

10 Ways to Encourage Employees to Take Ownership in Their Work



Every employee who works for you will eventually arrive at a crucial intersection, if they haven't already.

At that point, you hope they turn right and buy-in to your leadership and the vision and values of your company. Turning that direction means that they see a future for themselves with your organization, so they'll invest themselves fully and go all-in.

Unfortunately, some will turn left and quit on you without actually quitting. They'll take on the 'me against the machine' mindset and begin looking for shortcuts and ways they can do just the MDR (Minimum Daily Requirement) that it takes to fly below the radar and avoid getting called out or fired.

Your leadership determines their direction. Here are 10 ways to encourage your people to turn right, own their job and control their future in your organization:

1. **Share Your Vision.** Help employees feel part of something bigger than themselves. Communicate your mission and vision to them early and often and ask for their continual input so that they see what you see and are committed to working toward that result.
2. **Involve Employees in Goal Setting and Planning Activities.** Seek out their ideas, knowledge, and insights, and invite them to help make important decisions. At the very least, let them see your process for making difficult decisions.

3. **Explain the Why.** Don't just tell someone what to do without making certain they also understand *why* that task needs to be completed and *why* you've selected that individual for the job. Give the job context in the bigger picture of your operation.
4. **Let Them Choose the How.** Whenever possible, let your employees decide *how* to achieve the task you've assigned. Agree upon what constitutes a successful outcome, then let them chart their own course. This builds ownership in the process and they might figure out a method for getting the job done that is superior to the one you would have assigned. If that happens, call attention to it. If they choose a poor methodology, don't jump in and scold them, but rather ask questions that enable them to see better options and give 'em another chance.
5. **Delegate Authority, Not Just Work.** Give employees a leadership role in some of the meetings they attend. Leadership skills develop over time, and they require practice.
6. **Trust Them Before You Have To.** Eventually, you'll have to trust them, but sometimes it's worth the risk to trust them before that point to decide or step into a role that pushed them to the limit. Your trust in them will give them confidence, and that confidence is crucial to their personal development.
7. **Encourage Them to Solve Their Own Problems.** Listen to their problems but don't bark out the answer. Instead, ask probing questions that will lead them to determine the right answer. When they get it, compliment them and tell them they don't need to ask you about similar situations; that you have faith in them to figure it out. Don't abandon them but prove that you trust their judgment.
8. **Hold Them Accountable.** Remember that employer trust and employee autonomy is a two-way street. Holding employees accountable for their work and for meeting established goals and deadlines motivates them to achieve better results. Don't let 'em off the hook. Demand their best effort.
9. **Provide Constructive Feedback.** Regardless of the results, let them know how they're doing, and give them the coaching they need to improve. Although they might not always ask for it, they want and need your feedback to further develop their knowledge and skills.
10. **Acknowledge Them on the Spot for Stepping Up.** A few seconds of genuine one-on-one acknowledgement and recognition can go a long way toward reinforcing an employee's willingness to step up and stand tall. Show you appreciate their above-and-beyond commitment with a reward that matches the result. Often, the best reward is additional trust and an added level of responsibility.

ON POINT – If you want your employees to take ownership in their jobs and work for you the way they'd work for themselves, you must invite them to be more than just an order-taking drone by cultivating a culture of autonomy.