

CULTIVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES



Creating significance in your business is accomplished through influencing, cultivating, and empowering others. The concept of cultivating others, specifically your employees, is often and easily overlooked as it becomes easy to feel you are moving too fast to stop and prepare others to do the job right. However, cultivating your employees is an absolute must if you want your business to function properly without your presence at every moment, making every decision about every detail.

Cultivating employees simply means preparing them to be ready for greater responsibility. Actually cultivating them can seem much more complicated, but it doesn't need to be. Here are the 4 things to do when cultivating employees.

1. Determine where you want them to improve. There may be a number of areas you can identify an employee needs to get better at. Most people aren't capable of working on improving more than two or three areas of their behavior or performance at once. Depending on the severity of improvement needed one area can seem like too much. Determine what improvement will make the biggest difference and focus your energy there.

2. Tell them why you want them to improve. Employees crave knowing why. At one point in history, managers were able to dictate to employees what they should do, but we've developed a smarter workforce that now wants to know the reason why they should invest effort. A simple explanation of why you think this is important, why you want them to invest their time and effort into improving their skills, and why they should want to invest their time and effort can serve as a powerful connection point with your employee.

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3. Assess where they currently are. Take a measurement of their current ability to handle the task you want them to be better at. There are a number of online assessments to be found covering everything from typing speed to personality profiles. Getting as much of an objective perspective on where your employee currently is helps later when you're trying to figure out if the employee is making any progress, and if you're doing a good job cultivating them. The natural tendency is to measure things only when they are really good or really bad. Measuring when things are “just okay” can be a tremendous help and shouldn't be overlooked.

4. Provide resources to improve. Cultivating employees is an investment in your time and theirs, and it is also an investment financially. Too many business owners struggle with setting aside the necessary resources to support the growth of the employee. Some struggle with giving them the time they need to work on developing the lacking skills, while others struggle with paying for the tools or training needed. Be wise with your resources, but don't be cheap.

5. Provide feedback on improvement. It seems obvious to most to set a goal and establish a deadline where the employee will be measured again, but more important is to look for random opportunities to provide positive feedback when you catch your employees attempting to make a change. Formal reviews are nice, but informal praise is powerful. Conversely, if you find an employee falling back into bad habits, stop them in the middle of it and draw their attention to what they are doing and how they can improve. Our bad habits really are habits, and that means we do them without thinking, so it takes continual, gentle pressure applied to change.

Cultivating employees is one of the most rewarding aspects of leading a business. Watching cultivated employees take on more responsibilities creates the most impactful results of about any investment I've ever witnessed within organizations.

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