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6 Little Changes that make a Big Difference in the Workplace

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6 Little Changes that make a Big Difference in the Workplace

We toss around the phrase “lead by example” all the time in leadership development. And it’s not just a saying. Numerous studies show ethical leaders have a [positive impact](#) on employees’ performance and quality of life. Conversely, when leaders communicate poorly or don’t cultivate good habits, employee morale and performance can tank.

So, if our teams are mirroring—or responding to—our habits, how do we make sure we’re setting a good example?

Conventional wisdom says that [we can form new habits](#) in as little as 21 days, and they can become a permanent part of our lifestyle after only a few months. But even before they become automatic habits, there are choices we can make every day in the workplace that will make a big difference in the happiness of our team, and the freedom they feel to do their best work.

1. Encourage Screen Breaks

Taking breaks from screens during the workday. Experts recommend more frequent short breaks rather than infrequent, longer breaks: “Take short breaks often, rather than longer ones less often. For example 5 to 10 minutes every hour is better than 20 minutes every 2 hours. Ideally, users should be able to choose when to take breaks.” (Source: [HSE](#))

Short breaks help protect your eyes from strain, without causing you to lose track of what you’ve been working on by the time you get to your desk. If you see breaks as essential for health and safety, your team is more likely to follow suit, which can decrease health issues and burnout.

2. Hydrate and Nourish

I was so busy I forgot to eat.

When was the last time I had a glass of water?

Sound familiar?

When we don’t prioritize our hydration and nourishment, our mood and motivation suffer. That affects how we interact with our team, and the messages they receive about what’s important to us.

When we eat healthy snacks and drink water throughout the day, it gives us energy to keep going, [without the crash](#) that happens when we eat too much sugar or drink too much caffeine. Keeping your water cooler filled and keeping snacks stocked at convenient places throughout the office give you and your team the chance to stay nourished and hydrated.

3. Check In Regularly

It might feel odd to do this, but checking in with ourselves is an extremely helpful practice. Being mindful of how we’re feeling is important not only for building emotional intelligence, but for practicing self-care. Start by asking yourself at the beginning of the day, the end of the day, and whenever you take a screen break. Ask yourself questions like:

- How does my body feel?

- What is my energy level?
- How am I feeling emotionally?
- What do I need right now?
- What is going well right now?

You might be surprised at what you learn about not only what's going well, but areas where your body or mind need more care and space. Once you are in the habit of checking in with yourself, checking in with your team will open things up for greater kindness, awareness, and empathy in the workplace and beyond.

4. Set Intentions

When you start your day, set intentions for what you want to accomplish. That way, you have them front-of-mind and can easily recognize tasks that aren't a priority. At the end of your workday, evaluate: how'd it go? Were you purposeful and deliberate in your work? Did tasks get in the way that someone else can help you handle going forward?

You can encourage intentional work habits in your employees, too. You might give them a simple template for their daily tasks, or set intentions clearly in meeting agendas, or some combination of both. Any effort you make to have a clear sense of purpose is going to have a positive impact for you and your team.

5. Honor the Clock-Out

Unfortunately, some workplaces hold up exhaustion and burnout as badges of honor. You don't have to follow that trend. Honoring the clock-out for yourself and your team is an excellent way to maintain trust, improve morale, and keep your work-life balance healthy. If it's challenging to do this, try something like setting an auto-responder during your out-of-office time. Make sure you encourage this among your teammates by respecting their out-of-office hours. Don't contact them until they've confirmed they'll be available and ready to work.

6. Get Support When You Need It

Staring down a list of healthy habits or culture changes can be intimidating, even when you're excited about making them a part of your workspace that's clearly reflected in your team. If you're feeling stuck or overwhelmed, counseling, coaching, or training from someone who's "been there" can make a big difference in helping you move forward. Investing in similar support for your whole team will make it clear to them, too: you care, and you're committed to their growth and well-being.

About the Author:

Andora Hinton is the founder and CEO of Willow North Growth Partners, a global leadership development consulting firm. Her goal is to help professionals transform both their professional and personal lives in a way that would make a monumental difference in their holistic work.

Andora has a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from The University of Alabama. She is certified in Emotional Intelligence, Relationship Intelligence, InsideOut Coaching, LEAD NOW!, and is a Ken Blanchard Channel Partner.

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