

## Managers...Are You Approachable? Are You Sure?<sup>1</sup>

I'm a manager of a fairly large department of staff. I think I'm approachable and want my team to come directly to me with concerns rather than reporting them to an internal department for investigation, or worse yet, an external authority. What do I need to know?

In a Jan. - Feb. 2016 Harvard Business Review article, "Can Your Employees Really Speak Freely,"<sup>2</sup> two business professors shared their research findings related to the gaps between managers' perceptions of their approachableness, and the reality.

As a manager, being approachable is critical, because most employees prefer to speak to their managers about ethics and compliance issues before going to HR, the compliance office or a hotline/helpline.

Based on the article, here are five questions you can ask yourself about your approachability:

- 1) Do you issue general rather than specific invitations to check in with employees?** "Come and see me any time" is not as effective as sending a meeting request or scheduling a specific time to check in with members of your team. Is it easy for your team to find you and stop by casually?
- 2) What messages are you sending with your body language?** The authors warn against "conveying your power through subtle cues" that indicate dominance. If you're sitting behind a huge desk, crossing your arms, or frequently checking your phone during meetings and conversations, you could be sending a message you don't intend.
- 3) Do you follow up with employees' questions and suggestions?** If a team member comes to you and you listen but take no action, your trust with that employee erodes. Commit to following up.
- 4) Are most of your conversations with your team fairly formal?** If you rarely have casual conversations with your employees—or if every conversation feels "high stakes"—employees will be much less comfortable sharing information with you.
- 5) How do you handle brainstorming sessions?** Your approachability can be significantly impacted by how you treat team members during those moments where they're out on a limb—including sharing new or off-the-cuff ideas in front of other team members.

The more your team members feel comfortable with you, the more likely they are to speak up when they have a question or an issue. Ethics and compliance issues in your department are more likely to come to you directly. And that helps us better protect our company, our reputation and our bottom line.

For questions or for more information, please contact the Office of Audit, Compliance and Ethics at 860-679-4180 or [compliance.officer@uchc.edu](mailto:compliance.officer@uchc.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from August 2016 Compliance Communicator at NAVEX Global, Inc. <http://www.navexglobal.com/en-us/resources/newsletters/compliance-communicator-are-you-approachable-are-you-sure>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hbr.org/2016/01/can-your-employees-really-speak-freely> last accessed March 8, 2017