

Openness – A Critical Key to Communication

Introduction:

As part of Hauora’s Relational Performance Framework, openness - “Being receptive to new ideas, opinions, or arguments” - is a foundational component of communication.



In today's highly competitive and constantly evolving work environment, fostering a culture of openness has become more important than ever. Openness is about embracing and valuing everyone's ideas, beliefs, plans, and viewpoints, regardless of their role or seniority. This type of culture can contribute to increased creativity, innovation, teamwork, employee satisfaction, and accountability.

Creating an environment of openness is a complex task; many organisations struggle to nurture this. Companies often face challenges when trying to cultivate a culture where employees feel comfortable expressing their opinions, and where everyone's perspectives are respected and valued. This can be pronounced for larger multinational organisations where cultural and language barriers can create additional challenges in cross-functional operations.

In this article, we will unpack the benefits of openness in the workplace in more detail, the potential challenges and drawbacks of such a culture, and provide practical tips on how to foster a culture of openness in your organisation. Whether you are a HR director, CEO, head of wellbeing, or striving employee, you will learn how openness can improve social wellbeing, communication, and overall workplace performance.





The Benefits of Openness in the Workplace:

- **Increased creativity and innovation:** When employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas and perspectives, they are more likely to come up with creative solutions to problems, and to innovate in their work.
- **Improved teamwork and collaboration:** An open workplace fosters a sense of trust and respect among team members, which leads to better collaboration and teamwork.
- **Enhanced employee satisfaction and retention:** When employees feel that their opinions and ideas are valued, they are more likely to feel satisfied with their jobs, and to remain with the company longer.
- **Increased transparency and accountability:** An open workplace promotes transparency and accountability, which can help to reduce conflicts and misunderstandings.

Challenges and Drawbacks of Openness in the Workplace:

- **Resistance to change:** Employees may resist a new culture of openness, particularly if they are used to working in a more closed environment.
- **Misunderstandings and conflicts:** Openness can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts if employees are not trained to communicate effectively, empathetically, and respectfully.
- **Time and resources:** Creating a culture of openness requires time and resources to implement and sustain.

Practical Tips for Fostering Openness in the Workplace:

- **Lead by example:** As a leader, it is essential to model the behaviour that you want to see in others. Be open to feedback and demonstrate a willingness to listen to and consider different perspectives.



- Encourage effective feedback mechanisms and input: Create opportunities for employees to provide feedback and input, such as by regular feedback surveys, feedback hunting pathways, town hall meetings, or suggestion boxes.
- Provide training and resources: Provide training and resources to help employees develop the skills and confidence they need to express their ideas and opinions effectively.
- Foster a culture of respect: Foster a culture of respect, where everyone's ideas and opinions are valued and respected, regardless of their role or seniority.
- Recognise and reward openness: Recognise and reward employees who demonstrate openness and a willingness to share their ideas and perspectives.



Conclusion:

Openness in the workplace is crucial for fostering creativity, innovation, and employee satisfaction. By creating an environment where everyone's ideas, beliefs, plans, and viewpoints are accepted and respected, you can build a culture of trust, collaboration, and transparency that benefits everyone in your organisation. However, it is also important to acknowledge the potential challenges and drawbacks of such a culture... and take steps to address them. By following the practical tips outlined above, you can take the first steps towards creating a more open and inclusive workplace culture.

