

# Trust, clarity and openness in the workplace

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In times of uncertainty employers should engage more openly with their staff and drop the jargon to improve communication and allow feedback, according to a paper in this month's *International Journal of Productivity and Quality Management*.

D. Keith Denton of the Department of Management, at Missouri State University, in Springfield, suggests that it is essential for companies that wish to survive economic strife to create an atmosphere of trust in these untrusting times. He says that, "Companies with high-trust levels give employees unvarnished information about company's performance and explain the rationale behind management decisions. They are also unafraid of sharing bad news and admitting mistakes." However, companies must also take note of employee input for improving the work climate. "Lack of good communication leads to distrust, dissatisfaction, cynicism and turnover," he adds.

A study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) published in HR Magazine (2008) reports that communication between employees and senior management is among the top five most important indicators of [job satisfaction](#). Employers should be able to spot the signs: "If there is a high level of engagement, the leader can expect that members of the group will express their feelings, concerns, opinions and thoughts more openly," Denton explains. "Conversely, if trust is low, members are more likely to be evasive, competitive, devious, defensive or uncertain in their actions with one another."

Senior [management](#) must communicate directly with employees so that

they understand business goals, policies and the company's vision and, most importantly, the company's status. But, when communication breaks down, through conscious or subconscious misunderstandings disorganization ensues, a lack of clear goals becomes apparent and employee commitment wanes.

Denton suggests that numerous channels are available, bulletin boards, intranets, newsletters and email all of which can be effective. But research shows that "face-to-face [communication](#)" stands out above all others. "One-on-one conversations and small group meetings take time, but are well worth the investment. It is the only place where true dialogue can and does occur," he concludes.

**More information:** "Engaging your employees in times of uncertainty" in Int. J. Productivity and Quality Management, 2011, 7, 202-208

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