



*The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.*

This is true in our personal lives as well as our professional ones. There is loads of research to back this up.

These are just a few data points- the first of which we've seen before.

69% of people say they would work harder if they were better recognized.

79% of people say that lack of recognition is a major reason why they left their last job.

Look at this last one-

68% of Americans say they weren't recognized even once over the course of an entire year.

No wonder so many are leaving.

Often when we talk about feedback our minds go to critical feedback, and of course that's a part of it. But praise is a very important part of it, too.

There are different data points out there about how much praise you should be giving compared to criticism. I've seen 3:1, 5:1, even 10:1. I can't give you an exact number, but what I can say is you should be praising your staff far more than you're giving them critical feedback.

You need to make praise and recognition a central component of how you work with your team. Here are some questions for you to consider because again every one of your staff is an individual.

Just like they're going to want to receive critical feedback in their own way, they're also going to want to be praised in their own way.

Think about what your staff cares about and ask them.

Remember we talked about understanding what their goals are- their current goals, their personal goals, their long term goals- and how can you show them that you're recognizing the growth they're making toward those goals.

What are they proud of?

What would they feel most special receiving recognition on?

I remember in one of my jobs, I was running that Community Center and I was so passionate about the programs. I was new at it and I wanted to get better at it. Unfortunately, my supervisor never came out to see what I was doing, so when it came time to give me feedback the only feedback they ever gave me was based on what they



knew of my work which was my admin and my paperwork.

Yes, it was a compliment. It was nice to hear that I was doing it well, but I didn't really care about admin and I didn't really care about the paperwork.

What I cared about was my work at the community center and I never got any praise around that.

Make sure you are praising your staff on things that they really care about.

What do they want?

How do they want to be praised?

There are lots of ways to show praise and you want to make sure you're catering it to what your staff wants.

Each of your staff is going to have a preference for one of those ways.

It's helpful for you to think about what should be celebrated, recognized, or appreciated.

Do you recognize when goals are met or only when they're exceeded?

Do you celebrate maybe not in the feedback sense but in the celebration sense people's personal celebrations as well, or do you keep it work related?

How do you keep it fair and honest?

A lot of times what supervisors will do is they'll praise an entire team for the work of one or two. Or they'll punish an entire team for the mistakes of one or two.

In many teams, you're going to have superstars who are deserving of a lot of recognition and praise.

How do you offer that in a way that doesn't cause resentment and that is fair to the rest of the team?

Are you only ever recognizing results or do you also recognize effort?

Do you praise and recognize mistakes when people take chances and risks in the name of growth and getting better?

These are great conversations to have with your staff.

What is a collective understanding on your team? What are some individual differences across the different members of your team?



Learn how they want to be praised both as a team and as individuals. Some of your staff will want a banner and a party and a parade when they are praised. This will mortify some of your other staff who want something much more private.

Do you go above and beyond with that parade or party or is it a simple word of acknowledgment, a note, or a card?

Are you just focusing on accomplishment?

Are you also recognizing effort and a simple thank you for the work that they're doing?

In addition to the feedback you're giving there are lots of ways to celebrate your team.

Lots of times managers will go directly to gifts.

Gifts are nice, but what the research shows is the three main things people want for gifts are:

- 1) your words and your acknowledgement. That you are taking the time to recognize and show them that you appreciate them.
- 2) money
- 3) time off

I know you can't wrap any of these and it might not feel as good to be the giver of those things, but believe me, your staff will really appreciate it.

With objective feedback, subjective feedback, critical feedback, or praise, the principles are the same. You want to be specific. Just saying good job or just saying thank you is something but it doesn't give your staff an idea about exactly what you're praising them on.

You want to highlight the behaviors you want to see continue, so be specific.

*Thank you for getting your report in on time.*

*Thank you for making your presentation so inclusive and interactive and leading the discussion after your slides.*

Or whatever.

Make it collaborative. You want your staff to be able to recognize themselves too. That all the praise just doesn't come from you. That they learn to celebrate and recognize and advocate and share their own areas of praise and recognition.

As you recognize what's happened in the past, tie that into the future, how to continue to



see that behavior or action continue in the future.

Always focus on growth.

Reinforce what you want to continue to see.

Don't ignore your superstars. Very often managers will spend all of their time on staff who are underperforming. They start to take for granted all the amazing work their superstars do.

I worked for someone once who never praised me on anything and after two and a half years. I broached the subject. They told me 'you're a very competent person and I don't want to insult you by praising you for something you're expected to do.'

It's certainly one way to go about it.

It wasn't a way that I responded to well.

Don't ignore your superstars. If they continue to do amazing work, continue to praise and acknowledge it. Give them opportunities to recognize themselves.

One of the best, most productive activities I did with my staff when it came to performance review time is, I asked them to send me a list of their accomplishments throughout the year. I would let them know to track them over the course of the year. I of course was tracking them too, but I wanted them to build self-awareness and to learn to advocate for themselves and to be able to show that to other people.

*Look at what I've done.*

Just like you're creating a culture of feedback, you want to create a culture of appreciation. To cultivate opportunities for your staff to praise each other. It's great if they praise you too, but just like with feedback you want that praise and appreciation to go in all directions. Once you learn to do this, once you show your staff how grateful you are that you value them and what they do, that you value them as human beings, that you recognize and take the time to appreciate all of the wonderful things they do and the wonderful people that they are, your culture of appreciation and your feedback culture is going to create an atmosphere where people thrive.

You are going to thrive too.