

10 things your employees want to hear you say:

Here are 10 phrases or questions you can use with employees to build respect, gratitude and trust, according to the book *Finding Happiness* by Todd Patkin. Incorporate them into your at-work vocabulary.

1. **"I need your help."** Your employees don't expect you to have all the answers. Rather than lose respect for you as a leader, they'll appreciate that you treated them as valued partners. And they'll feel invested in the company's future.
2. **"How is your family?"** People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Employees will be more loyal and motivated if they feel valued as individuals, not just as job descriptions. So get to know employees on an individual basis and incorporate that knowledge into your regular interactions.
3. **"What do you need from me?"** Employees may be anxious about asking the boss for what they need, whether it's new equipment or time on a project. By asking what you can give them, you extend permission for staff to make those requests.
4. **"Thank you."** Praise, especially when it comes from an authority figure, is incredibly fulfilling. People love to hear positive feedback about themselves, and in most cases, they'll be willing to work harder to keep the compliments and thanks coming.
5. **"Hey, everyone—listen to what Mike accomplished!"** Don't stop with a compliment when an employee experiences a big win—tell the rest of the team, too! Verbal praising isn't the only way. Highlight those successes on the company website, newsletters or bulletin board.
6. **"What would you like to do here?"** You may have hired employees for a certain job, but as the organization has changed, so have your people. That's why it's good to check in with each one periodically to ask what they'd like to be doing. You may not be able to accommodate every preference, but employees will be happier (and more motivated) when their jobs match their skills.
7. **"What do you think?"** Employees who are told what to do (and how to do it) feel like cogs in a machine. To unlock buy-in and achievement, ask them for their opinions, ideas and preferences. Again, they'll be much more invested because they had an active part in creating it.
8. **"Here's where we stand."** Help employees make connections regarding how your company works from top to bottom. It will streamline internal processes, reduce misunderstandings and promote team spirit. Also, make sure everyone understands the relationship between their performance and the bottom line (and, thus, their own pay). Transparency will breed trust.
9. **"That's OK. We all make mistakes. Let's talk about how to fix this."** You shouldn't take mistakes lightly, especially those involving negligence or incompetence. Just remember that mistakes can be part of growth. Take a deep breath and remember the employee feels bad already. Yelling won't change the past. Instead, focus on how to keep the mistake from happening again. Did the employee learn something? Should a process or procedure be tweaked?
10. **"This task is in your hands—I'm stepping back."** Micromanaging and excessive hovering give employees the impression that you don't trust them—a belief that undermines engagement. Once you've delegated a task, step back and let employees do what you've asked them.

