

Your Employees: Do You Appreciate Them or Take Them for Granted?

By David Lee

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If you care about employee motivation and morale, this is an important question to ask...

At a supervisory skills seminar I gave last week, a participant who was a new supervisor told the group he realized that he was thanking his people too much and that this was diminishing his credibility.

I was curious about how he “knew” it was diminishing his credibility, and asked him if it was a theory he had or if his employees actually told him this.

Neither was the case. It was the veteran supervisors he worked with who told him “it was a bad thing.”

You Mean Showing Appreciation Is A BAD Thing?

I asked the group for their take on this. Another group member said she has “old school” managers at her company who believe that you shouldn’t thank employees or show appreciation and, she noted:

“It shows... they have incredibly high turnover in their departments.”

Research on employee motivation has shown us time and time again that if you want disengaged employees—employees who don’t care about helping their employer

succeed—taking them for granted is a great way to get there.

Few actions trigger resentment and diminished motivation faster than having one’s hard work, extra effort, and significant contributions taken for granted.

Think of your own experience as an employee. Think of times you worked weekends, put in extra hours, went above and beyond, and never got a simple “thank you.” Think of what you thought about your boss or management in general, and how you felt.

Is Not Bothering To Show Appreciation Really A Big Deal?

According to Tom Rath of the Gallup organization, the #1 reason employees leave is because they don’t feel appreciated. Furthermore, Gallup’s research revealed that 65% of American workers reported that they had received zero recognition in the workplace in the past year.

Thus, having ones work appreciated and recognized is:

- A) Really important
- B) Not happening for the majority of employees

So...If you're interested in high levels of:

- Employee Motivation
- Employee Engagement
- Employee Retention

Here Are Some Actions You Can Take:

1. Let them know that you read this and wondered if you showed enough appreciation. If they say "No", ask for examples of when you dropped the ball. Make it clear that you're not asking them to defend their position. Specific examples increase your ability to recognize future opportunities.
2. Ask each team member how he or she prefers having a boss show appreciation. Ask them if they've had previous supervisors show appreciation in ways that worked for them. Some people like effusive praise, others like an understated, off-hand comment. Most want specific details about what their boss appreciated or recognized as excellent work.
3. Let your team know that you will work on showing more appreciation. By doing this, you remove the awkwardness supervisors often feel when contemplating trying out new behaviors. "What if they think 'Why's she doing this? What... did she go to some seminar?'" By spelling it out, you know they know that you know you're trying something new. Doing this also communicates that you care about how you treat them enough to want to improve.
4. Stay on the lookout for opportunities to show appreciation, such as when an employee goes the extra mile, does an especially good job, works overtime or on weekends makes some other sacrifice, or simply has a great attitude.
5. If you have team members that you truly can't find anything to be appreciative of about them, maybe you need to ask yourself why they're still in your team. It doesn't do you or them any good if you're not happy with their performance. Talk to them about what you want them to improve in and help them get there or get out.
6. When someone from another department does something especially helpful, let them – and their boss – know you appreciate it. In the same seminar mentioned above, a participant said that she makes a habit of "CC:ing" the president of their small company when she emails a thank you email to an employee who did a stellar job. By doing this, she also models mindfulness and appreciation for the president. Thus, the more you show gratitude, the more your recipients – and onlookers – will do the same to others.
7. Cultivate an "Attitude of Gratitude". The more we recognize and appreciate the blessings in our life and the more we express that – especially to the people who bring them – the greater our feeling of goodwill and good cheer. By doing this, we become more of the type of person that uplifts others, simply by our presence. In fact, research by University of Virginia's Rob Cross, PhD and his associates, has shown that people who are perceived as "energizers" are far

more effective than those perceived as de-energizers. In fact, whether a person was seen as an energizer was four times stronger of a predictor of their performance than the next closest variable measured.

By expressing appreciation and gratitude, you increase your energizing effect on others, and become more of a “force for good” in your organization.

