

Open Door Policy

Open door policies help management in establishing connectivity with employees, leading to trusted relationships.

When Jane McIntyre, took over as CEO of the United Way of the Central Carolinas, she had to face the wrath of the employees as its predecessor left the company in a mess. In order to gain the trust of its beleaguered employees, she announced an open door policy. She made sure that every decision was discussed with employees in compulsory staff meetings and communicated face to face. She was open and accessible to employees to win their trust. In the open meetings employees were free to question her and the atmosphere was that of camaraderie.

In order to win the trust of his employees, Mike Volpe, the Chief Marketing Officer for a software company, Hubspot, adopted few strategies, including radical transparency, sharing data, goals, missteps and milestones with everyone at every level. He found employees doing extremely well when they were given autonomy, authority and responsibility. He used to collect feedback anonymously and once he found the trust between them was declining because few employees who were misfit were allowed to go. Mike openly discussed the issue with employees and gave them facts which helped him to regain their trust.

Company's success to a large extent depends on the trust managers' gain from employees and on the open door policies they adopt. One of the most effective trust building strategies is to have connectivity with subordinates. As power increases for managers, they tend to lose trust from the employees. Dougherty suggests few guidelines to help them to be in touch with them and to gain their confidence, which is essential for their success:

- **Be transparent and truthful**-Managers should disclose company's health and future goals honestly.
- **Encourage rather than command**- Managers instead of forcing employees to do the job, need to motivate them to do it by empowering them to align their goals with that of company's goals.
- **Take blame, but give credit**- Recognizing and giving credit to employees and sharing the blames help a lot.
- **Don't play favorites**- Managers gain the trust of employees when they treat everyone equally without showing favoritism to anyone.
- **Show competence**- Competence comes by updating the skills regularly and by collaborating with experts. Managers should be competent to win employees trust.

If managers are open and adopt open door policies, success is most likely to be theirs.

Communications will be effective if **open door policies** are followed by organizations. The open door policy allows the employees to approach their superiors, at any time, to discuss their problems.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you understand by open door policy?
(**Hints:** approaching superiors directly- connectivity with employees- trusted relationships)
2. Discuss the guidelines suggested by Dougherty to managers to win employee trust
(**Hints:** transparency and truthfulness- encouraging- taking blame for mistakes-giving credit to employees-exhibiting competence)

Source: Carolyn O'Hara, Proven Ways to Earn Your Employees' Trust, HBR Blog Network, June 27, 2014