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## Pros and Cons of Open Door Policy | Aparna Sharma | Senior HR Professional & Certified Corporate Director | Editor's Collection

An organization is a setup where individuals from diverse backgrounds, different educational qualifications, varied mentalities and temperaments join hands to work towards a common goal. It is the culture of the workplace which unites all the employees, helps them enjoy their work and deliver their best.

The values, policies, ideologies and beliefs of an organization form its culture. The culture of any workplace decides the way employees behave with their fellow workers. Employees are the assets of an organization who must contribute effectively to achieve the targets within the desired time frame.

One should not treat the organization as a mere source of earning money. It is essential for an individual to prioritize work and contribution over other things. The employees must have cordial relations with their superiors and the management for smooth flow of information and better



understanding at the workplace. **Transparency is essential at all levels in the hierarchy to avoid conflicts and unnecessary disagreements.** No one should feel neglected at work. Problems arise when queries remain unattended and bosses do not have time for their team members.

To avoid the above situation, organizations have introduced a policy named “Open Door Policy”.

**So, What is Open Door Policy?**

According to this policy, the doors of the offices of superiors or the management (including the CEO) must remain open for the employees to have an easy access in cases of queries, conflicts, sharing views or even complaints. The team members should have the liberty to walk up to their team leaders and discuss issues with them in an open manner.

The role of the managing director, chief executive officer or the chairman is not just to spend time only in closed door reviews (business &/people); instead they must act as a strong pillar of support for employees. A healthy interaction amongst the employees is essential for a positive ambience at the workplace. The management must address the employees from time to time to motivate them.

An **open-door policy** is a great way to make sure **important** information and feedback reaches managers who can take that information and make changes when needed. It also builds trust among employees, establishing a more loyal worker base, and an overall more productive team.

## **PROS**

1. **It encourages effective communication between the employee and the management.** The employees do not feel left out at the workplace as they know there is someone to support them always at the time of crisis. This way they get attached to the management and are always loyal towards the organization.
2. **There is no room for confusion when employees directly interact with their superiors.** They feel motivated and strive hard to live up to the expectations of the management. They will never badmouth the management or their organization.
3. **It encourages healthy discussion at the workplace.** Individuals exchange ideas and come to an innovative solution benefitting all. The employees are free to discuss their ideas with the superiors and gain from their ideas and mentoring.
4. Gone are the days when people used to fear their bosses. **The “Hitler approach” does not work in the current scenario.** The management must respect the decisions of the employees and only then expect the same in return. The management must make themselves readily available and lend a sympathetic ear whenever required.
5. **The open door policy enables the employees to seek their boss’s help and freely discuss things with them for better clarity.** This policy is essential for effective communication, proper feedback and better output. With the help of the open door policy, employees need not crib

amongst themselves, rather talk to their superiors, clear all their doubts and work towards a long term association with the organization.

## **CONS**

While the practice originated with the intent of encouraging collaboration and inclusion, it does have disadvantages that can create tension in the workplace, especially in a small business.

### **• Chain of Command**

In companies with open-door policies, employees may opt to bypass their immediate supervisor and bring issues directly to the senior most manager. This can create tension and hostility between employees and their immediate supervisors, especially if the issue is something that should be discussed first at a lower level in the chain of command. This approach can also waste time of senior management, especially when asked to intervene for petty or trivial issues. In a small-business environment, going over someone's head is not an easily-kept secret, and hostility can disrupt the workplace dynamics.

### **• Disruption of Workflow**

When an employee bypasses an immediate supervisor or group leader with a new idea or suggestion, it has the potential disadvantage of a middle manager not vetting the concept beforehand. Disrupting the established workflow of a small business can create an environment where no one is quite sure of the status of projects or of who has the ultimate authority over how workplace practices are implemented. Any slowdown in productivity has the potential to have a negative financial impact on the operations.

### **• Reduced Problem-Solving Capacity**

Ideally, a company will have a formal process to follow if co-workers or managers have internal office related disputes with one another. When employees are free to go directly to top managers with problems, it eliminates the necessity for working through and resolving differences one-on-one. Also, the same issues are likely to arise repeatedly in the future.

### **• Time Management**

One simple disadvantage of an open-door policy is that it can make it difficult for a manager to maintain a schedule if he/she never knows when an employee will stop by or how long a conversation has the potential to take. While this can be managed with an appointment system, if a significant amount of time is spent on employee issues, other important responsibilities can fall by the wayside. This can be especially detrimental to a small-business owner who has numerous responsibilities and limited time.

## • Role of Human Resources

Employment law is continually changing, and human resources representatives in large companies are charged with keeping pace with changing workplace liabilities. In a small-business environment, a fully-staffed human resources department may not exist. When an employee uses a small company's open-door policy to bring serious charges of harassment or discrimination, it must be appropriately documented, substantiated and addressed, or a legal liability could result.

In summary, the most important question is if "Open Door Policies Work?" When a company has an open door policy, employees are free to approach or meet with the senior leadership of the organization. However, the organisation needs to be wise to train managers and executive staff about how the policy ought to work.



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