Own Recognition for Those You Lead

Description

I received an email from the head chef at a restaurant. He wrote that he had recently heard me on a program say thank you to all the restaurant workers who have continued to work during the pandemic. Itâ??s true that these workers deserve our thanks. Some of their jobs have changed to takeout only, while others work in restaurants that have had to limit indoor seating and/or add or expand outdoor seating. The changes have not been easy for them. The chefâ??s note read that healthcare workers are getting recognized and that he felt restaurant workers are notâ??so he wanted to thank me for not leaving them out.

Please do not think this column is about me. It is not. Itâ??s about my reaction to the chefâ??s email, which is this: Each leader needs to own helping those they lead to feel valued. When a leader looks for others to help the people they lead feel valued, those leaders are underestimating their own impact.

Over the years, I have heard leaders ask *their* leader to come into their department to explain something, because they feel staff will accept it better. My response is that maybe this makes sense in very unusual situations; however, if a manager needs someone else to communicate with those they lead, they need to take a hard look at their own skill set.

The most impactful people in the workplace are an employeeâ??s coworkers and direct supervisor. When a manager looks for others to motivate and make those they lead feel valued, they are falling into a dangerous spot. Without realizing it, they are moving into the victim role. In cases like the one I just described, they are missing their own role in helping those they lead to feel valued.

Here are some tips:

1. Do not see it as someone elseâ??s job to help those you directly supervise. As my cousin Al says, â??You spot it, you got it.â?• In other words, if you spot that those you lead need support to feel valued, then it is up to you to provide that support. This goes for public team recognition, notes written and mailed to the personâ??s home, and other ways to say thank you and help those you lead to feel valued. Once you feel it is up to someone else to make it happen, you have shirked your role.

2. If you believe recognition from someone else will have a positive impact, take responsibility for making it happen. Leaders sometimes come up to me at workshops or presentations and share that their leader or a top executive does not recognize their team. I start with point one and ask, â??How are you recognizing them?â?• Then I ask, â??What have you done to help your leader recognize them?â?•

People have a lot on their plates. If a manager wants to have their staff recognized, they need to let the person they want to recognize them know why. This can be done either in person or via email. For example, the Pensacola Blue Wahoosâ?? general manager of food and beverage is Eric Kroll. He does

a very good job. His leader is Jonathan Griffith. Their offices are not near each other. So Eric regularly writes a note to Jonathan that lets him know who should be recognized and why, provides their address, and tells him they would appreciate a note from him and also a shout-out at the next staff meeting.

Here is a recent example of an email Eric sent him.

Afternoon, Jonathan, Iâ??d like to recognize two staff members who have been doing a phenomenal job over the last four months with our Blue Wahoos Diamond Dinner program. Chef Travis Wilson and Chef Carl Sackman have provided over 1,100 meals to families since starting this program in October 2020. One customer sent us a thank-you note for the convenience and variety of choices throughout the program since these meals have been very helpful to him and his wife as she goes through chemotherapy. Appreciate your time and have a great day.

When he gets this kind of email, Jonathan then sends a note to each recognized person that reads, â??Eric wrote me on the exceptional results for the Blue Wahoos Diamond Dinner program.â?• He then adds his thanks. As you can see, this also gives Eric a win.

As a manager, please own helping those you supervise be recognized. Often the top leader may not work in the same building, the same town, or even the same state. They will very much appreciate your help in this area.

3. The leaderâ??s leader can also be helpful. When the leaderâ??s leader comes by the work area, they can say to the leader, â??Take me around and let me know whom you would like recognized and why.â?• Then the leaderâ??s leader goes up to each recognized person and says, â??[Leaderâ??s name] shared with me how you spent some extra time this week helping a new staff person learn how to use the checkout system. Thank you for demonstrating the value of teamwork.â?•

Items two and three above are excellent examples of managing up. To manage up simply means to position others well. Youâ??re helping the person to be recognized. Itâ??s a win-win-winâ?¦or depending how far it goes up the ladder, a win-win-win-win! Regardless, itâ??s a great way to prevent we/they divisiveness and create a sense of unity inside your organization.

In summary, if you are in a leader role, take ownership of helping those you lead feel valued. Donâ??t think you are not important enough; you are! Otherwise you become a victim. When that happens, you are no longer leading. You have the ability and responsibility to make recognition take place. Doing so helps people feel appreciated and valued, shows them that theyâ??re making a difference, and builds stronger relationships and a stronger organization.

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