

Developing better workplace relationships

Table of Contents

Why is empathy at work important?	1
What happens when a company lacks empathy?	1
What are the benefits of having empathy?	2
How to communicate with empathy	3
What you should NOT do	3
How to build strong working relationships	4
What you should NOT do	5

Why is empathy at work important?

Empathy is when you imagine yourselves in another person's shoes and consider how they may be feeling about a particular situation. Having empathy at work is important because it improves connections between team members, encourages interaction, and increases overall morale.

What happens when a company lacks empathy?

The internal impact of a lack of empathy is lower performance and morale. If a manager can't empathise with their team, they will be like likely to understand them. This will leave employees feeling undervalued and underappreciated, reducing overall engagement.

The external impact can be profound. If a company can't connect with or put themselves in the shoes of their customers, they are likely to misunderstand their needs. This could lead to them losing business.

What are the benefits of having empathy?

Boosting staff morale

A workplace in which managers and team members can empathise with one another will make everyone feel more valued and understood.

This can lead to better job satisfaction, people working at their best, and feeling appreciated by their employer.

Improving team bonds

Having an empathetic team means that people are more likely to understand and get on with one another. Workplace relationships are likely to be improved, conflicts will be better resolved, and more productive conversations will occur.

Better management skills

Having empathy as a leader means that you will be better able to understand your team and support them appropriately. Your team members will look up to you, and will feel supported to do their best work.

Higher customer satisfaction rates

If you can empathise with your customers/stakeholders, you will be better able to understand their needs. This means that the services you provide will be of value to them, and will be more likely to attract customers with your increased customer satisfaction.

How to communicate with empathy

Empathy is important to have effective and valuable conversations.

Empathising with people means that you will be respectful of their opinion and give them the time and attention that they deserve. You will not be judgemental, and this will mean that people are more likely to be honest and open with you.

Be an active listener	Don't ignore their feelings	Be supportive	Validate their feelings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure that you're engaged and paying attention to what the other person is saying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't be dismissive of how the other person is feeling.• Let them know that you've listened to and understood how they're feeling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure you're supportive of what they're talking to you about.• What would be helpful for them in this situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sometimes people might feel like their feelings aren't justified or they're over-exaggerating.• It's important that they're made to feel like their feelings are valid.

What you should NOT do

Don't downplay others' experiences	Don't tell others how they should feel	Don't make it a competition	Don't 'focus on the positives'
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't minimise other peoples' feelings or invalidate their experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't tell people how they should/ shouldn't feel.• Try to look at it from their perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's not a competition to see who has it worse.• You can relate to other people without trying to compete with their experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sometimes you might be tempted to look at the 'positive' side to a situation.• This can be unhelpful, and minimise what the other person is going through.

How to build strong working relationships

Having strong working relationships can have a positive effect on overall team performance, employee engagement, and job satisfaction.

Strong working relationships aren't automatic, and they require time and effort. How can you cultivate an environment of mutual respect and understand?

Offer your support

Look for ways that you can support your colleagues at work. The more effort you put into the relationship you have with them, the stronger it will be.

- Do you have spare time in which you can help out with their workload?
- Are they trying to problem solve and want to discuss ideas?
- Do they want a second opinion on something?

Fulfil your commitments

Make sure that you fulfil any commitments that you have made to the team or to your role. If you don't, your colleagues might have to pick up the slack. This can lead to resentment in the team if people are having to work harder to make up for your mistakes.

Your colleagues will respect you if they can see that you fulfil your promises and commitments, and work your hardest.

Celebrate team wins

Make sure you credit and celebrate your colleagues for the good work that they are doing. This will cultivate an environment in which people feel appreciated and like their work is being recognised.

Be positive

People find it quite hard and draining to work with people who have a negative attitude. On the other hand, people who are passionate and enthusiastic about their work are more enjoyable to be around. It creates a positive environment for everyone, and people are more likely to be productive at work.

Express your interest

It is important to show your teammates that you care and are interested in their thoughts and ideas. Asking them for their feedback tells them that you value their opinion. Giving them attention during conversations shows that you care about what they have to say.

What you should NOT do

Don't blame others for your mistakes- take ownership.

Avoid unhealthy competition or trying to undermine your colleagues

If there has been a misunderstanding, talk to your colleague first to understand the situation before it escalates.

Don't gossip about other colleagues.