Summary

By becoming more mindful of expressing appreciation and gratitude, you can have a

dramatic effect on not just your employees, but your peers and even those above you in your organization.

Recommended Readings:

How Full Is Your Bucket?: Positive Strategies for Work and Life by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton

The Manager's Book of Decencies by Steve Harrison

Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier by Robert Emmons

Comments about David Lee's Work:

"Thank you for doing such an outstanding job keynoting our conference. As you could tell by the response, participants loved both the content and the delivery of your presentation."

Dr. Ian Gawler, Director, The Gawler Foundation, Victoria, Australia

"I've now worked with over 150 presenters since you last were a part of MEBSR's Spring Conference, and still you stand out as the best person we've ever had come and present on how we best work with one another, increase productivity and thrive."

Sanna McKim, Executive Director, Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility, Maine

"Having seen a lot of speakers, I can't tell you just how impressed I was by David. I even waited in line to talk with him... I learned a great deal and laughed my butt off in the process... When we have someone who is so genuine and so well prepared, we owe it to each other to spread the word.... I take it very seriously when I recommend someone else's work and... he's great!"

Naomi Judd

"I was inspired by David's presentation. As onboarding new ladies and gentlemen at the Ritz-Carlton, Hotel Company LLC is one of the cornerstones of our success, I cannot agree more with his statement that, 'Everything you do in onboarding matters'."

Diana Oreck, Vice President Global Learning & Leadership Center, Ritz Carlton, Maryland

"It was a sheer delight to sit back and listen, learn and laugh as David weaved his extensive knowledge of the material with his abundant practical wisdom generously sprinkled with personal reflections, stories and his own wholesome humor. David brings a rare blend of practical knowledge and genuine humanity to his presentations. One cannot help but leave his sessions smarter, and a better human being, as he has a way of touching one's heart as well as one's head."

Bill Gaertner, MD, Wisconsin

"David, I wanted to thank you for being part our show in Las Vegas. The feedback I have received about your sessions was fantastic!!!!!! Three cheers to you."

Julie McNeney, COO, International Council on Active Aging, Vancouver, BC

"Your presentation on resiliency is extraordinary. I left with a specific action plan for improving the quality of my daily life. Your kindness, your knowledge, and your energy combined for a helpful and inspirational workshop."

Brenda Foster, Director of Communications, Healthwise, Idaho

"Without you realizing, David woos you into learning by appealing to what you naturally know to be true by your own experience. He's incredibly down to earth and balances stories, humor, statistics and research to engage his audience in a time defying way. His programs will benefit anyone looking to gain awareness, passion and spirit in the workplace (and beyond). I was so riveted and inspired that when David said he was wrapping up his program, I was dumbfounded by how much time had passed. I was convinced my watch was mistakenly an hour ahead. Thank you, David, for following your passion & curiosity from which we greatly benefit."

Krista Irmischer, Human Resources Manager, Jøtul North America, Maine

"What makes David unique is his ability to take analytical information, creatively apply it to real life workplace situations, and then deliver it in a really fun way."

Fran Liataud, DialogueWorks, Maine

"David's unique blend of humor and professionalism provides an engaging forum to absorb the content of his presentation. David does not hesitate to encourage participation and captures the audiences attention consistently throughout the seminar. I left the seminar feeling that this experience was well worth the time and money."

Dennis Hebert, Jr., President, Merrimack Valley Chapter of the NH Credit Union League, New Hampshire

"David's presentation style is unparalleled! The substantive and timely content of his subject materials is immediately adaptable to the workplace making his seminars an invaluable aid to an employer seeking to be an "Employer of Choice."

Lynn M. Lombard, VP, MMG Insurance Company, Maine

"I can honestly say that your sessions were highlights for me at the conference. Since then I have perused your website and read many of the articles posted on there. Again, thank you and kudos to you for the great presentation!"

Rob Huppée, Amica Mature Lifestyles Inc., Vancouver, British Columbia