

Building Higher Trust 100 Feed Your Team

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



If you are a leader, you will have better results if you feed your team. I mean that statement in both the literal and figurative sense. I will explore the impact in this article and give some tips for handling remote situations.

The importance of feeding your team

I have observed that when a team meeting is accompanied by some food and drink the atmosphere is much more collegial and productive. When you bring in a box of doughnuts and a container of hot coffee, people respond and become more engaged in the topics being discussed.

Actually, any kind of food will work, but I would stay away from messy or awkward food presentations. Keep it to simple finger food and it will be less confusing or distracting. It will also be less expensive.

Food when your team is operating remotely

You can indicate on the meeting notice that food is welcome at a remote meeting. People are encouraged to bring a snack or coffee to the meeting. For critical meetings, I have seen leaders actually have food items delivered to the homes of the team members. That gesture always makes a great impression. It is also a great way for the leader to show appreciation to the team members. I would stay away from sending out food coupons because they encourage people to leave home.

Figurative feeding

The nourishment does not always have to be in the form of physical food. The leader can “feed” the team by providing information they would normally not receive. He or she can praise members who have gone above and beyond the call of duty.

Many teams have some kind of ritual near the start of meetings to share some good news or thank fellow team members. That habit provides some form of social

engagement to set the tone at the start of the meeting. This form of feeding can be live when members are present or remote when working from home.

Two caveats

You can overdo the feeding of a team whether it be literal or figurative. A little goes a long way with this technique. You must avoid having the munching time eclipse the whole meeting agenda. The best approach I have found is to keep the nibbling activities to less than 10% of the meeting time. That is enough for it to register and spread goodwill but not so much as to distract.

Also, stay away from alcohol unless this is an after-hours event with networking.

Conclusion

If you take the time to feed your people with physical or spiritual food they will be more engaged. It is a simple gesture that will pay off in goodwill and productivity. You can use it anytime, but avoid overusing the technique. Do not let it become a distraction.

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