

Donâ??t Underestimate the Impact of Positive Recognition

Description

What recognition have you received that made a positive impact on your life? Many people can instantly come up with an answer. The tremendous power of reward and recognition was the subject of a recent conversation I had with Dr. Bob Nelson on *The Busy Leaderâ??s Podcast*. Click here to listen. (Heâ??ll also be presenting at this yearâ??s EntreConâ??our virtual business and leadership conference scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, November 18-19, 2020. Click here to register.)
Dr. Nelson is a best-selling author of many books. One of his best known is *1001 Ways to Reward Employees* (more recently updated as *1501 Ways to Reward Employees*). As I listened to his ideas during the podcast, I jotted down some notes. For example, he said most effective recognition is timely, specific, tied to actions taken by the individual or group, and when possible connected to the values and/or purpose.
After our conversation, memories and various stories that have been shared with me on the subject of reward and recognition filled my mind. These situations did not include money, trophies, and plaques, although these can be nice. Here are some of the memorable ones. You may want to use these examples in your own workplace.
One hospital had a creative way of recognizing its employee of the month. After the person was chosen, a box was then placed in the cafeteria. It featured a story on why that person was named and included index cards for staff to fill out if they wanted to. Staff members would write their own thank-you, a word of congratulations, a personal story they wanted to share, etc. At the end of the month, the recognized employee would receive the collected index cards. They would also receive an employee-of-the-month pin to wear.
A manager in that same hospital told me a story that taught me not to underestimate the power of such gestures. She went to the wake of an employee who had passed away. When she walked up to the casket, she noticed that on his lapel was his employee-of-the-month pin. And in the casket were the many index cards he had received. We often know such actions make a difference; however, I feel we underestimate just how much of a difference it is.
In my case, I had to quit believing a myth I had heard around positive recognition, which was that we can use it to balance out the negative. â??Balancing outâ?• is a fallacy. I have come to learn that it takes at least three positive interactions for each negative for one person to feel good about the other person. A 2-to-1 â??positive-to-negativeâ?• ratio creates a neutral feeling, and a 1-to-1 ratio creates a negative feeling.

I share this because I have heard people rationalize not recognizing people. They might say, â??I just told them they did a good job a few weeks ago!â?• It is like we have a limited supply of recognitions in us, and when they are gone, we have no more. The truth is the opposite: The more we recognize the more the behaviors are repeated, and our recognition chips are always replenished. When an athlete makes a good play, or a singer belts out a great song, we donâ??t think, *No need to applaud, I did it the last game or performance.* Recognized behavior gets repeated. We cannot give too much positive recognition!

With COVID-19, we need to be even better at recognition. Here are some ideas for doing this during virtual calls.

â?¢ Start the meeting with some fun. A few weeks ago, I was on a call and each person was asked, â??If you were being introduced, what walk-up song would you like?â?• It was such fun and helped us get to know a bit more about each other. This helps us make a human connection, which goes hand-in-hand with positive recognition.

â?¢ Put a name in the chat box and then ask everyone to go to the chat area and add a positive comment about this person. This works in person also (when there isnâ??t a pandemic going on, of course!). Just have each individual put their name on top of a piece of paper. Pass the papers around the room and give each person time to write a note under each name. (PLEASE NOTE: THIS SHOULD BE A POST-COVID ACTIVITY.)

â?¢ Ask for help. I find most people want to recognize people; however, we may not see what they are doing on a daily basis. At the Studer Family of Companies, we ask people in supervisory roles to send notes to *their* supervisor and to me. We ask them to include the name of the staff member, what they have done that can be recognized, and the personâ??s home address. This then turns into a letter from me. In it, I share that their supervisor sent a note about them, explain what they have done right, and add a sincere thank-you. If I can connect to the impact their actions have made on others, even better. Research is showing that up to 45 percent of workers are having mental health challenges due to the impact of COVID-19. By creating that human touch even when virtual, and staying on top of recognition, we can provide a brighter day for those we count on each day to make a difference.

Dr. Bob Nelson will be a featured speaker at EntreCon, Pensacolaâ??s virtual business and leadership conference, which will be held Wednesday and Thursday, November 18-19, 2020.

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Author
quint-studer