development. The cost burden of education can be great for some people, preventing them from obtaining the skills and knowledge they need to move up in your company. Helping with that cost shows that you believe in investing in your employees and are willing to help them apply what they learn on the job. Consider the set up of your plan carefully, but if done right, you can build stronger bonds with your employees.

Mentorship.

Guide your employees towards colleagues who would benefit from becoming a mentor. If not you, then somebody who can help them to navigate your company's culture, pursue skill-building opportunities, and encourage networking in and outside of your company. Mentorships can develop naturally between employees and their direct managers, but these connections can also happen cross-departmentally. Even if you don't have a formal mentorship program, encourage your teams to find support where they need it from people they trust.





7.

Incentivise.

Motivation is key to ensuring employees are willing to give their best effort and be at their best to succeed in the job. Having said that, not every person is motivated in the same manner. Consider a broad range of incentives that can speak to each employee's "motivation language" to keep them winning.

Rewards.

Naturally salary increases and promotions cannot be done on a regular basis, instead consider other tangible gifts given for high performance. Also consider short-term awards too - smaller but still significant motivators that help keep momentum.

Recognition.

Regular sit-downs are always great, but you can take this to the next level. Try shout-outs in company forums like newsletters or social media. Ask your senior leadership team members or CEO to send a direct message to team members to acknowledge their achievement. If your industry issues certifications at the completion of levels of service, make sure your employee is aware and is part of those ceremonies.



Security.

Many employees just want to know they can take care of themselves, come what may. That sense of security may come from a company-matched pension scheme, life insurance policy or access to financial advisors who can help them plan for the future. For others it might mean having access to a robust health benefits package that includes medical and mental health resources to help them feel their best.

Final note.

Be mindful of your approach to empowerment as you design your development plan. Empowerment can quickly turn into neglect if you don't give your team members attention or direction. Likewise, delegation can lead to feelings of being over-worked if you don't check in often enough to determine if your employees can handle their workload. Work diligently to create and maintain a connection with your employees, and they will trust you to guide them along their career development path.





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