

# ***Accelerated Performance through the Art of Appreciation***

by Sandra Strauss

*“People do not live by bread alone. They need buttering up once in awhile.”*

Robert Henry



Appreciation—can we really ever get enough? How much does it matter anyway? In a survey by the U.S. Department of Labor, *46% of people who quit their jobs did so because they felt unappreciated.* Nearly half of our nation’s workforce doesn’t feel appreciated enough and leaving because of it. Appreciation matters and is vital for retaining motivated employees.

When we put our time, effort, creativity and personal energy into our work, in helping others, or being of service, having it recognized, praised and appreciated is very reinforcing. Although we may not expect recognition in return, it is a powerful motivator. When our work is being noticed, valued, validated and appreciated, it has a way of encouraging us to keep performing in the same excellent manner. Why? We respond positively to reinforcement and repeat the behaviors which are praised; validation is a compelling form of reward.

Appreciation and praise pump up performance and puts our “**eX**” factor to work—our potential to **eX**press **eX**cellence. When we’re focused on expressing excellence in whatever we do, we “show up” fully to serve. At the same time, we find greater meaning and purpose because we’re putting our gifts and talents to work, increasing feelings of positive self-regard with benefits to our own health, well-being and relationships. Appreciation nurtures the potential for excellence within.

All too often, people hear about their wrongdoings, how they’re doing something the “wrong” way or not meeting expectations. Without receiving regular validation of the value they provide to organizations, employees may doubt their work is important. What a difference in both actions and attitudes when people notice and comment about their exemplary performance and everything they’re doing right! We love to be caught “doing something right.” It brings magical rewards of continued performance and expressions of excellence. It awakens the best within us and reinforces the repetition of desirable behavior.

Wherever you go and whoever you encounter throughout your day, look for the good, the special, the appreciated, and the extraordinary—and tell them. Make appreciation a daily practice. No matter your role at work, look for ways to acknowledge and appreciate people. Even if it’s not your official responsibility to motivate employees, your appreciation makes a difference; whether it’s the

receptionist who answers the phone with an engaging tone, the cashier who rings up a purchase with a smile, or someone who helped out in a crunch.

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Tell them what a difference their actions and dazzling attitudes make. Watch their faces and see the difference a compliment makes. Let the people your work, as well as others you meet throughout your day, know how much you value what they contribute. Sustaining that positive flow of energy throughout the year is invaluable for keeping “eX” factors in full pursuit of peak productivity.

To encourage the ongoing expression of excellence, acknowledge the time, energy, effort, creativity and other personal contributions people provide on a regular basis. Appreciation needs to be given abundantly throughout the year, not just relegated to one week celebrating and honoring the countless contributions of colleagues, although recognition is valuable anytime.

Showing your appreciation comes in many forms—the more creative, the more it’s likely to get their attention. A simple “Thank you!” is universally appreciated; anything beyond that is pure gravy for our hungry souls. Sending a handwritten note, personal letter, or gift as a gesture of appreciation nets big returns. While e-mails are fine for many routine acknowledgments, don’t let cyberspace totally replace good old-fashioned, more personalized and meaningful displays of appreciation, especially for exceptional displays of service or effort.

By developing an “attitude of gratitude,” thanking people for their help, their time, their service, their thoughtfulness, their care, or their support, you’re setting up a continuing series of happy returns that works wonders everywhere. In turn, it is usually rewarded by receiving more help, more concern, more caring, more support, more loyalty, and enhanced connections—more of all the good things you want from your colleagues.

Appreciation boosts good feelings and motivates people to fully show up eager to find new ways to put their “eX” factors to work . . . and especially with those sobering DOL statistics, vital to keep them keep showing up at all.

*“There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread.”*

Mother Teresa

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