

Building a Dialogue with Your Team Members

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2007, published in the Houston Daily Journal on Saturday, March 24, 2007

If you are a frequent reader of my articles, you know how much I encourage conversation among team members. We've not yet discovered how to convey ideas from one human brain to another without communication!

You may remember articles in which I've referred to the questions identified in First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently. These questions can help you learn exactly what those under your authority need. My clients have found them to be a very helpful diagnostic tool.

"Yes" answers to these twelve questions have been shown to predict organizations that will be productive and profitable, with high employee retention and loyal, satisfied customers.

You can generate a simple form to give to team members to familiarize them with the questions and capture their initial comments. If you'd like such a one-page tool, please contact me.

The point of this initiative is to stimulate dialogue. If the answer to any of these questions is "no," listen closely. It is likely that YOU, the team leader, will be the key to changing that response to a "yes"!

Listen intently as team members describe their perspectives. Use their responses to determine what you may have overlooked to this point. Work to give each person whatever he or she identifies as a need. Remember, your job is to serve your team by providing direction, perspective, and resources.

- 1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?** You may be quite surprised what you will learn here, so listen closely! Remember, it's not the employee's fault if something is not clear. Resist any temptation to show anger. Instead, enthusiastically explain anything that could be clarified.
- 2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?** It's been surprising how frequently I find people trying to do their work without adequate resources.
- 3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?** Research indicates that fewer than two out of ten individuals are able to answer this question "yes." Sad!
- 4. In the last week, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?** You may pay people, but they still appreciate acknowledgement for their good work!
- 5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?** This one is tough! If the real answer is "no," do you think the person will actually tell you?
- 6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?** A huge oversight in many organizations—organizations of excellence are built on the concept of continuous improvement!
- 7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?** Similar to question #5. Listen closely!
- 8. Does the mission and purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?** If the answer here is "no," this person may be looking for work elsewhere.
- 9. Are your co-workers committed to doing quality work?** If the answer is "yes," congratulations! You must be doing something right!
- 10. Do you have a best friend at work?** Surprisingly, this is a strong indicator of a healthy culture.
- 11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?** Related to question #6, guess who this person should be!
- 12. This last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?** I hope that you and your colleagues have consciously chosen to build future leaders!

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Questions to Stimulate Dialogue with Your Direct Reports

This simple survey is adapted from a book entitled First, Break all the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton. These questions are generated from a twenty-five year research effort by the Gallup Corporation. Open-ended interviews were conducted with a million employees and eighty thousand managers. These twelve questions were determined to be accurate predictors of a healthy culture in an organization, with equally healthy organizational results (specifically profitability, productivity, employee retention, and customer satisfaction and loyalty).

Provide the questionnaire to individuals on your team and ask them to answer the questions honestly. Then, use the questions as a basis for dialogue with each individual to learn how you can best serve him or her in improving the response level for each question. If it is within your power to do so, then provide the support necessary to further empower that individual!

Directions for the person taking the survey:

Please circle a number for each of the questions, indicating your response:

- 1 = mostly "no"
- 2 = more "no" than "yes"
- 3 = more "yes" than "no"
- 4 = mostly "yes"

Question	Response	Comments I Would Like to Make
1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?	1 2 3 4	
2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?	1 2 3 4	
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?	1 2 3 4	
4. In the last week, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?	1 2 3 4	
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?	1 2 3 4	
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?	1 2 3 4	
7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?	1 2 3 4	
8. Does the mission/purpose of your organization make you feel your job is important?	1 2 3 4	
9. Are your co-workers committed to doing quality work?	1 2 3 4	
10. Do you have a best friend at work?	1 2 3 4	
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?	1 2 3 4	
12. This last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?	1 2 3 4	
Bonus: Are you extremely satisfied with your organization as a place to work?	1 2 3 4	