

SKILL BOOSTER 3 : GIVING PRAISE



REIGNITE DEVELOPMENT
Reflect, Refocus, Results

Introduction

When was the last time someone praised you at work? How did they praise you? What was said? How did you feel? We all know how good we feel when someone thanks us, or tells us we've done a good job. Studies consistently show that getting "appreciation for work done" is what many team members most want from their jobs.

Giving people feedback in the form of praise is an example of day-to-day recognition. It costs nothing and is highly desired but is not practised nearly enough. Perhaps this is because we don't know how to praise or we're not aware of what the benefits are of praising our teams.

What is Praise?

Praise is not the same as a compliment. Telling a team member that you like their new jacket is a compliment. Telling a team member that their skills at resolving customer complaints is a valuable asset to the company is praising effectively. The purpose of praise is to modify behaviour, encouraging more of the positive behaviours from people.

Benefits of providing constructive praise

- Boosts morale
- Can help retain top performers
- Sets a good example
- Builds strong relationships
- Reinforces a positive organisational culture
- Can increase team member commitment
- Can help motivate your people – they feel valued
- Can increase productivity, results and profits
- Reinforces the positive behaviours you want to see being repeated
- Helps communicate expectations to the rest of your team

Guidelines to help you in the art of giving effective praise

Proportion

Praising a team member too frequently or too rarely will dilute the effectiveness. Some people have a higher need for praise than others, for example new team members or those who may lack self confidence may require a higher frequency of praise, but equally don't forget your longer serving team members – they need praise too.

Appropriate

There are many ways to say thank you and well done, choose something that fits the deed. Know your team – know what works for each person – remember that some team members would appreciate public praise whereas others would hate the attention and would much prefer a quiet word.

Immediate

Praise should be immediate, recognise good performance when it happens. Do not wait until your team member's appraisal or review to praise them for things they have done well.

Specific

A vague "thanks for your help today" is OK (and better than no praise), but better to be more specific e.g. "I really appreciated the support you gave to Zoe our new starter today in her cocktail training. You explained it really clearly and simply and it made a real impact on her, thank you". It's important to give details of what has been achieved.

Effective

If praise isn't something that happens in your team, there's a strong temptation for team members to gloss over it, encourage your team to say thank you when they receive it rather than "Oh it's nothing, it's just my job".

Never use praise followed by criticism or you will lose the effectiveness of everything you have just achieved. E.g., "I appreciated the support you gave to Zoe our new starter today, shame you can't do that with all our new starters. If you're giving praise - make the praise 100% positive.

Final Thought...

As a leader of people, you should want to facilitate a work environment which encourages all team members to bring their best ideas and initiative to work. Positive reinforcement is an essential tool for encouraging the behaviours that you want to see. Praise may not come easily or naturally to you right now, but if you want successful performers, you've got to praise – and that in turn will make it more likely that you will be praised in return.