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ASK THE EXPERT: MY STAFF DOESN'T LIKE HOW I MANAGE THEM. WHAT CAN I DO?

Dear Evan,

"I feel funny asking you a question like this. But the people who work for me in my franchise just don't seem to like the way I manage them. I can sense it in my one-on-one conversations with them, and sometimes in a group of them when I arrive at my location or enter a room. I don't really think I am a bad boss, but something has gone wrong and I need advice on how I can turn this situation around. I would appreciate any suggestions!"

- Steven, Pennsylvania

Dear Steven,

First, I want to compliment you for being aware that people don't like the way you are managing them. You might be surprised to know how many supervisors are completely unaware of how their employees view them. So maybe without being aware of it, you have already taken an important first step toward turning the situation around.



At the same time, simply knowing that the problem exists will not solve it. I encourage you to consider what you need to do to become a better manager, or one who is perceived to be a better manager. The first step is to become more supportive of what your employees want and need.

Here's the thing. The answer to your question is amazingly simple, but it is something that most managers never do. You need to sit down with each of the people you manage ask them how you can support them better and be a more effective manager. That requires setting aside your defenses, listening calmly to what they tell you, and accepting the validity of what they say.

In addition, I would like to suggest three other ways to become a more effective manager.

Use the Five to One Rule

This is especially effective when meeting with employees who could use an extra dose of positive motivation. How does it work? For every one thing you say that could be interpreted as criticism, say five things that are positive and encouraging. This approach will dramatically improve every interaction you have with the people you supervise.

Differentiate Fact from Opinion

When you are offering an opinion, precede it with the phrase, "In my opinion." This differentiates opinions from facts and eliminates the perception that you are accusing people of doing something wrong. Perhaps more importantly, it raises the quality of the conversation by inviting people to contribute to your opinion, refute it, or offer productive alternatives of their own.

Learn to Look for What the Other Person Is Saying that Is Right, Not Wrong

Too often, managers only listen to hear things that other people say that are wrong, or that support their own opinions. Instead, listen actively for things that your employees say that are true, then focus on them and ask follow-up questions like, "I think that is a great insight, how did you first notice that?" I call this Ingaed listening, and it can help you become a much more effective and positive manager.

What Are the Benefits of Being a Better Manager?

Perhaps I should have mentioned them at the beginning of my reply to you, Steve, not at the end. But the many benefits of working to improve your skills as a manager include these:

- Your company will become a better place to work.
- Your employees and your company will become far more productive.

- Your employees will stay with you longer, which will save money, reduce training costs, and provide many other benefits.
- Customer satisfaction will improve, because happier employees create happier customers.

Thank you very much for writing, and for asking such an honest and open question. I am confident that you can, and will, turn the situation around and dramatically improve the atmosphere of your franchise.

Best wishes,

Evan Hackel

If you have a question for Evan, please email ehackel@ingage.net (<mailto:ehackel@ingage.net>)

*Evan Hackel is a 35-year franchising veteran as both a franchisor and franchisee. He is CEO of Tortal Training (<http://www.tortal.net/>), a leading training development company in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Principal and Founder of Ingage Consulting (<https://www.ingage.net/>) in Woburn, Massachusetts. Evan is the host of Training Unleashed and author of *Ingaging Leadership*. Evan speaks on *Seeking Excellence*, *Better Together*, *Ingaging Leadership* and *Attitude is Everything*. To hire Evan as a speaker, visit www.evanspeaksfranchising.com (<http://www.evanspeaksfranchising.com/>). Follow [@ehackel](https://twitter.com/ehackel) (<https://twitter.com/ehackel?lang=en>).*

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