

Set an example of fairness

Your employees look to you to set ground rules on effective communication. If you like to curse and yell, for instance, then so will many of your staffers. One simple way to set the proper tone involves standing up for individuals who are not present to defend themselves. Always express loyalty, or at least give the benefit of the doubt, to those who are absent.

That sends a signal to employees who are present that you will not be talking behind their backs, either. Also, avoid lacing your statements with judgmental words. Say what you see, rather than jumping right to your opinion. Pretend your eyes are cameras that take snapshots. Rather than declare, "Jim's just not on top of things anymore," say, "Jim's memo contains three factual errors, and his presentation relied on last year's outdated numbers."