

BE HONEST AND DEPENDABLE; TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Build Top Office Culture

10 Ethics aren't just nice things to have in the workplace. Simply, creating a culture in which truth is the norm is good for business, too.

Here's how to make it work:

■ Employees buy in. Build trust in order to gain employee engagement at work, says Jim Harter, chief workplace management scientist at Omaha, Neb.-based research firm Gallup. That comes from his firm's recent State of the American Workplace study.

"If there's unethical behavior (at the top), people are less likely to see anything the executives say at work as authentic," he told IBD.

When you create an environment of trust, workers stay on the job longer, call in sick less often and suffer fewer job-related accidents because people look out for each other, Harter says. He found that profits are 22% higher at firms that have high employee engagement.

■ Take it from the top. The leader can set the tone for honesty and openness by explaining why he makes decisions, Harter says. It's vital to communicate clearly, too. "Help people know what's expected from them at work," he said.

■ Set the standard. Leading by example carries far more weight than telling people what you want, says Van Moody, a Birmingham, Ala.-based leadership coach.

Be honest in employee reviews and explaining decisions. Do things ethically. It'll rub off.

"People won't reproduce what we say; they'll only reproduce who we are," said Moody, author of "The People Factor."

■ Back it up. Make sure people do what they said they would. If they don't get projects finished on time or they miss meetings, show that it's a priority by setting up rewards and consequences.

"A lot of times people don't recognize that disconnect within themselves," Moody said.

■ Adapt. Try to let employees use flex time. Bend work schedules to fit their needs, Harter says. If they have a kid in basketball, help them find a way to get their work done and still make the big game. "It shows them, 'I'm not just a worker; I'm a person, and my boss trusts me to make it work,'" Harter said.

■ Take a chance. Show others your vulnerabilities. If you struggled with a decision or made a mistake, explain that to your employees. It shows you're human and sets the tone for them to open up.

"It's learning to be intimate, to be honest about your strengths and weaknesses," Moody said.

■ Set expectations. State what people must accomplish and how that fits the company's broader goals, Harter says. They'll grasp how vital their piece of the puzzle is. If you set only company goals, workers might not know how their task contributes to the big picture.

"The more you start treating people as individuals, the better off the organization is," he said.

■ Be sincere. Take it to the extreme, even if that means sharing things you're not comfortable talking about. Employees will see you're honest and act accordingly. If you have to cut staff, tell the group how hard the decision was and what went into it.

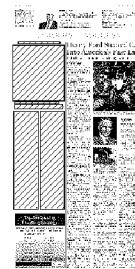
"It takes a person being intentional and not hiding anything," Moody said.

■ Don't tweak it. Don't dance around the truth, Moody says.

He points out that one-fourth of people pad their resume to make themselves look better. Also, people at work shift the blame.

Better for the whole team to give the whole story. Everyone will look better in the end.

"It's always best to err on the side of integrity and honesty," Moody said. "The truth always comes out. I don't think corporations are looking for perfect people. They're looking for honesty." **Steve Watkins**



IBD'S 10 SECRETS TO SUCCESS

Investor's Business Daily has spent years analyzing leaders and successful people in all walks of life. Most have 10 traits that, when combined, can turn dreams into reality. Each day, we highlight one.

- 1 **HOW YOU THINK IS EVERYTHING:** Always be positive. Think success, not failure. Beware of a negative environment.
- 2 **DECIDE UPON YOUR TRUE DREAMS AND GOALS:** Write down your specific goals and develop a plan to reach them.
- 3 **TAKE ACTION:** Goals are nothing without action. Don't be afraid to get started. Just do it.
- 4 **NEVER STOP LEARNING:** Go back to school or read books. Get training and acquire skills.
- 5 **BE PERSISTENT AND WORK HARD:** Success is a marathon, not a sprint. Never give up.
- 6 **LEARN TO ANALYZE DETAILS:** Get all the facts, all the input. Learn from your mistakes.
- 7 **FOCUS YOUR TIME AND MONEY:** Don't let other people or things distract you.
- 8 **DON'T BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE; BE DIFFERENT:** Following the herd is a sure way to mediocrity.
- 9 **DEAL AND COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY:** No person is an island. Learn to understand and motivate others.
- 10 **BE HONEST AND DEPENDABLE; TAKE RESPONSIBILITY:** Otherwise, Nos. 1-9 won't matter.