

# Timeliness on pay, promotions can increase 'citizenship behavior' in employees

January 25 2019

---



Credit: Pixabay

Americans have a constitutional right to a "speedy" trial, and new research by an Arizona State University professor has found that the concept of procedural timeliness is critical to employees as well.

Michael Baer, an assistant professor of management in the W. P. Carey School of Business, said that much research has been done on fairness in workplace decisions, but the concept of timeliness has been mostly ignored.

"We said, 'Let's revisit this and see how much employees actually care.' We found that they care a whole lot," said Baer, whose paper will be published in *Personnel Psychology*.

In fact, their research found that timeliness mattered regardless of whether employees got a desired result, such as a raise, promotion or desired assignment.

"Consistently, people care how long it takes. Even when I got what I wanted, if it took a long time, I still was upset," he said.

The team put ads on Craigslist around the country to survey people who worked full time. Then, their supervisors also had to agree to be surveyed.

"That was important because instead of them just saying, 'I helped out more,' we know from their supervisors whether they actually did," he said.

## **The key is for employees to exhibit "citizenship behavior."**

"Research has shown that employees who are willing to go above and beyond their core duties—willing to help the supervisor when not asked, willing to be good citizens who help the work get done—are critical in terms of group performance and organizational performance," he said.

So they looked at attitudes and emotions that are important for work: trust, anxiety and anger.

Trust is crucial for citizenship behavior in the workplace. Employees trust supervisors who have high ability, care about them and have integrity. The researchers theorized that making decisions in a timely manner indicated proficiency and caring in bosses.

Anxiety and anger cause employees to withdraw, Baer said.

"When things aren't going your way, you feel righteous indignation, and we tend to want to retaliate," he said.

"In the workplace, the way we retaliate is by withholding behaviors that the supervisor wants. A lot of research backs that up."

The team found that timeliness was more predictive of trust, anxiety and anger than even justice was.

"It makes intuitive sense," he said. "You don't know what's going on behind the scenes when a decision is being made. Was it unbiased? You don't know.

"Whereas, timeliness is transparent. If it's quick, you know it's quick."

So timeliness is a transparent reminder of whether the supervisor can be trusted.

But you can have too much of a good thing. Employees also don't respond well if they perceive a decision was made too fast.

"Timeliness can mean 'in the sweet spot,'" he said.

"What if you ask your [supervisor](#) for a raise and they come back 15 minutes later and say 'Nope.' Then you think, 'Did you actually put any thought into this?' That makes you question whether they care about you."

Baer said that timeliness is subjective, and future research could try to pinpoint what that means. But current research has found that communicating with employees throughout the process is always a good thing.

"I teach this in my classes," he said. "You can't always give people what they want, but you can always treat them with respect and fairness."

Provided by Arizona State University

Citation: Timeliness on pay, promotions can increase 'citizenship behavior' in employees (2019, January 25) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-01-timeliness-citizenship-behavior-employees.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.