

# The Leading Edge

4th Quarter 2014 Manager Newsletter



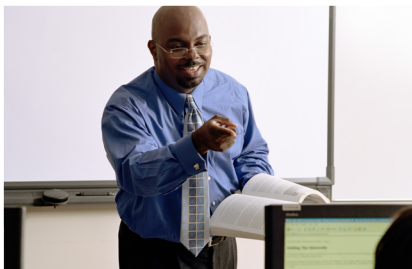
## Are you leading by example?

Building morale doesn't have to be complex or expensive. Click here for ideas on how you can help build moral. **More...**



## Are you a solution-focused manager?

Read this article to find out how you can be a solution-focused manager while still keeping good boundaries. **More...**



## Morale matters: Building a positive workforce

As a manager, you have the chance to lead your staff. Few things inspire others to follow someone as much as leading by action. **More...**

# Are you leading by example?

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“Practice what you preach.” It’s a statement that applies to management as much as it does to parenting. Nobody likes the boss who tells everyone to work late, but then leaves at five. Employees resent the supervisor who says people need to work harder but is always playing solitaire on the computer. Promoting a double standard is a great way to demotivate your staff. As a manager, you have the chance to lead your staff. And few things inspire others to follow someone as much as leading by action.

## Being a role model

Managers aren’t necessarily leaders. Managers are promoted into positions of authority. And this authority gives them oversight and responsibility. But leaders, on the other hand, are appointed by their followers. You have to earn the role of leader through your actions and integrity. To be a leader, you have to show others the way by first doing it yourself.

The world’s greatest leaders changed others through their actions. Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, spent most of his adult life living his beliefs. He showed his commitment through his behavior. And people followed in his footsteps. When you lead by example, you make it easy for others to follow you.

## How to be a good example

In order to be a good role model, you have to take a close look at your behavior. What do you criticize others for that you do yourself? If you tell your team that work-life balance is important but you work all the time, you’re sending a mixed message. Your staff may be confused about your expectations. Here are some steps to consider:

**Look in the mirror.** Don’t ask others to do something you’re not willing to do yourself.

**Play fair.** If you implement new rules, follow them closely.

**Get your hands dirty.** Working alongside your team builds trust.

**Take responsibility.** When mistakes happen, own your part.

The best leaders aren’t perfect. They make mistakes and experience failure. But by responding to mistakes with integrity, these managers role model how failure can be an opportunity to learn and improve. Because at the end of the day, your staff will remember what you did, not what you said.

# Are you a solution-focused manager?

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What you say matters. You may have heard employees complain about bosses who are “no” people. It doesn’t matter the solution or suggestion, “No” managers like to point out problems. The problem with “no” bosses is they tend to squash creativity and lower morale. And this can make employees feel like their manager creates roadblocks to production.

So how can you be a solution-focused manager while still keeping good boundaries? Being a “yes” person doesn’t mean you co-sign on every idea presented to you. Being a “yes” manager really means removing barriers for your staff so they can do a good job. This includes taking a hard look at yourself. Are you inadvertently getting in the way? Are you an accidental “no” person?

## The importance of being positive

Being positive helps your employees grow. When you create a positive environment that empowers staff, you’re going to attract and maintain talent. Your “yes” attitude will be contagious.

Employees want to feel good about coming to work. They want to feel like their ideas matter. And when they feel good and positive, they’re more productive. But creating a positive workplace starts with you.

## How to say “yes” more

A solution-focused manager likes to find solutions and strengths, instead of problems. This doesn’t always come naturally to people. If you’re risk averse, you may need to look at where that comes from. You may be a “no” manager if you find yourself saying “yes, but...” Ask yourself some questions, such as:

- What is my motivation in saying “yes” or “no”?
- What’s the worst that can happen?

It’s important to weigh the risks and rewards of taking a chance on a new idea. You may also want to talk to someone you trust to see if your fears are founded.

## What does being solution-focused look like?

There are lots of ways to say “yes.” You don’t have to approve every idea without hesitation. Try some of these statements:

- “I believe in you”
- “How can we solve this issue?”
- “How can we do this better?”
- “Let’s try it”
- “I like that idea. How can we make it work?”

Being a solution-focused manager means letting your employees make mistakes. It includes listening to their ideas, taking calculated risks and trying new things.

## Removing obstacles

A good boss tries to make sure his or her employees have what they need to do a good job. It’s important to check in with your staff on a regular basis so you understand their needs and encourage new ideas. Consider questions like these:

- What can I do to help make your job easier?
- Do you have all the resources you need to do your work?
- Is there anything I can do to give you more support?

By asking solution-focused questions, you show concern and compassion for your employees. It proves you understand an important part of your job is taking care of your staff. So try to turn those “no’s” into opportunities to find solutions.



# Morale matters: Building a positive workforce

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## When it comes to high morale, everyone wins.

Employee morale is good for business. It's linked to loyalty, productivity and low turnover. When you've got high morale, staff members are less stressed. And less stress means your employees work harder, are more engaged and take fewer sick days. So what can you do to build morale?

Building morale doesn't have to be complex or expensive. Here are a few ideas to consider:

**Say thank you.** This one should be easy. But because it's easy, you can often forget the power of a "thank you." You might think your gratitude doesn't matter or it isn't enough. But this couldn't be farther from the truth.

Stop worrying about not giving enough. A well-earned "thanks a lot" can go a long way. It shows your staff you notice them and you value their contribution. It helps give meaning to their efforts.

**Give attention.** There are few things as rewarding as attention. By sitting down with your employees, you both benefit. You can get to know them better. You can learn about their goals, talents and hopes for advancement. And you can find out what is going well in your organization and what needs work.

You can come away from these talks knowing more about your team. And your staff can feel more valued.

**Value personal time.** Company potlucks are nice. But nothing helps your team unwind as much as time spent with family and friends. In fact, human resources experts say scheduled work events can feel like a burden for employees.<sup>1</sup>

Many employees want flexible work schedules and the chance to take personal time as needed.

**Encourage development.** Many employees care about doing a good job. A sense of efficacy and accomplishment often boosts morale. You can foster this by offering training and development opportunities.

In addition to company training, check out the local community colleges and university-extension departments for affordable classes. Find out if your organization provides any money to help your staff pay for continuing education. Help your team explore new options.

**Build trust.** Trust matters. If your employees don't trust you, it hurts morale. Work to build trust by involving your team in discussions and encourage them to make decisions. Make sure you follow through with your promises. And if you make a mistake, be sure to own it.

Work towards being transparent and genuine with your staff. This kind of authentic leadership will pay off with a trusting workforce.

**Have some fun.** Try to infuse fun into your workplace. You don't have to throw fancy parties or spend a lot of money to have fun. Instead, try to think outside the box. Laser tag, games and team builders can help your staff bond.

And make sure to have a sense of humor around the office. Share funny quotes and crack a few jokes – all within good taste, of course. And don't forget to smile and laugh at yourself from time to time.

Staff morale doesn't have to cost you a lot of money to build. But the lack of it can cost your organization in the long run. Get creative, show appreciation and let your employees know they matter. Because with good morale, everyone wins.

<sup>1</sup>[forbes.com](http://forbes.com)

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