

Trafton International Management Consulting Group



Solomon M. Uwadiale, Ph.D.

LD Article Volume 02-15

WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT FOR SOME LEADERS TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION AND GIVE PRAISE EFFECTIVELY?

By Solomon M. Uwadiale, Ph.D

Naturally, we all know that genuine compliments and appreciation are key factors in building sustainable relationships with people. Most of us don't receive enough appreciation and praise from our leaders in the workplace, in spite of the fact that we all love to get sincere recognition for a job well done.

Research has shown that one of the reasons people leave their jobs is because they feel unappreciated and leaders clearly need to understand the implications of their behavior and find a way to be more comfortable in giving praise to people that deserve it. I have watched much of CBS's "Undercover Boss" and have seen how some of the employees are overflowing with joy when the undercover boss reveals their identity as the CEO of the company and expresses appreciation to the employee. One of the most recurring expressions from the employees is that "they are not being appreciated enough" by the leaders.

According to a Gallup Survey of more than 10,000 business units and more than 30 industries has found that employees who receive regular recognition and praise:

- Increase their individual productivity significantly.
- Increase engagement among their colleagues.
- Have greater employee satisfaction.
- Are more likely to stay with the organization.
- Have lower employee turnover.

Question: Why is it that most leaders find it difficult to express appreciation and praise publicly and even more so privately? The reason is deep-seated because of their background growing up in a household where praise was not a practiced thing. I have coached some leaders that find it somehow embarrassing to praise others. I cannot really remember when my dad praised me for doing a good job when growing up but I can tell you when I was disciplined for not doing my household chores.

Giving praise is a learned behavior and recognition and praise are fundamental human needs. We all want to be appreciated for work well done, especially in the workplace. So, leaders need to unlearn the behavior of withholding praise in the workplace if they want to bring out the best in people and maintain a high-performing culture.

Here are some suggestions on how to express appreciation and give praise:

1. Make your praise memorable, specific and genuine. State exactly what you are recognizing the individual for and express the value of their contribution to the organization to make the praise more memorable and impactful.
2. Learn not to delay your expression of appreciation or wait until the individual's annual performance review. Deliver your praise to the individual and don't try to follow it up with any conversation about their review. It is more impactful to separate the two from each other. Allow the individual to enjoy the recognition and appreciation without mixing it up with his/her annual performance review. It does not take that long to say thank you for a job well done. It will take only five seconds out of your busy schedule.
3. Look for ways to express your appreciation and not just focus on looking for things that are going wrong. I can assure you when you focus on looking for problems you will find them. Learn to praise more often because the more you praise individuals sincerely, the more they learn and understand what's important to you, the team and the organization as a whole.
4. Learn to extend your praise appropriately in relation to everyone's different personalities, styles and motivations. Some of us like to be praised publicly to enjoy the limelight or glory, but on the other hand, some of us just want be acknowledged with a simple thank you in private.
5. Learn how to show your appreciation and respect to others by giving them appropriate assignments based on their knowledge and expertise. It is very important for people to feel that they have been accorded the respect and appreciation they are owed, and that they are leading important projects/assignments due to their expertise and leadership abilities. So, appreciation doesn't have to be verbal or written. It can also be in a form of respect for the individual.

In conclusion, it is our responsibility as leaders to practice this behavior of expressing appreciation and praise others more often until we are comfortable doing it. To become comfortable, we must practice the behavior all the time. The ultimate appreciation is letting people know that they matter and their contributions to the organization matter also. Remember, leadership is all about people and relationships, and it is important that we understand the value of making people feel great about themselves.

Your Next Move:

Please check out our upcoming Leadership Development Workshops at www.trafton-group.com Click on Conferences/Workshops. Thanks! Sol...

Solomon M. Uwadiae, Ph.D. is a management consultant, principal of Trafton International Consulting Group, executive coach and global strategist, who consults with Fortune 500 companies as well as public sector enterprises to help develop integrated leadership strategies that positively impact business practices throughout the organization. He partners with organizations to be more efficient and effective to increase their bottom-line (profit) Solomon has more than 25 years of experience working with both private and public sector organizations, domestically and internationally. He is the author of **Public Leadership: How Public Leaders Achieved Extraordinary Performance Results, Opportunities Created By Customer Complaints: Using Customer Complaints As Your Free Research and The Rules of Engagement**. You can contact Sol through e-mail: sol@trafton-group.com or visit his website at www.trafton-group.com.