

Learn to respect employees' time, and you'll increase productivity

In this age of "do more with less," employees value every minute of the workday. As a manager, you need to respect their time and value it as much as they do. Here are some things to remember:

- **Don't abuse your cell phone.** When you're on the commute home, and you know a key employee is working late, it's tempting to call to talk business. Don't. Employees don't arrive early or stay late for fun—they are trying to accomplish something, and giving up their personal time to do so. Let them work in peace.
- **Ask for permission to extend meeting times.** Set specific times for meetings, and then insist that everyone—yourself included—is on time. When assigning a time, set a finishing time as well, so employees can better schedule their days. ("We'll meet from 10 to 10:45.") If the meeting proves to be productive and you don't want to quit at the designated time, ask employees if it's okay to extend the meeting—and offer employees who need to leave the chance to do so.
- **Learn to make "24-hour promises—and stick to them.** When an employee comes to you with a question, and you don't know the answer, don't blow it off. They'll waste time finding the answer somewhere else. Tell them, "I'll be in my office 24 hours from now with an answer. Meet me here." Then jot down the problem, and the appointed time in your day planner. Make sure you have an answer waiting.
- **Create a "Time Suckers" committee.** Have committee members weed out unnecessary, time-wasting reports, meetings, processes, and so on. Encourage other employees to nominate things to be eliminated. Keep track of your progress on a "Time Suckers" bulletin board.
- **Reward the families of hardworking employees.** If workers are staying late on an important project, their family life often suffers. Send their spouses a card—or, better yet, a dinner or movie voucher. Let them know you don't take the extra time for granted.