



TOPIC: REWARD AND RECOGNITION

TITLE: THE ART OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

March 18, 2001

It seems so easy to focus on what's wrong, what's not working, or the problems we are experiencing. These things tend to capture our attention, and in addition, they represent our daily challenges. It can be much harder to focus on the positives: What we are doing well, what progress has been made, what successes have we accomplished, etc.

When we come from this perspective, we often forget to recognize or acknowledge others for what they've done. And, the more we focus on the challenges, the higher the bar seems, the harder the struggle, and we forget what we're capable of doing, not to mention what we've actually done.

I'd like to focus this newsletter on acknowledging success. Although we might make an effort to recognize performance or reward employees on occasion, acknowledgement is quite different. It takes praise and recognition one step further. The difference is quite simple: praise and recognition compliment the behavior someone demonstrated or the result they achieved; acknowledgement compliments the person they are being.

Acknowledgement is about reminding someone and helping them see what they often forget in themselves. It's a deeper form of recognition, and one where the person being acknowledged feels really heard and seen for who they are, or who they are trying to be. It requires you to really know the person you're acknowledging, whether it's your employee, friend, loved one or peer. It goes right to the art of where the person is stretching, getting stronger, or building a new skill and can often highlight or recognize a value that's important to them that you see them living. It truly builds their confidence.

So, how do you acknowledge people? I'd like to share some thought below:

Acknowledge rather than recognize: This is about acknowledging them as a person, rather than recognizing what they're doing. It's the difference between complimenting them on the great job they did, versus acknowledging the big risk they took by taking a new approach. Or, acknowledging how much stronger they're getting at speaking up in meetings, because it shows they're taking a stand for being heard. The real key is that it is not about what or how they're doing, it, but who or how they're being in order to do it.

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Keep it short and sweet: Acknowledgement is not meant to be long and drawn out. It's a quick way to share what you notice and recognize the person for who they are.

Be sincere. The best acknowledgement is the one that comes straight from the heart.

Recognize it's an art: Just like appreciating art, we all see something different in individuals, and that's what makes acknowledgement so special. What I acknowledge might be different than what you might acknowledge in someone. And, hopefully, we'll help them see something they might not notice, or something special they might have forgotten was there.

Before I challenge you to go and use this new skill, I'd like to acknowledge you for the commitment you show to your own learning and growth through participating in this newsletter.

My challenge for you this week is to acknowledge the people most important to you and your success - both at work and at home.

What would you like to acknowledge yourself for?

Your manager?

Your employees?

Your peers?

Take a minute to share with each of them what's in your heart about the inner character of who they are.