

What Employees Want: Qualities of an Ideal Leader

It's a well-known fact that an employee's positive relationship with their supervisor increases job satisfaction. As such, there's a good chance you're familiar with the notion that *people don't leave bad jobs or organizations, people leave bad bosses*. The adage remains relevant because the reality is that it happens all the time and, since no organization can afford to lose talented employees, it's important to be the kind of boss employees admire, respect, and *want* to work for.

What employees look for in a boss

Job interviewers often ask potential candidates to describe their ideal boss, usually with the intent to learn about the qualities they value in a leader and to get an idea of how well they might mesh with their prospective manager. Even if we've never experienced such a request – either as an interviewer or an applicant – we likely have an unspoken wish list of attributes that would characterize our “perfect” boss. The following is a list of qualities that employees tend to seek out in a good manager. How many boxes do you check as a manager, and which ones are on your wish list?

Employees want a leader who:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Allows autonomy and doesn't micromanage | <input type="checkbox"/> Listens to and addresses employees' concerns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gives timely feedback (on successes and setbacks) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follows through on promises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is empathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Supports and models healthy work/life balance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provides opportunities for growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Isn't afraid to roll up their sleeves |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledges wins (big and small) | <input type="checkbox"/> Communicates openly and efficiently |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treats everyone equally | <input type="checkbox"/> Sets clear expectations and upholds accountability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps it together under pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Admits their mistakes and doesn't blame others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes and rewards employees | <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciates and nurtures employees' skills and strengths |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is consistent and dependable | |

The importance of building more than rapport

Individually, the attributes listed above increase your chances of being appreciated by your employees. But truly great bosses, the kind others really *want* to work for, are more than just a handful of these qualities. A well-rounded leader who embodies most or all of these traits naturally provides employees with what really matters to them: a boss they admire, respect, trust, and a working environment where they feel safe, included, and valued.

The value of connection

It's also important to create and embrace as many positive interactions with your staff as possible. Not only does authentic interpersonal connection have a significant impact on mental health, but it also helps to build trust and motivation. One way to do this is to make a point to get to know each team member on an individual level and be willing to share a bit about yourself. In addition to showing your employees that you care about who they are and what's going on with them, connecting in this way helps to humanize you in their eyes and allows them to see that there's more to you than just your role as a supervisor.

As you can see, being the ideal leader involves both managerial and interpersonal components. The good news is that honing these skills is achievable and your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is here to help you do just that. Call any time day or night, or visit us online for resources and expert guidance.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to eligible federal employees at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

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