

HR Insights

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Overcoming HR Distrust Among Employees

HR departments perform many essential tasks for an organization, including employee recruitment, onboarding, training, and overseeing payroll and benefits. HR professionals serve as key points of contact for employees, ranging from their initial orientation and onboarding to providing assistance when issues arise. Even though HR departments are designed to support and advocate for an organization's workforce, employees are often distrustful of them.

According to a report from MyPerfectResume, 86% of workers are afraid of HR representatives, with 85% stating they are hesitant to approach them to discuss work-related issues. A separate report from Secure Data Recovery found that more than a third of U.S. workers don't trust their company's HR department due to factors such as bias, favoritism and inconsistency.

A lack of trust and confidence in HR can lead to negative perceptions of leadership, unhealthy workplace culture and high employee turnover. Understanding the key reasons for this distrust can allow employers and their HR teams to overcome common issues and foster credibility among employees.

Reasons for HR Distrust

Some causes of HR distrust can stem from a lack of resources or operational practices that don't meet the needs of workers. Even well-intentioned HR professionals can unknowingly disrupt trust among workforces with their actions. However, understanding the reasons employees may struggle to trust their HR departments can help these teams avoid unnecessary mistakes.

Key factors that can contribute to HR distrust within an organization include the following:

- **Lack of approachability**—Employees are less likely to communicate their concerns if an HR team is inaccessible or intimidating.
- **Confidentiality concerns**—Employees may be less likely to approach HR with concerns if they are concerned that sensitive information won't be kept private.
- **Perceived ineffectiveness of HR**—If previous concerns and discussions have not been addressed, employees may view HR as incompetent and not bring up issues in the future. Similarly, if employees find that HR is not effective at helping them with routine tasks such as benefits enrollment, accessing pay stubs or solving issues that arise, they may begin to develop distrust.
- **Poor communication**—Ineffective HR communications can lead to misunderstandings, unclear expectations and a lack of transparency, thus hindering productivity and reducing workers' trust.
- **Favoritism**—Employees expect fair treatment. If HR shows bias or favoritism toward specific individuals for promotions, recognition or other opportunities, employees may feel betrayed and experience lower morale.
- **Disorganization**—A disorganized HR team can result in lost documents, missed deadlines, and overall inefficiency and ineffectiveness. These consequences can be stressful for employees and impact their trust in HR.

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- **Inconsistent policies**—If HR applies workplace policies inconsistently, employees can feel confused, frustrated and unsure of what to expect.
- **Lack of empathy**—By failing to be understanding and compassionate toward employees' personal and professional concerns, HR can cause employees to feel undervalued, further eroding their trust.

Because of this hesitation, many employees prefer to solve workplace issues independently or with their manager's help without raising them with HR. While policies and procedures are essential to HR practices, workers want to know that people matter just as much.

How HR Can Gain Employees' Trust

By improving departmental practices and focusing on employee needs, HR teams can earn trust among workers and help create a positive company culture. The following strategies can build trust in HR:

- **Invest in training and developing HR teams.** Thorough and regular training and development equips HR teams with the skills and knowledge to support employees and address their concerns. It also enables HR to act competently and demonstrate its reliability to employees.
- **Align HR with employee needs.** It's imperative that HR understands and addresses the diverse needs of the workforce. HR teams should listen and respond to employee feedback and concerns. This alignment fosters trust, allowing employees to feel seen and heard.
- **Advocate for employees.** When HR stands up for workers' rights and well-being, employees are more likely to view these teams as their allies, thus instilling confidence and trust in HR.
- **Practice transparency.** Transparency entails open and honest communication about company policies, decisions and changes. This practice can help build trust with HR, as it

reduces uncertainty, keeps employees informed and shows them that their involvement is valued.

- **Focus on employee development and career advancement.** Investing in employees' careers and skills can show that HR is dedicated to their growth and personal development. In turn, this can gain workers' trust, as HR demonstrates that it values their futures and long-term success.
- **Prioritize employee needs.** HR teams should focus on solving employee issues, such as helping them access their pay, fixing benefits issues, growing their careers, and assisting with paid time off, leave and administrative obstacles. By prioritizing workers' needs, HR teams can prove their value to the employees.

Conclusion

HR departments are essential to any team, but they can only be successful if employees can trust them. If you're concerned about your employees and their relationship with HR, it might be time to improve departmental practices and focus on employee needs.

Contact us today for additional HR resources.