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An investigation into factors relating to speaking up in the workplace.

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors that enable or prevent employees to speak up. Effective employee communication is vital in early detection of problems. Employee silence is defined as the deliberate withholding of information useful to the progress of an organization. Empowered employees will take personal accountability and ownership of issues. In an increasingly competitive market employee communication and reaction to change is vital for the success or failure of an organization. Previous research has found that failure of employees to speak up can have significant consequences, including decreased innovation and productivity; unreported health and safety incidents; stress; depression; and lower commitment and job satisfaction. This study (N = 240) has confirmed that employees may not speak up out of fear of being labelled in a negative manner. Employees are more likely to speak up when they feel it is safe and worthwhile. This study provides recommendations for managers for enabling and encouraging employees. The present study has found trust in supervisor, supervisor support and self-monitoring were found to be significant predictors of speaking up.

Key words: Employee voice, employee silence, communication, management, speaking up.

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