

## Twelve Ways Leaders Tell Their People They Are Important

Leaders know the old saying “How you act shouts so loudly I can't hear what you're saying” is the truth. They use it to their advantage.

Leaders know that the greatest sense of accomplishment and importance often comes from non-monetary rewards, and from positive recognition from the person who is the boss. And they know they can do it without “breaking the rules” or incurring big expenses.

Many managers feel constrained by the rules and regulations of their organizations. They feel their hands are tied when it comes to rewarding their people – that their actions are controlled by others, and there is little of any real value they can do to motivate their people.

### Here are 12 Ways leaders let their people know how important they are:

**Way #1** – Leaders truly believe the work performed by their people is important. This may sound pretty basic, but that is an absolutely essential belief. Without it there is simply no way people can be convinced that what they do is important. How often have you heard – or been guilty of saying – or thinking – “Oh, she's just the receptionist” or, “He's just the janitor” or “They're just trainees” or “They're just a staff weenie?”

**Way #2** – Leaders expect the best from everyone, and settle for nothing less. Nothing makes people feel more important than high expectations for their performance. Leaders make sure their people share in setting the expectations.

**Way #3** – Leaders create goals that are shared and show the tie in of individual work with the success of the organization.

**Way #4** – Leaders select the best – in every opening they have. Every tool is used to ensure that the best possible decision is made on who is selected. People watch very carefully to see who is picked – they need to be involved in the selection process whenever possible. Leaders know that actions taken in selection communicate how important the open position is. Who is selected is seen as a direct reflection on the quality of the people in the organization.

**Way #5** – Leaders are their people's institutional champion! What's that mean? When their pay is wrong, leaders get it right. When their reviews are scheduled, leaders ensure they are done accurately and on time. When their raises are due, leaders make sure they are handled properly and on time. Leaders jealously guard their relationship as the go to person for their people. Institutional support people can help, but leaders know they are the key contact for their people.

**Way #6** – Leaders are absolutely intolerant of unsafe, disruptive or other negative behaviors. They act on them quickly and decisively, and never let their people see them knowingly ignore a bad situation. Leaders know these situations will not go away, regardless of how much “wish’in and hop’in and pray’in” might be done.

**Way #7** – Leaders know that trust and respect are not the same thing as being liked. It is nice to be liked, it is absolutely essential that people trust and respect their leader. As a comedian said: “If you want to be liked, get a dog.”

**Way #8** – Leaders cultivate a climate of civility for their people. In their relationships with their people, they make sure their actions reflect a fundamental respect for others.

**Way #9** – Leaders get every one of their people some form of self development activity on a regular basis. It may be a seminar, it may be tuition refund, it may be a book, it may be a CD set, it may be a Community College course – it does not have to be expensive and time consuming, but the act of creating added value through the investment of personal effort supported by organizational resources is a powerful way to express importance.

**Way #10** – Leaders respect their people's time – it's their most valuable asset. Leaders start meetings on time, end them on time, keep meeting commitments. They do what they have to do to ensure their people have the use of as much of their work time as possible.

**Way #11** – Leaders keep the rules and policies to an absolute minimum. If there is a workable set of cultural and organizational “Way's Of Doing Things” then the basis for treating people with individual regard exists. If they don't exist, leaders set them in their own area of responsibility.

**Way #12** – Leaders celebrate the successes – they create the opportunity for group recognition to happen all over the place – if Safety is an issue, they create a Safety Award process that celebrates progress. They make the celebration events frequent, the rewards modest – but they do it all the time. Leaders know the frequency of awards and the opportunity for celebration are as important, actually more important, than the annual lunch or dinner or whatever.

Did you notice one thing about all 12 Ways? Not one of them deals with lots of money, or more capital, or new policies or procedures. All do require beliefs and behaviors – and they are the most challenging, most high leverage efforts that can be made to improve an organization. It's always tempting to do a feel good

seminar, or buy something, or take some action that shows a high level of commitment to the people. But the truth is that the way to greater success is through a focused, day to day effort to improve the level of commitment of the people in an organization, and that takes hard work, leadership and the acceptance of change.

If you can see Ways that can help you organization or your work group or yourself in this article, take them and run with them – they are the basis for successful managers becoming successful leaders.

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**The Cox Consulting Group was founded by Andy Cox in 1995 with the goal of helping clients select, develop and retain the talent and teams they need to be successful.**