

9 THINGS GREAT LEADERS SAY EVERY DAY

Start every day planning to say each of these things to at least one person, and watch the results:

1 "THIS IS THE SITUATION."

People want to know what's going on. Odds are, they'll find out anyway, or worse, fill in the gaps with conjecture. So be the kind of leader who ensures everyone knows. Don't sap morale, or rob yourself of your team's insights, and make people feel undervalued. Sound crazy to let them in on everything? Walmart founder Sam Walton did it for decades, and he did okay.

2 "HERE'S WHAT WE'RE DOING."

A leader is supposed to lead. People will offer great suggestions, especially if you're saying and doing everything else on this list, but you need to be able to make decisions and stand behind them. Your team needs to know where you're trying to take them, and how. Also, don't forget the crucial corollary: You need to be able to say "no," especially to moves that would be inconsistent with your plan.

3 "WHAT DO YOU NEED?"

This is crucial for two reasons. First, people need to know that you care about them on personal and professional levels, and that you want them to succeed. Second, if you've put together a great plan, you need to leverage every person's abilities to the maximum extent possible. If they are not able to give it their all, you want to know why.

4 "TELL ME MORE."

Let people know you're more interested in finding good answers than hearing yourself speak. Give others implicit permission to share their opinions--or heck, invite them explicitly, if you have to. Staying quiet is an invitation for others to offer ideas and insights.

5 "REMEMBER OUR VALUES."

You can't possibly stare over the shoulder of every person making decisions that affect your organization, but you can remind them to make choices that the rest of their team will be proud of. Reminding people of your values requires, of course, that you can actually articulate shared values.

6 "I TRUST YOU."

If you can't trust the people on your team, then they shouldn't be on your team. You need to trust their integrity, their judgment, their confidence and their passion--and you need to ensure that they understand how much you depend on them.

7 "YOU CAN COUNT ON ME."

The flip side of that last point is true as well. If your team can't trust you, they shouldn't do you the great honor of letting you lead them. So tell them you've got their back, and then work like hell to fulfill the promises you make.

8 "WE CAN DO BETTER."

One of the toughest, most crucial parts of leadership is to push your team to a higher standard than they might set for themselves. That means congratulating them when they do well, but also not coddling them when they don't live up to their potential. It also means admitting when you fail to live up to those standards, too.

9 "LET'S CELEBRATE!"

Don't create a culture in which the only reward for great work is more work. Instead, make it a practice to celebrate your wins, both large and small. This can mean big parties and bonuses, but it can be just as important to call people out for great work and congratulate them for their milestones--both professional and personal.