

How to Create a High-Performance Environment

Imagine having a company culture where success isn't just a possibility—it's guaranteed. Everything that surrounds you and your team is aligned to one thing: achieving world-class results. Your company is guided by a compelling vision that inspires excellence and focus. Everyone understands what it will take to reach your goals and is motivated to achieve them. You're surrounded by people who are supportive of you and of each other—you have a team that consistently asks for feedback to be better than before.

How to Create a High-Performance Environment

This is the high-performing environment that will help your team reach its full potential.

Now ask yourself: Do the people in *my* organization feel like this about our company culture?

If not, then *why*?

The key is in your vision and how you orientate your team to achieving your organization's goals. As a leader, you'll get the best results when your team believes in the program. In a high-performance environment, everyone needs to know more than the basics of their responsibilities and the "general purpose" of the company—they need your vision to succeed. Your long-term goals will inform your employees on the big picture and their role in achieving the results you want. While there are a number of ways to incorporate your vision, one of the most effective tools is regularly scheduled **Employee Development Meetings**.

There's no substitute for face-to-face contact and communication between you and your employees. In an Employee Development Meeting, you'll paint a vivid mental picture of your dream and then work to focus your team's hopes and intentions on the future they want to create with your company and for themselves. You'll ask them questions about what's working and what isn't. You'll discover with your employees what each one needs to succeed—both for the good of themselves, and for the good of the company.

In the Employee Development Meeting, you are the role model for the open and trusting attitude you want your people to emulate. By giving your team room to discuss their work, performance and their role in the company, you're giving them an opportunity to enrich your vision with their own objectives.

Don't lose sight of your role as a leader! The Employee Development Meeting will help you be a mentor towards your employees. In these one-on-one meetings, you'll be the one who fires up their hearts, minds and souls. You're the one who will show them that the answer to "What's in it for me?" is nothing less than the achievement of *their* dreams!

Worksheet

Instructions - How to Hold Employee Development Meetings

The Employee Development Meeting is a forum for discussion, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and planning that leaves your employees feeling listened to and empowered to take action towards your goals and their own. We recommend weekly 30-60 minute one-on-one meetings between managers and their reports. While training your managers, consider an activity for role-playing different scenarios—like encouraging professional development or giving feedback—so they'll be more comfortable during the discussion.

In addition to these meetings, many business owners create informal opportunities for personal exchanges. Friday afternoon get-togethers create an opportunity for unstructured conversation and feedback. Monthly or bimonthly coffee hours or breakfasts with open agendas encourage conversation.

As you and your managers get started, keep these tips in mind:

1. Remember to show how what you're doing also benefits your employees. Remind them how they can achieve their own aspirations through the work they do.
2. Focus on people's accomplishments and positive characteristics when giving feedback.
3. Allow your people the opportunity to speak openly about their fears and concerns, and show them that you understand. Encourage your managers to keep the lines of communication open with each of their reporting employees.

Worksheet

First Employee Development Meeting Sample Agenda

Instructions: Use this agenda as an example of how you and your managers should structure the weekly meetings.

Discuss ground rules for our relationship

- *What we can expect from each other*
- *What you need from me*

Provide overview of Employee Development Meeting

Purpose: To promote employees' professional and personal growth by working together to overcome obstacles, to provide a place to be vulnerable, and to learn so that employees can be their best and achieve results they can be proud of.

Logistics: Participants are managers and individual employees. Meetings should occur in a private location each week for 30-60 mins.

Content: Mentoring, professional development, interpersonal and administrative issues.

Review Current Work

- *What's in progress?*
- *What work issues can we identify and solve?*

Discuss Employee's Professional Goals

- *What's getting in the way of your personal development?*
- *What tools or additional training do you feel like you need?*
- *How can I continue to support you?*

Schedule Regular, Ongoing Employee Development Meetings

- *What should be carried over for next week?*
- *What other items should we discuss?*

Worksheet

Sample Discussion Questions

Instructions: Use the questions below to guide your team to think differently about their work. You'll need to be prepared to listen to your people, and understand what may be going on inside them in order to help inspire change and improvement.

- When we talk about our vision and goals, what stands out to you? Why is that? How do you feel about your role in achieving those goals?
- I'd love to hear an example of where you feel like we didn't live up to our standards, or anything else you see along those lines. Was there something we did that you felt let down by? How do you think we should handle it differently next time?
- Do you feel like you're in the 'center' of your job? Meaning, are you doing something that really suits you? And do you feel like you have the right amount of responsibility and authority to do it well?
- What would you say is the 'theme' that runs through your work here? For example, do you often get lost in the details on projects, or struggle to feel relaxed in talking with our customers? What are you working on as a professional goal for yourself in being here?
- Does working here make you 'better' at your life outside of here? Meaning, do you go home feeling good about yourself and your contribution? What do you think is in the way of you feeling more that way here?
- When you think about where you want to be a year from now, or three, how does working here serve that personal dream? What is it giving you, or could it give you, that serves you and the life you want?

Worksheet

As you can see, these questions are 'soft'—they're not about today's tasks or next week's deadline. They're questions that invite your people into the big picture, not only to 'do better' at work but to 'be better' in their life. Their individual hopes, dreams and fears are all part of the magic that is your brand.

With these meetings, you'll help your team grow, communicate and move forward in the company. You'll be the coach who teaches them how to handle problems and frustrations in a healthy, constructive way. The environment you create will help give your employees' the recognition, meaningful yet challenging work, and personal and professional growth they desire. They'll work to achieve your goals because they're guided by your vision of success. That's the real purpose of the meeting, so your people can bring that much more of themselves into work today than they did yesterday, and most importantly to feel they have your support along the way.