

~~Make your own
decisions~~

Ask for their opinions

You're the boss; you should make the calls, right? You're paid to make decisions, and you're responsible for the outcomes. But that doesn't mean you can't and shouldn't involve the people you work with in the decision-making process.

"How do you think we should handle it?" can be one of the most important things you ever say to an employee.

When you ask for their input, three good things happen, even before you get an answer.

1. You show your respect for your employee.
2. You show that you don't think you have all the answers.

3. You open yourself up to a chance to get valuable information. And that means you can make better decisions.

Asking is only half the process. Listening is the other half. Give employees your full attention. Show them by word and gesture that you're paying attention. Ask questions.

You won't necessarily share their perspectives, but it's important that you try to understand them. And you won't necessarily agree with their solutions, but you should take them seriously and consider them carefully.

It takes courage and initiative for an employee to speak up to the boss. Reward that courage with your words and actions. Questions and suggestions are positive contributions, not threats. They'll make you a better manager.

Here are three tips to help you seek employee input effectively:

Ask for their opinions—and then listen to what they say: They'll assume you don't want their input unless you ask for it. They may not trust you when you do. Be patient and keep asking.

Take their ideas seriously: That doesn't mean you'll agree. But, if they offer the input sincerely, you should take it seriously. If you think an idea's

good, say so. If you think it's flawed, say why. Discuss ideas, not personalities.

Check with your employees before making a decision that affects them: When a decision impacts your employees' working conditions or job description, it's doubly important for you to ask before you act. You'll gain their confidence and make better decisions.

“You may be wasting one of your most valuable resources—your employees' good ideas.”