Get them to solve their own problems

Yes, your door is always open to your employees. But you shouldn't tolerate a steady parade of workers into your office looking for answers to every little problem.

Here are some guidelines to get staff to find solutions to some of their everyday difficulties:

1. Encourage them to try their own solution. You can listen to their ideas about how to deal with a situation, then let them try one out. But as a rule of thumb, give employees as much problem-solving leeway as you can. The pride they feel in solving problems on their own will encourage them to keep figuring things out independently.

2. Don't be so hard on them if they make mistakes. A person will be more willing to test a solution if she knows that she won't be unduly criticized for a result that really didn't pan out well. One really effective way to build confidence is to admit when you yourself made a mistake. Mentioning your error, what you've learned, and how you plan to fix it will give your people an excellent model to follow.

3. Offer good ideas when you can. And gently explain when other tactics are not currently practical. The openness you show to new ideas and your willingness to experiment will go a long way in encouraging employees to get involved in solving problems.

4. Reward successful problem-solving. Take time in a meeting or conversation to describe the fix the department would be in if it were not for the employee's resourcefulness. Then thank the employee.