



Quint's Mailbox: Two Letters from Readers

Description

Each week after my column appears, it is neat to see the reactions. It also leads to some questions and observations. This column is based on a couple of recent ones.

What if your boss does not appear to appreciate you? This note I received led to a phone conversation. The person shared that he feels his boss does not appreciate him. He said he does not hear any good feedback. He described the relationship as one in which he tends to hear only what is wrong. He said the boss is someone he had known outside of work before getting the job offer. He then relayed to me some situations in which he felt he had done well and did not hear anything; yet when he falls short, he hears about it immediately.

As I tend to do after I listen to complaints about someone, I asked, "Does your boss do anything good?" The person shared that the boss had hired him when he really needed a job. He added that the boss meets with him weekly. I then asked, "Have you written him a thank-you note for hiring you?" The answer was no. "Have you thanked him for meeting with you weekly?" Again, the answer was no.

My suggestion was that he compliment and show appreciation when his boss does something he finds helpful. In other words, he should role model the behavior he is expecting from his boss. It takes three compliments to one criticism for a person to feel good about another person. So often I find people are so focused on what *they* need or want that they miss paying attention to what *their boss* may need or want.

This was brought home to me years ago by Ron Del Ciello, who was my boss at the time. We had started about the same time and we got along well. I was in a role where I talked to customers on a regular basis after they received the service we provided. When I heard a complaint, I brought it to Ron. There is nothing wrong with that, of course. In fact, at first Ron seemed pleased I was learning things so they could be corrected.

But then after about three months on the job, I happened to be walking down the hallway while Ron was starting to come out of his office. He saw me, went back in his office, and closed the door. (It was clear he wasn't happy to see me coming!) But then he opened the door and asked me in. As I sat down, Ron shared that I had worn him out. He said that every time he saw me all he heard was what

was wrong. He said, “I understand that is important. However, do you ever hear anything good?” I said, “Yes, lots!” He then said, “Great! Please share those with me too.”

No one wants to hear from their boss that they are wearing them out. But I realized it was true. From then on, I focused on both aspects: what we could do better *and* what we were doing well.

I worked with a health system CEO who was someone who felt he did not need lots of thanks and “good job”-type notes. This was likely true. However, because you don’t feel *you* need them is not a reason to not give them. It was that time of year when a note went out in the system newsletter listing employee anniversaries. His was listed. A group of employees came up with the ideas of having as many staff members who wanted to do so to send the CEO a personal congratulations and thank-you note. Many chose to do this. It was soon after that when the CEO starting sending notes to the staff thanking them. The impact on the CEO from all those thank-you notes was so profound he changed his behavior.

We can fall into the trap of believing that the compliments should flow only down in an organization. They also need to flow up. Since that day in 1985, I have coached many people to let their boss, their boss’s boss, and so forth know when they do something they appreciated. As Gandhi said, we should be the change we want to see in others. The Saint Francis of Assisi prayer on seeking to understand rather than seeking to be understood is another good guideline to use in building relationships. When we make an effort to understand the pressures our leaders face, our thank-yous will be more heartfelt.

A quick request: Send a note to someone you’d like to receive compliments from that details something *they* do that *you* appreciate. The more specific you can make it, the better. My experience is that once people receive good news and feel its positive impact, they will start to do the same.

Another note I received recently concerned salary. *I feel that I am worth more than I am getting paid.* I asked the person why he felt that way. The person shared his experience and education and pointed out that he brought a lot to the table. He is in a sales role and had been with the company about six weeks. I asked how much revenue he had brought in, understanding that with his being so new, it was likely not much. He said that due to lead times, he had not brought in any sales yet. I shared that if a new salesperson came to me after a few months to ask for a pay raise and had no sales, I would be concerned about this person’s thought process. The best way to earn more is to go out and get results. Yes, past experience and education are nice; however, if they are not leading to results, they mean nothing.

In summary, the moral of letter one is to treat your boss how you want to be treated. Positive feedback is not a one-way street. The moral of letter two is when seeking more pay, results need to come first.

Please keep the letters coming. And as always, thank you so much for reading. I am grateful for the opportunity to connect with you.

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