

ARE YOU LYING TO YOUR STAFF?

YOU MIGHT NOT EVEN REALIZE YOU'RE DOING IT, SO HERE IS WHAT TO LOOK FOR.

BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK | CONTRIBUTOR

HAVE YOU ever been blasted by your significant other when you thought you were doing nothing wrong? Odds are, you did do something wrong days ago, but they didn't share it with you, and it built up inside them. I was listening to coach Geoff Berman help a shop owner avoid the same mistake with their staff, and I'd like to share his advice with you.

How many times has something that bothered you happened in the shop, but you chose to ignore it rather than confront the employee? This happens several times until finally you lose your temper and your control. The employee is bewildered by your reaction and doesn't know its cause. To you, your reaction seems to make perfect sense, because you have been dealing with the issue internally. To the employee, your response seems to come out of nowhere.

Did you expect this person to read your mind? A better approach would have been to tell the truth from the beginning. If you had, you would have avoided this messy conflict and could have dealt with the situation in a more professional manner. Here are the three most important steps to follow to avoid this costly mistake.

Make It Clear

Unfortunately, shop owners react this way all the time. Things that seemingly go unnoticed just go unsaid. Worse than that, you never made it clear what you expected in the first place.

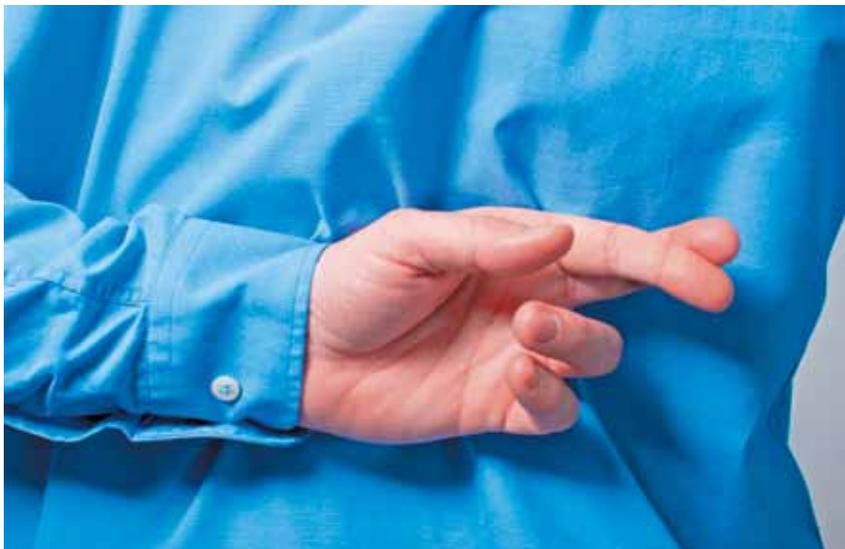
If you happen to be one of the few that have set clear expectations, was it done in writing? This is where most of us fail. People tend to find out what you expect when it is too late, when you tell them (or yell it to them) after the fact. Start off your relationship with

your staff on the right foot. Give them the leash to either hang themselves or to be successful. It is not enough to say to me as an employee, "This is how we do it here," and expect that I get it. Maybe I will, maybe not.

The point is, I probably won't remember everything you tell me. The best thing you can do is assume I won't. That's why you put it in writing. The written expectation is used to help train and counsel the employee. Ever hear an employee say, "You never told me that." Put it in writing, and that won't happen anymore.

Measure It

It isn't enough to set a clear expectation. You also need to pay attention to how it is being carried out. How can you ever know whether what you want is being done, if you don't pay attention to it? Why do you think just because you told me to do it, that's how it will happen forever more? Things will get missed, forgotten and just plain fouled up. A month later, you happen to notice I'm not doing something correctly and that is when you lose your temper. You can avoid these situations if you measure the process and work on course corrections as you go. If you cannot measure it, you cannot expect it.



“HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE A GOOD LEADER?

LEAVE THE SHOP FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. IF EVERYONE FOLLOWS YOUR BELIEFS, BEHAVES LIKE YOU TAUGHT THEM, THEN YOU’RE A GOOD LEADER.”

CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK [ATI CEO]

Stop Holding Me Accountable

You might have heard that you must hold your staff accountable. I agree with that statement. All human beings need to be held accountable. I would ask you to consider something slightly different, though. If you say you’re going to hold me accountable, it sounds negative. It sounds that way both to the person saying it and to the one being told. That is why you tend to shy away from confrontation, and things go unsaid that should have been said.

Instead of thinking of it as accountability, look at it as providing regular feedback. Sometimes this is good feedback, sometimes it is not. My hope is that you find more good in your feedback, and over time you learn how to look for that good. The bad things tend to easily find their way to the surface. It takes a bit more effort to find the good and inspire me to press on. This is how an effective leader keeps people focused and motivated. You can, too. The more you practice, the better you’ll get.

What is regular feedback and why is it important? I’m sure you have heard the saying that it takes 21 days to create a habit. You can’t do that without regular feedback. Each day, this new expectation is discussed. If you start with the feedback immediately, it will be easy to find the good and encourage that positive change. The message you will be sending the staff is twofold. First, that this expectation is very important to



you, and because it is clear you are paying attention, it will become important to me as well. Second, I will want to do it because you’re making me feel good with all of the positive feedback.

As you do this daily, you will get a sense that it is starting to work on its own. When that happens, congratulations, you have helped me change my habit. At this point, you still need to measure performance and provide regular feedback, but you do not have to do it as often. Now, as you scale back the frequency of regular feedback for this situation, you are free to introduce a new process and make that the top priority.

Another Way You Lie

We have been taught as leaders that we need to find the good in people. That’s true. I think too many times, though, we manufacture things to say that are not true, because we want to say something positive. We might say, “Great job today” to an employee, knowing very well that they did not have a great day. Leaving something unsaid and ignoring it is bad enough, but to tell me I did well when I did not, is clearly not true. What is the message we are sending here?

How will you ever expect me to grow and change if you do not provide me the truth about my performance?

A simple way to improve this with a new employee is to take my temperature weekly. See how I am feeling about my new position and your company. Point out the things you like about what I bring to the organization and what I need to work on. Make sure that I have goals and that your conversations are about achieving those goals each week.

It is important for you to always have weekly one-on-one meetings with your management staff; but for the rest of the established employees, a weekly one-on-one meeting may be a bit much. You will find a meeting once a month to be adequate. This shows your commitment to them and to their success, and helps foster the positive outlook you’re striving for. If they know you have their best interests at heart, they will do whatever you ask.

Whether you are training a new employee or changing the habits of one you currently have, it is important for you to recognize that your job as leader is to inspire your staff. If you follow the steps of setting a clear expectation, measuring it and providing regular feedback, your staff, customers and you will be happier.

If you would like a simple checklist to fill out before you meet with your employees, go to www.ationline-training.com/2013-6. It is a new ATI coaching form called “How to Help an Employee Change Their Behavior,” and we will include a short video to show you how easy it is to do. **TM**

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