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## Three Steps to Stop Absenteeism

**If you're an employer or a manager, workplace absenteeism is costing you money, creating an inconvenience to those who are working, and upsetting your customers.** And as you all know, not all days taken off work are due to genuine sickness. Many employees "take a sick day" because their morale is low and they just don't like or can't do their work.



The challenge for employers and managers is to make people happier at work. If people are happy at work, they are less likely to take a day off every time they wake up with a stuffy nose.

Some bosses think that paying more money, increasing job security, or improving working conditions provide the answer. They don't. Making people happy at work can be very hard to achieve.

People who employ or supervise others need to become more tuned to their employees' emotional needs and find out what really motivates them.

**To reduce the amount of absenteeism there are three steps you need to consider.**

**First, pick the right person for the job.** You need to get better at interviewing and selecting people.

Take more time to decide who is right for the job; pay more attention to the applicant's human side rather than their qualifications or experience. Get to know them better.

Find out what makes them happy, how well they get along with other people, and how much energy and enthusiasm they have. Make sure they know what they're getting into and be sure the job suits them.



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**Second, you need to believe in your people.** If you've interviewing well and picked the right person for the job then you need to trust them to do that job. You need to constantly demonstrate to your people that you trust and believe in them by what you say, your tone of voice, and your body language.

If you believe that your people are not to be trusted, that they're unable to make a decision without checking with you, that they'll turn up late and go home early, then that's exactly what they'll do.

If on the other hand you believe that they'll do their job well, that they can be trusted to make decisions, and they'll give you a fair day's work, then it is more likely this is what you'll get.

As with all theories there is no guarantee that it will work every time, however the majority of employees are reasonable people and if you treat them as such then they are more likely to behave in a positive manner.

**The third and probably the most important thing you can do to reduce absenteeism and motivate your people is to give them feedback and coach them.**

This is where so many employers and managers fall down in dealing with their people; they're hopeless at giving feedback. Many managers are uncomfortable telling staff how they feel about their work performance.

Most employees want to know how they are performing in their job; they want to know if they are doing it right or how they could do it better.

If you really want to motivate your people then you need to give them feedback on what they're doing well and what needs improvement.

When you notice an employee doing something you do like, tell them about it. When you notice something you don't like, tell them about it.

**Do it as soon as possible.** Acknowledging a job well done is not much good six months later. Also, if you don't immediately call someone's attention to something you're not happy about, then they'll assume its okay. Either that or they'll think you didn't notice, or worse, that you don't care.

**Do it in private.** Why is it some managers still feel its okay to reprimand someone in front of their colleagues? Even the mildest rebuke can have a negative effect on morale.



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When you do speak to the person use "I" messages. Say things like "I liked the way you did that" or "I'm unhappy with the way your reports are always late and I'd like your view on why this is."

Avoid "You" messages such as "You're doing great." That can come across as patronizing or insincere. "You're doing that all wrong" may cause conflict, lower morale, and may not solve the problem.

Focus on one or two things. Don't run off a whole list of attributes or misdemeanors. Also be specific about job behavior, focus on what the person did or didn't do, don't make a personal attack.

Employees will feel happier if they perceive their employer or manager as a reasonable and fair individual – someone who is quick to praise but also says when they're not happy about something.

If you want motivated staff then make their work interesting, give them feedback, and give them the feeling that they're involved in the business.

You can make the job more interesting by giving people more responsibility, assigning projects, and by training and developing them. You need to regularly give people feedback on how they're doing; focusing on what they're doing well rather than on what is not so good. To meet their need to feel involved you should regularly communicate both formally and informally. You could also involve staff in meetings they might not normally attend.

These steps will take time and thought. However, they'll make a huge difference as to how employees feel about their work. If they feel good and gain satisfaction from their work then they're less likely to find a reason to "take a sick day".

