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Interact Report

**THE TOP COMPLAINTS
FROM EMPLOYEES ABOUT
THEIR LEADERS**

July 2015



Survey Methodology:

This survey was conducted online within the United States March 12-16, 2015 among 999 employed adults (employed full-time, part-time, and/or self-employed). It was conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of Interact.

Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

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A survey shows a striking lack of emotional intelligence among executives.

If you're the kind of boss who fails to make genuine connections with your direct reports, take heed: 91% of employees say communication issues can drag executives down, according to results from our new Interact/Harris Poll, which was conducted online with roughly 1,000 U.S. workers.

In the survey, employees called out the kind of management offenses that point to a striking lack of emotional intelligence among business leaders, including micromanaging, bullying, narcissism, indecisiveness, and more. The data shows that the vast majority of leaders are not engaging in crucial moments that could help employees see them as trustworthy. This is startling,

considering how much money organizations spend conducting employee surveys and reorganizations, engaging consultants, and implementing change initiatives.

In rank order, the following were the top communication issues people said were preventing business leaders from being effective.



Not recognizing employee achievements (63%)



Not having **time to meet** with employees (52%)



Not giving **clear directions** (57%)



Refusing to talk to subordinates (51%)



Taking credit
for others' ideas
(47%)



Not knowing
employees' names
(36%)



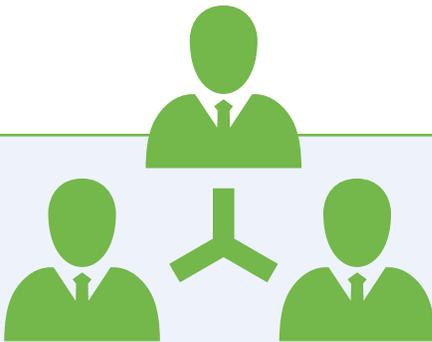
Not offering
constructive
criticism
(39%)



Refusing to **talk**
to people on the
phone/in person
(34%)



Not asking about
employees' **lives**
outside work
(23%)



Effective leaders know that healthy communication requires the energy of connection—with inclusion, recognition, clear directions, meaningful interaction, and feedback as the nerve center of the company.

They know productivity is tied to communication. They are intentional about building a sense of connectedness with their teams and appreciation of their employees by saying and asking things such as:



1. Here's what I appreciate about you and your contribution ...

A basic "atta-boy" or "atta-girl" doesn't satisfy people who put their hearts and souls into their work. Instead, say something specific to your employees like,

"I appreciate the way you pull in people from other departments to reach your team goals—you're a connector." Leaders need to notice employees' unique, specific contributions and let them know that you notice.

2. Thank you (personal and public) ... Daily interactions—from the elevator to the parking lot—represent opportunities for leaders to engage in dynamic interactions and show appreciation for their employees' efforts. Public recognition at a staff meeting or a thoughtful "thank you" in a newsletter or e-mail is also meaningful. For example, Duke Energy CEO Lynn Good leaves "thank you" notes on yellow sticky notes in employees' offices.

3. Here's what's happening and what you can expect ... Companies operate in a constant state of change, and all too often, information is withheld from team members until the last minute. This is a huge distraction for employees, who need "real speak" about their futures to be present in their work. Leaders often underestimate employees' ability to accept "why" if it is shared in an honest way. Leaders will gain deep respect when they share as much as they know as soon as they can share it. Real explanations are always better than no explanations.

4. I have some feedback for you ... Don't wait for a performance review to tell people how they're doing. A culture of continual feedback is healthy and nimble. In particular, Millennials want more coaching and feedback than previous generations.

5. Let me tell you about something I learned the hard way ... Smart, capable leaders who know their stuff are well respected, but employees like and trust leaders who are not only smart, but can also occasionally lean back and laugh at their own mistakes, and who are generous with what life has taught them. Don't be afraid to show that you're human, too.

6. Hello, Susan ... Dale Carnegie said, "A person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language." Get to know your employees by name. If the company is too big to know everyone's name, start with the people in close proximity. There's no excuse for saying, "I'm not good with names." The best among us work at it. Learn the art of association.

Vision that is too heavily weighted toward achievement at the expense of employee experience can exact a toll. Dr. Edward Hallowell, author and former faculty member at Harvard Medical School, asserts that for most people, the two most powerful experiences in life are achieving and connecting. But if we focus on achieving, we're not doing well at connecting. Connection is a mindset and an energy exchange between people who are paying attention to one another.

I often ask my MBA students this question: who will influence you more and motivate you toward you best—the brilliant and well-published professor who has no time to connect or the brilliant but less well published professor who makes a connection with you as a human being? Hands down, it is always the latter.

What this all boils down to is that business is about people. It always has been, and always will be. Too often, businesses fall short not because leaders don't understand the business, but because they don't understand what the people who work for them need in order to bring their best effort to work.

Much of a team's success lies in the pattern of connection a leader has with direct reports and the way he or she empowers them to extend that pattern to their direct reports, and so on. In a business environment that is woefully lacking in employee commitment, leaders who aren't actively connecting with people are themselves a liability. ●