

Promoting a work culture centred on empathy is one way to ensure actively-engaged employees and increase overall productivity. This is reflected in the [2016 Empathy Index](#), which showed that the top ten most empathic companies outperformed the bottom ten by at least 50% in productivity, earnings and growth.

Empathic leaders also pave the way for happier employees. Mutual understanding and an open environment are a powerful foundation for meaningful connections between management and employees — leading to lower stress levels and higher retention rates, i.e., a win-win situation.

Keep reading to find out how implementing empathic approaches can improve relationships with employees and drive a more satisfied workforce.

Defining Empathy in the Workplace

Empathy means having the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes to relate to their thoughts, emotions and experiences. When we have empathy, we react more compassionately and have a deeper understanding of how someone feels.

Empathy is a powerful tool in any relationship — not just work. By temporarily taking up residence in somebody else's perspective, you'll find it easier to solve conflicts and create solutions that work for everyone involved.

In the workplace, establishing empathic relationships with colleagues can improve performance and satisfaction, and eliminate the risk of stalemates for more efficient decision making. These empathic connections usually have four qualities:

- Both parties openly communicate about workplace problems and concerns.
- Neither party is interested in conflict, judgment and criticism.
- Both parties respect the other's point of view.
- The focus shifts to a win-win strategy, removing tension and conflict.

How Empathy Fuels Productivity

Since the pandemic struck, employees are placing more emphasis than ever on their mental health. According to research by [Workplace from Facebook](#), more than half of employees state they would consider leaving their job if company leaders didn't show empathy to staff needs.

Although an important factor, the benefits of empathy extend far beyond employee satisfaction to all corners of a business — including its bottom line.

It decreases conflict

When there's a common understanding of emotions and motivations, the risk of conflict decreases significantly.

In a conflict situation, it can be tempting to look for someone to blame. However, pointing fingers can escalate situations, leading to bad feelings and a notion of victimhood. By making someone the perpetrator rather than working towards mutual understanding, you waste time and energy — the definition of unproductive.

When leaders focus on embedding a culture of empathy, collaboration increases, driving productivity and making solutions easier to find.

It makes giving and receiving feedback easier

Giving and receiving feedback at work is an important element of productivity, as it gives us the opportunity to improve. Empathy allows leaders to gain an overall understanding of why certain areas aren't up to scratch. Taking a compassionate and empathic approach to feedback gives employees the space to be open about

their downfalls.

For example, by asking “How are things going for you?” employees have the chance to open up on areas they’re struggling with, which could be hindering their productivity. Leaders can then work on finding a way to overcome these barriers to productivity, promoting an environment where self-improvement is central.

It reduces work-related stress

Fostering empathy in the workplace can help create a more collaborative environment and strengthen work relationships, which works to reduce stress levels. In fact, research from the [BI Norwegian Business School](#) found that managers with good relationships with their employees, who in turn understood their managers’ challenges, experienced significantly less stress.

Employees are also less likely to experience burnout in an empathic organisation. Through a lens of empathy, managers can check in with employees regularly, giving employees the chance to talk. Instead of instilling fear and stress in employees, empathic leaders can pivot and adapt their policies to focus on wellbeing.

How to Improve Empathy at Work

Here are four simple steps you can take to ensure your company is cultivating empathy:

1. Actively Listen

In a busy work environment, it can be easy to passively listen while your mind’s on something else. However, this isn’t productive. Try to put your deadlines, tasks and

problems aside to concentrate on what the other person is really saying. Look out for non-verbal cues as well.

By putting yourself in their position, you can imagine how they're feeling and are better equipped to find a solution.

2. Recognise your bias

Your unconscious bias could be making you react in a certain way, impacting your decision making. Although it's difficult to unlearn, it's easier to keep your bias in check when you're aware that it exists.

This awareness prevents you from dismissing someone's feelings simply because of a preconceived notion of how you think they act, leading to a more empathic environment.

3. Work with your team

By better understanding your team's workload and the frustrations they feel, you can empathise with their needs and worries. It's also a lot easier to spot the signs of burnout when you work alongside your workforce, which helps prevent disengagement.

When remote working, you can do this by checking in regularly to see how people are feeling regarding their workload and simply asking how their day is going. Trickle's "[How Was Your Day?](#)" feature is perfect for this. Your employees can (anonymously) share if they had a good or bad day and why, while you can identify improvements and figure out what really matters to your workforce.

4. Avoid making assumptions

Giving employees the benefit of the doubt before passing judgment on their performance can be a powerful way to demonstrate empathy.

Jumping to conclusions is the exact opposite of empathy, as there's no patience or understanding involved in making bold assumptions. Through open dialogue, on the other hand, you can get to the root of the issue and solve it faster.

How Trickle Can Help

Trickle is an online platform that brings together employee engagement, wellbeing and recognition in one easy-to-use tool. It helps organisations listen to employees and boost collaboration to drive meaningful change and improvements.

With optional anonymity, Trickle gives employees the opportunity to give feedback and suggestions so leaders can focus on areas that need it the most.

Give your employees a voice and take actionable change with Trickle.

[Find out more](#) about how Trickle can help your organisation improve employee wellbeing and make things better for everyone.