Q. What is meant by the term equitable workplace? Is this a new abstract idea, or is it something that can be clearly defined with a business rationale? What is the supervisor's role in an equitable workplace?

A. An equitable workplace is a work culture or environment where everyone, regardless of their background (ethnic origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical abilities, or neurodiversity), believes they have an equal opportunity to be happy, healthy, and productive. The term evolved from diversity awareness and inclusion initiatives, but it is rapidly becoming the dominant way of describing a healthful workplace. The workplace has undergone dramatic changes in recent decades. Employees no longer feel as loyal to employers, but personal meaning and fulfillment in one's job have become paramount. As a result, employees are more aware of inequities, can spot them more quickly, and are less willing to tolerate working where they perceive disrespect or exclusion. This makes workplace equity a priority concern for companies and gives it a clear business rationale. There are hard economic costs of ignoring workplace equity. They appear in terms of lower productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. Managers can play significant roles in enhancing workplace equity by making changes in areas of communication, team development, opportunities, policies, and practices.

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Q. I want to show maximum respect to my employees rather than overlook important ways to demonstrate that I value their expertise. I know this will build morale and enhance my relationship with them. So, what are the areas of interaction with them that I should consider?

A. The more you engage in respectful behaviors, the more your relationship deepens. Consider the following. 1) Respect and value your employee's time by acknowledging it when delegating assignments. 2) If you promise something to an employee, deliver on it. 3) If you set a meeting time, don't forget it. 4) Don't offer an assignment without explaining what's expected. 5) Use empathy to identify what employees need in order to be productive. 6) Reach out; don't wait for a request or complaint to come if you anticipate it. 7) Never act like an employee is replaceable. Ultimately, an employee might be easily replaced, but don't use this as a force in your relationship. 8) Treat employees as the experts, which means asking them for their ideas, opinions, and suggestions first. For example, if you need a new file cabinet and want an opinion on what kind, ask the administrative assistant first.