50% of staff say that they have no idea what is expected of them.

50%!

There's nothing more unsettling for a staff to be working somewhere where they don't know what's expected of them. They don't know where they stand and they don't know if they are any closer to getting promoted than they are to getting fired.

Your job as a leader is to make sure your staff is crystal clear on what is expected of them.

An exercise that I suggest to all the leaders I work with is a really simple one- have a conversation individually with each member of your team and ask them what their goals are. See if their answers match your answers.

If not, it's really important that you clarify what their goals are so that everybody is on the same page.

If you also have team goals, it's a great exercise to do with your team to make sure everybody knows what's expected.

Goals matter for several reasons.

First and foremost they help provide focus.

As a leader, you are implementing your vision and those goals should be designed in order to reach that vision. It gets everybody on the same page and it helps to measure if you are making the progress that you hope to make.

It's easy to say yes, we're growing or yes, we're doing okay, but if you're not measuring it, it's only a guess. Maybe educated, but a guess all the same.

It also helps to maintain motivation.

People like to know that they're working towards something. Whether it's selling a certain number of things or raising a certain amount of money or bringing in a certain number of people to an event or a training- whatever the work is that you do, it can be really motivating to start to see those numbers climb.

When people reach their goals, and it's recognized and acknowledged, that can be really exciting for staff. It can help build buy-in and make people feel appreciated. It helps to highlight your purpose by focusing on what's most important and it helps to show Improvement.

Even if you didn't reach the end goal, the next time you do it you get a little bit closer and a little bit closer.

It focuses on that growth and improvement.

Always involve your team as much as possible in everything that you do and this includes goals. There may be some goals you have at the team level, at the organizational level, even at the individual level that just are there and there's nothing to be done about it.

Be clear about that with your team, but always create space where your staff has the opportunity to create goals for themselves as well. Even if it's not a hundred percent tied to their job description, as a leader you want to create opportunities for your staff to grow.

When staff feel supported and when they know that you're interested in their growth as a human being as well as a member of the team, that really helps them feel connected. It helps with the morale of the team. It helps them stay longer when they know that they have continued opportunities for growth.

I had a staff member once who was really excited about starting their own nonprofit. It didn't really benefit our organization directly since there wasn't space- we were already a nonprofit- to create a new one.

But 1) I knew they were really excited about it and 2) the cost was minimal and the time investment was minimal for the class that I found to help this staff. I knew that there were skills in there that they were going to learn that would help us on the team.

It wasn't a direct one to one and I was perfectly okay with that. I wanted to help them reach their dream and I wanted them to stay excited and motivated and to share what knowledge they did gain from taking that class.

Think about ways that you can support your team, even if it doesn't feel like the opportunity is exactly related to a T to their job description. It also increases staff impact and retention when they have buy-in and they have say and voice into their own growth and development.

As you create goals, the three areas you want to make sure are clear and everybody's on the same page are:

1) What is the goal?

2) Why does this goal exist? What about it is important?

3) How is it getting you to that vision and mission and end goal and how will you get there?

Involve your team. Connect everything to the mission. We'll break down the SMART framework in a minute, if you haven't seen it or you kind of forget what each letter stands for.

It's a good baseline as you're creating goals to make sure that they are valuable and how they're framed. It helps with your retention and to track progress.

It's important to understand your individual team members in terms of how much support they're going to need when they're reaching their goals. Some staff like a lot of support, some staff want you to be more hands off. Respect that provided that they are making the progress they should be making but always check in regardless.

Checking in does not mean micromanaging. It also means you want to recognize progress that has already happened. You want to see if there are any problems that you can help with. If there are any resources that they need.

You want to make sure everything's on track, particularly if it's a longer term project. You don't want to get toward the end and realize that they're way behind. Make sure there's some system in place where they're tracking progress along the way.

One of my favorites- celebrate, celebrate, celebrate not just when you get to the end of the goal. Celebrate the progress along the way. Do it as a team. Do it loud and proud.

Make sure your staff feels good and recognized and motivated as they're making progress toward their goals.

Here's the SMART model.

It's really helpful to remember to make your goals specific because then you can know whether you reach them or not, which goes hand-in-hand with the measurable.

If you say, 'I want to become a better public speaker', that's a great goal.

But how will you know if you've become a better public speaker?

Is it in the evaluations that you get?

Is it in how many people show up for your speeches?

Is it in how many claps you get? Okay, that would be hard to measure but you get my point.

You want to be able to measure to know if it's working or not.

You want to be realistic and also shoot a little for the stars.

You want- you know, if the goal is really easy to attain, I guess it technically satisfies the attainable requirement but you also want- to stretch you a little bit. Make it attainable, but also push yourself. When will you achieve it? For most of us, if we don't have a deadline, it just sort of lingers and lingers.

Next, what is the relevance of that goal to the work you're trying to do?

Find out how your staff likes to be celebrated.

Some people like things that are big in public. Some like to be a little bit private.

You can do tangible things- you know, pizza parties, cupcakes and things like that. You can do bonuses if your budget allows. You can give an extra day off or do a half day or however you celebrate. You can always get ideas from your team as well. But make sure that you are creating a culture where good, hard work is recognized and celebrated.

So, the most important question for you is, are your current goals clear and effective?