Listen Now, Make Suggestions Later

The best listeners actually enjoy learning from others. They’re content to stay silent and take in what they hear—without interjecting their opinions or making “should” statements.

It’s particularly hard to listen when you’re immersed in conflict. You may jump in to propose a solution or suggest an action plan, only to find that others are not ready to process your input.

A better strategy involves remaining quiet and attentive. Hold your suggestions for later; for now, keep urging others to open up and reveal more of themselves.

Rather than blurt out your proposed solutions, pose information-seeking questions. For example, replace “You should try resorting to harsher punishment” with “Have you considered different forms of punishment?”

Once you realize your role is to listen intently—and not rush to make suggestions—you’re more apt to concentrate on what others say and do. You’ll notice their nonverbal cues. And you’ll avoid daydreaming or planning what to say next.

Better yet, your rapt listening will help you empathize with them. Speakers will appreciate your willingness to let them open up. As a result, they will reveal more of themselves and conclude that you want to hear them out and capture the full message.

Why withhold your suggestions? It’s a matter of perspective: Your ideas represent your point of view, but speakers need to express their point of view.

When you offer a solution too early in the conversation, you’re imposing your story onto someone else’s story. That abrupt shift can undermine trust.

Source: http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/45644/listen-now-make-suggestions-later
Many people hide their feelings out of anger, fear or uncertainty. So a manager needs to have his or her radar up when an employee says one thing and thinks or does another.

The most revealing indicator is a discrepancy between words and body language. When your employees attest to their job satisfaction or commitment to excellence, you want to see their eyes light up with passion. Their voice tempo should speed up slightly as their intensity increases. Even shy or soft-spoken personalities should radiate low-key sincerity when they rave about their work. You can also tell by their vocal inflection and intonation that their positive comments are deeply felt.

Individuals who are disengaged, by contrast, speak with doubt or listlessness. Their facial expressions lack animation or variation. They appear sullen and drained of energy despite saying, “I’m really excited about this project,” or “It looks like that contract will be accepted.”

You can usually sense a speaker’s concealed purpose or buried attitudes. It helps if you treat everyone with openness and shove aside biases that can taint your impressions of people. Never bluntly confront or accuse someone whom you suspect of harboring hidden agendas or concealing utter dissatisfaction. Instead, ask supportive questions. Examples include, “Is there anything at all you’d like to talk about?” or “What can I, or the company, do to help you enjoy your work even more?”

Source: http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/45764/how-to-read-employees
Q. How can supervisors help employees be happier at work other than through good communication, avoiding micromanaging and other supervisor-related issues that impede productivity?

A. A quick Google search finds dozens of action steps and tips to help employees be happier at work. Supervisors can reinforce many of these tips thereby increasing their positive impact. Do your own search of “tips to be happier at work” and see how many you can find. Examples: 1) Eat healthier. (Supervisors can make healthy snacks, like fruit, available so employees are able to take advantage of healthy sources of energy in the afternoons.) 2) Exercise more. (Supervisors can model taking the stairs and/or taking walks during the day, reinforcing get-out-and-move-around behaviors.) 3) Give feedback to your supervisor/employer. (Supervisors can create efficient ways of encouraging employees to give feedback—both positive and negative—and then consider changes where appropriate.) Pride, job satisfaction, and fun at work stimulate the internal motivation of workers, so keep in mind what can contribute to these feeling-states to help employees be happier at work.

Q. We have a troubled employee with many behavioral issues who took a leave of absence from work. Lengthy absences had coworkers hoping and believing that he would not return. Unfortunately, he’s back, and employees are upset. How can this issue be managed?

A. Your employee will return to work and either maintain satisfactory performance or not. If you have a history of documentation, you should continue with it, noting positive changes or continuation of the performance issues. Meet and discuss your concerns with your employee. Set standards for what you expect. Talk with your employee about what, if anything, is needed from you to do the job well. If employees approach you with dismay and anger, remind them that you are fair and impartial in your supervision. Do not discuss the employee’s issues. Encourage individual workers to come to you with their complaints first so you can address them rather than risk a bullying or “mobbing” of this worker by an angry group of coworkers.

Q. What is “mobbing” in the workplace?

A. Mobbing refers to a group of employees bullying an individual. Whether coordinated or not, the pattern includes targeting the individual with behaviors generally considered to be harassment. These include “ganging up” on the victim in an effort to force him or her to quit or be transferred. The victim may be targeted with rumors, intimidation, humiliation, or social isolation. When discussing mobbing, these behaviors are generally not sexual or racial in their context, but their maliciousness constitutes harassment.