

8 Top tips for listening to your staff or team.

For ages I worked in places and spaces where I was in one way or another the “only one like me.” It taught me a lot about finding effective ways to grow towards a team’s or community’s values as I collaborated with folks to create nourishing places for myself and others to flourish. There’s a story behind every one of these tips (check out current and upcoming blogs on [Terra Firma Cultural](#) to learn more) but here’s a list of questions to ask yourself if you want to do more to create nourishing, flourishing places to work, live, and play:



1. **Is my idea of a “fun” place to work really fun for everyone I want to include?** This doesn’t mean doing only those things that no one objects to. Doing that takes the flavor out of life and no one enjoys “flavorless”. But if I’m planning an event or a regular activity, I should probably think through if everyone I want to be “part of my group” can feel comfortable participating.
2. **How are my expectations of what “fits” or “is fitting” limiting or constraining how people come to work for/with me?** Am I setting standards that might limit or inhibit others from contributing something wonderful or feeling as “at home” as I do? This might be subtle or not-so-subtle language or examples about how to dress or wear your hair, about age or ability, about body size or shape, about gender or gender identity.
3. **Does the language we use around here hold true to my values and vision for the kind of manager I want to be and the workplace I want to be part of?** Again, this isn’t about taking all flavor or fun out of what we do and how we interact. It is asking you to think about how you want to express care for others, even in moments of conflicts. Is it alright to insult and call names? Have we latched onto “cool” phrases (or profanity) that might be hurtful to people?
4. **Is there a space for spectacular mistakes that allows people to risk being innovative and creative in taking on challenges?** There is a huge difference between asking someone what they have learned that will help them grow and do better as opposed to assessing and appraising people based on the appearance of flawlessness. The first can lead to collaboration and experimentation to produce amazing new things the second tends to lead to shaming, blaming, and covering up.
5. **Do I know enough about the people I work with to know how they, individually, like to receive feedback, praise, or rewards?** Some of us love public recognition, others die from the embarrassment. Some of us crave tough love, others want to be coddled. Some love deluxe chocolate and a great bottle of booze, others are diabetic, allergic, or simply hate the taste of the stuff.
6. **How do I allow people with different communication styles to have a voice in group discussions and decisions?** Do people who need some time to think things through have a chance to do so or are only the loudest and fastest to speak ever heard. If we have given people “a seat at the table,” have we also provided them time/space to bring their thoughts forward? How often do I prioritize “getting through the agenda” over letting everyone have a say?
7. **In what ways do I recognize that those I work with are complete human beings with lives and interests and not just “staff”?** And do I recognize that their lives might look a lot different than mine? This might include thinking about people as parents, pet-owners, care givers, members of religious communities, performers or artists, sports enthusiasts, and/or people needing connection with people “like them” (whatever that might mean).
8. **If I am asking that people keep something “quiet” or “on the DL,” why am I asking it and to whose benefit?** Am I making a gross exception to “the rules” and if so, why? Is this about an experiment that I want to see how it works out before I take it public? Is it something someone would be embarrassed about or hurt by?

Need help implementing these suggestions? Want to hear the stories behind them and how we know they work? Book a strategy call with [Terra Firma Cultural](#) for diversity consulting with allyship at the heart.