ArcelorMittal Europe
Long Products Segment

Open Door Policy

Introduction

Short description:

An open-door policy is a workplace practice that encourages employees – all status - to approach their managers and senior leaders at specific time of the week or month to address their questions, concerns, feedback, or suggestions without fear of retaliation or negative consequences.

An open-door policy also means that managers and leaders are available and willing to listen to employees and address their issues in a timely and respectful manner.

Scope

Relevant to all employees, blue-collars, white-collars, and exempt population.

Purpose

An open-door policy is important for creating a positive and productive work environment. It can benefit both employees and managers in the following ways:

- It fosters trust and transparency between employees and managers.
- It promotes collaboration and teamwork across different levels and departments.
- It enhances employee engagement and satisfaction by making them feel valued and heard.
- It improves employee performance and productivity by providing feedback and guidance.
- It helps to identify, and to resolve quickly and effectively, potential problems and to receive critical information.
- It reduces employee turnover and absenteeism by addressing problems and conflicts early.
- It supports employee development and growth by encouraging learning and innovation.
- It enhances employee voices to support an equal culture and strengthen organizational culture and values.

In this document you will find more information about:

- ❖ **The principles of this new policy**
- ❖ **Toolkit for managers to make it safe to speak up**
- ❖ **Tool kit for employees to encourage them to speak up**

"A true leader has to have a genuine open-door policy so that his people are not afraid to approach him/her for any reason." – Harold Geneen*

(*) Harold "Hal" Sydney Geneen (January 22, 1910 – November 21, 1997), was an American businessman most famous for serving as president of the ITT Corporation.

Policy's principles

Implementing an open-door policy requires commitment and communication from both employees and managers.

Here are some steps to achieve this commitment:

1. Communicate the open-door policy to all employees and managers in local language via multiple channels and formats, such as emails, newsletters, meetings, posters, and handbooks. Make sure everyone understands the policy and how to use it.

2. Expectations and responsibilities are communicated to all the employees (all status) and all the managers.

3. Provide a guide to the managers and to the employees in how to communicate effectively and respectfully. Provide guidance on how to raise and respond to issues, how to give and receive feedback, and how to resolve conflicts. Emphasize the importance of listening, empathy, and confidentiality.

4. The doors of the offices of superiors or the management (including the CEO) must remain open for the employees to have easy access in case of queries and day(s) and time should be communicated to the employees

5. Monitor and evaluate regularly the open-door policy. Solicit feedback from employees and managers on how the policy is working and what are the challenges and benefits. Track and measure the impact of the policy on employee satisfaction, performance, and retention. Make adjustments and improvements as needed.

Problems exist. If people share them with you, you know you've created a healthy environment and strong relationships.

Rule:

- Each manager will have to implement this practice for a total amount of time which represent 1 full day per month (ideally it should be 2 half-days/months: Tuesday afternoon)

- The employee will not assign another colleague or employee representative within the context of this policy. Usual social dialogue or individual representation channel will be followed.

Managers' guide

As a manager, you have a lot of responsibilities and tasks to juggle. And one

of the most important things you can do is to **listen to your employees.**

Active Listening

Listening is not just hearing what they say, but understanding their perspectives, feelings, needs, ideas and challenges they may face professionally or personally.

Listening shows that you care, respect, and value your employees, and it can help you build trust, rapport, and loyalty.

Listening can also help you improve your decision-making by listening new ideas, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills, as well as boost your team's performance, creativity, and morale.

It requires time, attention, patience, and empathy. It also requires avoiding common barriers and pitfalls that can hinder effective communication, such as interruptions, distractions, assumptions, judgments, and defensiveness.

We will offer some steps and tips for managers to listen to their employees more effectively and authentically.

Steps for Listening

- Make sure you are in the right mindset and environment with your full attention (cancel noise and distractions)

- Clear your mind of any preconceptions, biases, or agendas, and focus on the purpose and goal of the conversation

- Respect your employee's views and feelings, practice empathy (you never know the entirety of the struggles the person is facing)

- Use an inviting, non-judgmental tone of voice and body-language (smile, nod and maintain eye contact)

- Engage the conversation with good and open-ended questions(*) without interrupting, correcting or arguing

- Express your appreciation, say *thank you* for bringing this topic to your attention, and interest of this conversation

- Count 10 before you rephrase and validate your employee's input

- Provide constructive feedback and support which will be the takeaways for your next follow up discussion with your employee

Potential scripts to engage the discussion:

1. Hi [name]! What's on your mind?
2. Hi [name]! I'd really like to help you, can we [chat, meet] then?

(*) Asking good questions

- ❑ What issue do you want to address?
- ❑ What kind of support would you like from me?
- ❑ Tell me more about your current workload. Which of these projects is the most time-consuming?
- ❑ What do you feel are the barriers to having a good relationship with this colleague?
- ❑ What are the root causes or key parts to this problem?
- ❑ What could be some potential solutions to this problem?
- ❑ What are your perceptions of how this change will work?
- ❑ What do you like best about working in this department?
- ❑ What would make our unit more productive and a better place to work?

Employees' guide

One of the most important skills for any employee is the **ability to communicate effectively** with one's manager.

Communication is not only about sharing information, but also about expressing opinions, ideas, concerns, and feedback.

Your voice matters

Speaking up with your manager can be challenging, especially if you are shy, nervous, or afraid of conflict but it can also be rewarding.

It is an important skill to develop, as it can help you to express your ideas, needs, and feedback, as well as build trust and build strong relationship with your manager.

This can help you improve your work, enhance your skills, support your career development and your personal growth.

Speaking up also requires a supportive and conducive environment where you feel safe and valued.

We will share some tips on how to practice speaking up with your manager, and how to overcome some common barriers and fears.

Speak up to your manager

- Identify your goal from the conversation and the main points you want to address before the meeting
- Start the discussion by stating the topic of the discussion
- Use a calm and confident tone of voice and maintain eye contact and good posture
- Use simple and direct language by avoiding vague, emotional, or accusatory language
- Be honest and transparent when you explain your concerns, ideas or opinions backed up with facts
- Answer to your manager's open-ended questions
- Listen and respect your manager's perspective and experience
- Embrace new idea without interrupting, arguing or dismissing your manager's point of view
- Show personal efforts by offering solutions
- Summarize the takeaways: action steps and expected outcomes
- Express your appreciation and gratitude for your manager's support

Situations when you have to Speak Up:

1. You have a question or concern
2. You have noticed a wrongdoing or an injustice
3. You want to offer a positive feedback, ideas or suggestions

Overcome barriers and fear

- ➤ Challenge your negative thoughts that prevent you to speaking up and replace them by visualizing positive outcomes of the discussion
- ➤ Use affirmations such as 'my ideas and opinions are valued, and I feel safe to express them'
- ➤ Start with small and easy topics, and gradually move to more challenging and complex ones
- ➤ Take deep breaths if necessary to relax your mind and body
- ➤ Practice with colleagues by asking them questions to say more about points they have made
- ➤ Ask feedback from your manager, colleagues or friends after expressing yourself
- ➤ Celebrate your achievements