3 Tough Questions You Should Ask of Employees by Jimmie Flores

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Your role as manager is difficult. You have many meetings to attend, countless reports to complete, and far too many fires to put out. You hit the ground running on Monday, and hope to build momentum by Tuesday. Of course, Murphyâ€™s Law has a way to intervene, and before you know it, youâ€™re in a reactive mode. It never ends.

As a business owner, Iâ€™ve had the opportunity to learn so much over the past couple of decades. Of course, this means that Iâ€™ve made so many mistakes. Most of my problems arose because I didnâ€™t ask the right questions, or was even unaware of the questions to pose my employees. If we fail to raise an issue, itâ€™s likely that no one will bring it to your attention.

In his book, Good to Great, Jim Collins discusses the importance of asking the brutal questions. Itâ€™s obvious that no one wants to hear bad news, but asking the tough questions is not necessarily negative. As leaders in our organizations, we are focused on identifying issues before they arise. When we ask the tough questions, these potential problems are unearthed before they have an adverse impact on our goals and objectives.

Here are three tough questions you should ask your employees:

#1: Why were you unable to complete the work by the deadline:

You must ask this question before you ask this one? How can I help you meet the deadline? By asking why first, we focus on the root cause of the problem, and not the symptoms. The employee might have too much on his plate, and we need to divide the work. In some cases, the individual fails to have the necessary skills to do the assignment. In that case, training might be the best option, or perhaps we can assign a mentor.

#2: â€œAdriana, Why are you criticizing Jacquelineâ€™s efforts?â€•

In many organizations today, there is a tendency to find fault in what others are doing. As a manager, we must quickly squelch this practice. Instead of finding wrong in what our teammates are doing, the energy should be spent on helping them succeed. The manager must identify the conflict, and put a stop to it. If we allow the issue to fester, it can spiral out of control, leading to significant corporate culture problems.

#3: Why do you like working here?

This is an important question, and we can learn a ton from an employee by listening to his response.

Here are red flags responses to this question:

â€¢ â€œItâ€™s a good job. I can now do it in my sleep.â€•

â€¢ â€œIt pays the bills, and even the benefits are good.â€•

â€¢ â€œAt least itâ€™s close to my house.â€•

The problem with the statements above is that the employee is focused on the benefits external to the work. Once they find something better somewhere else, they are out the door. To keep the

employees motivated, the work must be meaningful.

Skirting an issue is a recipe for failure. We must ask the tough questions, and listen carefully to the responses. Make sure to keep asking follow-up questions until you are clear regarding the root cause. In some cases, you will need to contact other employees to get their feedback. Donâ€™t stop until you have enough information to get matters back on track.

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