Maintaining a positive work environment is crucial to the success of any department. However, managing a diverse staff with varying personalities, skills, and abilities can be challenging. This is particularly true in times of budget constraints in which many departments are understaffed and constantly facing a high volume of work. Managers and supervisors play a key role in creating a positive work environment, and thus determining the success of their department. Promoting a positive work environment will increase employee productivity, loyalty, and morale, as well as engender more positive attitudes. Furthermore, maintaining a positive work environment will reduce employee stress, absenteeism, and turnover.

Open and clear communication is central in establishing a positive atmosphere. Employees that have a firm understanding of their work responsibilities and goals, as well as department rules and objectives, are more likely to succeed. Additionally, open and clear communication will reduce confusion and frustration, and ensure that supervisors and employees are on the same page. In order to maintain open and clear communication, it is important to:

♦ Regularly complete performance evaluations for your employees. This will provide an opportunity to discuss an employee’s strengths and weaknesses, and reaffirm the goals of the department.
♦ Reinforce positive behaviors. Acknowledging work well done is likely to increase employee morale and encourage the employee to excel in the future.
♦ Provide ongoing training and feedback. This will make the employee more capable of independently completing tasks, as well as provide a clearer picture of their supervisor’s expectations.
♦ Communicate with your employees face to face. This helps to foster a positive relationship, and will reduce ambiguity or confusion.
♦ Make yourself available to employees and encourage employees to voice their opinions and share their concerns.

Treating employees equally and fairly will lessen resentment, jealousy, and tension within a department. In order to do this, a supervisor should:

♦ Apply the same set of rules for all employees.
♦ Avoid favoritism.
♦ Address the behavior and actions of employees that are inconsistent with firmly established rules and policies.
♦ Avoid punishing all employees for the mistakes of a few.
♦ Discourage gossip.
Creating a fun and enjoyable place to work will encourage teamwork, as well as reduce stress, absenteeism, and turnover. Employees that look forward to coming to work are more likely to have a vested interest in a department’s success. A supervisor can promote a fun and enjoyable working environment by:

- Maintaining a sense of humor.
- Developing a positive relationship with employees so they feel comfortable being at work.
- Providing a challenging work environment so that employees don’t become bored or apathetic.
- Recognizing employee contributions by regularly scheduling small, informal celebrations.

Undoubtedly, the pressures of timelines and budget restraints can add stress to any work environment. However, creating an environment in which there is open communication, employees are treated fairly and feel appreciated, and employees enjoy their work, will help alleviate stress and tension within a department. Moreover, it will boost employee morale and increase productivity, ultimately adding to the success of a department.

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