

Do Those You Lead Feel Appreciated?

Description

Do those you lead feel appreciated? This is a question Iâ??m focusing on much more these days. It could be as I age my perspective changes. It could be I am a late learner. It could be the pandemic is bringing different lessons. Whatever the reason, I find there is a connection between how appreciated people feel and whether or not you measure that sense of appreciation.

I have always been curious about why some people, departments, or organizations are more successful than others. I have found measurement is a vital piece of the equation. For example, most of my experience vocationally is in healthcare. In the surgical area, â??on-time startsâ?• is one measure of success. My good friend Bert Thornton, vice chairman emeritus of Waffle House, Inc., has shared with me some metrics Waffle House uses. One is the time that elapses between when a customer enters the restaurant and when they place their order; another is the time it takes for food to be delivered to the customer. The Studer Community Institute has a concentrated focus on kindergarten readiness. We also fund a yearly Quality of Life survey. The success metrics used are dependent on the person, department, organization, or community.

I believe measurement is vital. Of course, measurements evolve over time. For example, new technology can change the time it takes to accomplish a task. With technology, one can be faster and more responsive. Yet as I have written often, even positive changes can have a downside, or at minimum, create a side effect. For example, advancing technology will often replace jobs. We learned during the pandemic that more people can work virtually due to technology. Yet we also learned that working virtually can be lonely, and creativity and teamwork can suffer.

Times change. As they do, we change the things we measure. Today, for a community to grow economically, the focus has shifted away from solely shovel-ready land and incentives for job creation to local job creation and a sense of place. Now, it is more about talent. Capital follows talent, and talent follows place. Today, people will first choose the place they want to live and then look for a job. This is very different from the past. Also, what people are looking for in a job has changed. Yes, compensation plays a part in attracting and keeping talent. However, other items are more important. Opportunity for development is now a top item people look for in a job. â??My supervisor cares about meâ?• is important. â??I have what I need to do my jobâ?• is important. And yesâ?¦â??I feel appreciatedâ?• is vital.

It is important to ask yourself, *Do I help people feel appreciated?* In looking up the word â??appreciate,â?• the first definition that came up for me was â??to recognize the full worth of.â?• As leaders, are we recognizing the full worth of our employees? I have held up the awareness mirror to measure appreciation, and I am being more purposeful in asking people whether or not they feel appreciated. If the answer is yes, ask, â??What is making you feel appreciated?â?• If the answer is sort of, ask, â??What can be done to help you feel more appreciated?â?• If the answer is no, ask, â??How can we fix that?â?• (Of course, there are those times when the fit in the job or organization is just not good. When this is the case, itâ??s best for the person to go to a place they can feel better about.)

Individualizing the ways we show appreciation helps. For example, for one person, it may mean recognizing their ability to take on an increased role. For another person, it may mean recognizing them publicly. It can be a thank-you note. It can be providing development opportunities.

I have people who report directly to me. In the past several months, I have asked the appreciation question more often, followed by the *why* question. I do this for while *I* feel that I am showing appreciation, I want to know if the *person* feels it. I can no longer assume the person feels appreciated.

I was involved in creating 13 songs for a CD titled *Passion & Purpose*. I wrote lyrics for a song called â??I Thought You Knew.â?• The lyrics came to me from reading a story in the media. A person wrote that she wondered if her father loved her because he never said, â??I love you.â?• So, she asked her father why he had never told her he loved her. The father responded, â??I thought you knew.â?• In looking back, the daughter realized all the ways her father had shown love for her. He just never said the words.

At times, we may feel our actions demonstrate that we appreciate someone. We may feel they should know. I have learned it is very beneficial to make sure the person feels appreciated. It also helps the person being asked that question to learn more about themselves. What helps them feel appreciated? Do they share those words or actions with others?

Take time this week to ask those you work with if they feel you appreciate them. If you are more courageous, ask your family the same question. When we show appreciation to othersâ??and make sure they actually feel appreciatedâ??we go a long way toward creating stronger, more rewarding relationships with those in our lives.

Life is an open-book test. The answers will show up when the questions are asked. What we do with those answers is up to us.

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