4 Ways to Improve Your Office's Work Environment

Your work environment impacts your mood, drive and performance. If employees work in a dreary office setting with unfriendly workers, they likely won't feel motivated or confident to speak up. That's why creating a productive work environment is critical to the overall success of your company.

Here are four ways you can improve your work environment and, in turn, employee engagement.

1. Hire great team members (and don't be afraid to let bad ones go)

Smart businesses know that a good work environment starts with hiring the right people. Make sure employees are professional and team players. The same idea translates to those who are already in the office. When employees work with toxic workers, they are more likely to become toxic themselves.

"It's amazing to watch one bad attitude affect everyone's daily performance," said Claire Marshall Crowell, chief operating officer of A. Marshall Family Foods/Puckett's Grocery & Restaurant. "I can't tell you how many times I have been thanked after letting poisonous employees go. Though it's a hard thing to do, it ultimately impacts the working

environment, which can be felt by not only our employees but also by our [customers]."

2. Improve the lighting

Lighting plays a vital role in workers' performance and attitude. An article by MBA@UNC, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Kenan-Flagler's online MBA program, states that exposure to natural light improves mood and energy, greatly impacting focus and productivity. But according to a survey by Pots Planters and More, nearly half of office workers said there is little to no natural light in their office.

If it's not possible to incorporate natural lighting through windows,
there are other options. Blue-enriched light bulbs may reduce fatigue
and increase happiness and work performance, according to the article.
Use this type of lighting in brainstorming rooms. In meeting or break
rooms, use warmer tones to promote calmness and relaxation. In conference rooms, use middle tones that welcome workers while keeping
them alert.

3. Make the office comfortable

Working in a clean, attractive office can have tremendous effects on co-workers and manager relationships, said Mike Canarelli, CEO and co-founder of Web Talent Marketing.

"Even if the sun can't shine into your workplace, make an effort to
provide a relaxing atmosphere with comfy furniture, working equipment

and a few 'extra-mile' amenities," he noted.

For example, give your employees the flexibility to choose to work
where they're comfortable, including comfy chairs or a choice of whether
to sit or stand at their desks.

According to the Pots Planters & More survey, people who labeled
their work furniture as "bad" are three times more likely to consider
their environment as less productive, and two times more likely to find
it "depressing."

"Make it easy for [workers] to purchase things like exercise balls and plants on the company dime," said AJ Shankar, CEO and founder of litigation software company Everlaw. "We also trust our employees to manage their own time. They're free to take breaks to play games or just recharge as necessary."

When employees choose a space that makes them comfortable, give them the freedom to customize their area, as everyone works differently, said Josh Turner, CEO of user feedback platform UsersThink. He suggested getting rid of the "same-issued everything" and giving everyone a budget to customize their own setup.

4. Improve communication

Be cognizant of how you're interacting with employees. Team members
and upper management should focus on their communication methods and the
effects they have on the office environment.

"Employees are motivated and feel valued when they're given

positive reinforcement and shown how their work contributes to the success of the business," said Dominique Jones, former chief people officer at Halogen Software.

This means offering employees specific feedback on how their work is feeding into the broader business objectives, she noted.

But employees shouldn't be the only ones being evaluated. Managers should be open to feedback as well, said Samantha Lambert, director of human resources at Blue Fountain Media.

"When you involve your staff in decision-making in an effort to
create a better work environment, they feel valued," Lambert said.
"Don't be afraid to ask employees for their opinion on a new benefit
offered, or what they think of a new client project."

While you're working on communication, don't forget to show gratitude for hard work. According to David Sturt, executive vice president of marketing and business development at the O.C. Tanner Institute, effective employee recognition can transform and elevate an organization.

"It ignites enthusiasm, increases innovation, builds trust and drives
bottom-line results," he said. "Even a simple 'thank you' after an
employee goes above and beyond on a project, or puts in a series of late
nights, goes a long way."