



SIX PROMISES THAT WILL HELP YOU BECOME AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

When I think about the most basic characteristics of effective leadership, I think about making and keeping promises. Whether you're in a new leadership position or you're a veteran looking to improve team performance, there are six promises that you should make and keep.

- 1. I will do my own job well:** I need you to be able to count on me. I will earn your trust and confidence by clearly mastering my own responsibilities. I will work hard to understand our organization, its strengths, its weaknesses and what drives our leadership. I will work to understand the internal and external environments in which we operate. I also know that my credibility with my own boss is critical to getting our team the resources and backing that we need to succeed. This means that when I take our suggestions, ideas and questions to my boss I will do my best to get everything right.
- 2. I will listen to you:** I am committed to understanding your ideas, questions, thoughts and ambitions. I believe that effective communication begins with effective listening. This means that I might ask a lot of questions, some of which you might find challenging. Challenging you doesn't mean that I don't value you; it means I do! If I don't listen well all the time it might mean that I'm busy, tired or distracted. Challenge me. If we don't connect effectively, we will try again. I am committed to the advice that the late Stephen Covey wrote in his book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, "Seek first to understand and then to be understood."
- 3. I will be polite:** I will be respectful, clear and honest in the language that I use. I will say "please" and, especially, "thank-you". I will not use demeaning language about you in your presence or in your absence and I will extend this courtesy to every member of our organization. In turn, I need you to be polite with our teammates and with me. Please tell me if anyone, within or outside our team, speaks to you or treats you in a disrespectful manner. If you've been unable or unwilling to handle it personally, we'll address it together. Simple courtesy is one of the foundations needed to build a strong relationship and a strong team.
- 4. I will keep you safe:** I recognize the importance of physical and psychological safety. We will only take on tasks once we have assessed risks and made plans to mitigate them. I know that every decision I make, or implement on behalf of our organization, has the potential to impact your psychological well-being. Alert me when this happens and I promise that we'll deal with it together. I also understand that your life outside of work can affect how well and how safely

you operate at work. While respecting your privacy, I will support you as you deal with any off-the-job issues.

5. **I will keep you informed:** I will let you know how our business is doing, how our team is doing and how you are doing. My promise is to be as accurate and timely as possible. If I don't have accurate information, I won't speculate or trade in rumors. I will make and keep a schedule of team meetings and one-on-ones with each of you. In exchange, I ask that you prepare for our meetings, even informally. To keep you well informed it's important that you make me aware of any questions, issues or suggestions that you have.
6. **I will make real promises:** I will be very careful when making promises so you can have confidence that I will live up to them. I want you to be able to tell people outside our team "Our manager doesn't make promises easily but always follows through". But, you know that sometimes circumstances change in ways that I didn't predict. This could mean that I won't be able to fully implement some of the commitments that I've made to you. If this happens I will tell you what's changed and explain why we are making other decisions.

Promises made openly, even to one other person, are promises that are more likely to be kept. Think about posting or emailing these six promises to the members of your team. Be open to feedback, some of which might be tough to hear but all of which will teach you something.

SIX PROMISES TO MAKE TO YOUR TEAM

1. I will do my job well.
2. I will listen to you.
3. I will be polite.
4. I will keep you safe.
5. I will keep you informed.
6. I will make real promises.