“Esprit de corps”, or morale, is defined as the level of satisfaction felt by people who work together. This affects their confidence, enthusiasm, mood, and loyalty, especially when faced with difficulty.

Low morale causes a vicious circle of negative attitudes and consequences. When this happens, it’s time for an intervention. Here are 20 principles to combat low morale:

1. Be genuine

As a supervisor, your priority may be to deliver results. However, you must approach issues like employee morale with genuine care for your employees. It’s not a matter of “how much work can I wring from them”, but “how can I help them feel fulfilled while contributing to the company, so that they’ll happily do and be their best”.

(See also)

2. Get feedback

Your employees know what works well and what doesn’t, from role-specific tasks, to company-wide processes. Listen to them and act upon their suggestions. Not only will this improve the efficiency and atmosphere of the company, it also shows them that they’re a valued and respected member.

3. Reach out

As a manager, you are more than a task-master, you’re a mentor. Reach out to your team
and connect with them, on a professional and personal level. Equip them with the strategies, tools, and confidence to tackle the problems they’re facing with their tasks and their mental state.

4. **Train managers**

One of the most common causes of turnover is poor management. Managers need to be trained to take care of their team. You should just promote your best performers, because they are more suited to their original role rather than management. Instead, look out for leadership potential.

5. **Manage negativity**

Sometimes the cause of low morale is disengaged, dissatisfied employees who are seeking and getting validation from the rest of the team. The solution can be to work more closely with them or fire them, but it’s important to deal with the source and control the spread of negativity to the rest of the team.

6. **Empathy**

Understand that your employees are human. Life happens and their performance may suffer. Company rules may punish them for coming in late or not meeting their targets, and this can cause stress and low morale. Managers and fellow team members should try to empathise with them and help them.
7. Heal burnout

Burnout happens to the best of employees. Don’t shy away from acknowledging and addressing the mental and emotional fatigue. The World Health Organisation suggests a sense of community at work, strong social relationships, a collegial environment, a workload that’s not too burdensome, a sense of agency at work, and a healthy work-life balance.

8. Inclusivity

Sometimes low morale is related to the socio-emotional aspect of the office environment, where employees feel left out. Do an honest appraisal of your company’s diversity and inclusivity, for factors like age, gender, ethnicity, as well as social fit.
9. Team building

When your employees find it easy and enjoyable to work with the people around them, interpersonal conflict won’t be a source of stress and dread. Employees who genuinely enjoy each others’ company will find it easier to collaborate, and they’ll be dedicated to growing the business together. Try these team building activities.

10. Creative environment

Creativity is something all companies want, but not all have. This is because creativity carries a big risk of failure, and on a personal level, employees fear ridicule and punishment. Therefore, a creative environment must be one that’s open and supportive, rather than critical.
11. Respect competence

As a matter of pride, your employees won’t appreciate being micromanaged or handheld in an area they feel competent in. While new hires and entry level staff should be closely supervised and supported, it’s important to follow the principle of Task Relevant Maturity.

12. Reward effort

Low morale can occur when employees have given their all but received no recognition. Certainly, a successful project deserves celebration, but it’s just as important to reward consistent hard work.
13. Control over schedules

Let your employees set their working hours. Trust them to know when they work best and deliver their best work. This can help to reduce sick days and absenteeism, or even “presenteeism”, where your employees are physically present but not mentally.

14. Clarity in communication

Employees will find it hard to be consistently productive if their job scope is constantly changing. Thus, all employees’ job expectations should be clearly defined. This will make for more effective performance reviews, where these expectations can be re-negotiated and re-shuffled amongst the team for maximum efficiency.

15. Transparency

Give your employees updates about what’s going on in the company. While it may seem like they’d rather not be bothered, they’d rather hear news directly from the leadership, rather than the news and other sources outside the company. Keep your employees informed on both the good and bad.
16. **Deal with change**

When there’s change in the organisation, like a merger or move to another country, be aware of how this will affect your employees. Maintain a dialogue with everyone, and be ready to counsel and mentor them through the shifts in their job scope, manager’s leadership style, and company culture, among other things.

17. **Ensure growth**

While this may be out of your control, employees can feel low morale and jump ship if the company is experiencing stagnation or losses. Where possible, try to avoid situations where the whole team has performed underwhelmingly or there are multiple resignations. This atmosphere is contagious and will cause a vicious circle.
18. Challenge your employees

Employees personally hate feeling like they’ve stagnated and become mindless robots performing the same repetitive tasks. Give them opportunities to learn and try new things. In Singapore, there are subsidies available to send your employees for education and training.

19. Manage workloads

Singaporeans love to brag/complain about how long they spend in the office. However, this is a sign of either an overworked team or an inefficient team. Work with them to identify how to find the sweet spot for the amount of work they have, what they’re doing, as well as how and when and where they’re doing it.

20. Purpose behind the work

It’s important for your employees to have a solid “why” for coming to work everyday. The best purpose is when their ideals align with the company’s values, so they feel like they’re working towards something meaningful and worthwhile.
The thing about a strategy to fight low morale is that it must be consistent. Keep your team happy and healthy, and they’ll be in a better position to contribute to the company, willingly too.

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