

The Secret Every Leader Needs to Know

I'd like to share with you a leadership secret – a way to boost the morale of your team and motivate them toward excellence. Perhaps like no other aspect of leadership, this one behavior can supercharge your team!

The ERC (Employers Resource Council) compiled a list of characteristics of “Great Workplaces that Excel at the Attraction, Retention, and Motivation of Top Performers” based on 15 years of surveys and interviews. (“HR Insights Blog” ERC (Employers Resource Council), 5-Sep-2013 (12-Aug-2014)).

The leadership secret that I want to reveal today corresponds with an attribute in the ERC report.

Leadership Secret:

Every leader can develop a great workplace by incorporating recognition and praise into their culture.

ERC noted the following about great workplaces:

“Great workplaces show they appreciate and value employees and their contributions. They celebrate success often, and praise, recognize, and reward employees in a variety of formal and informal ways. They never miss an opportunity to say ‘thanks’ for employees’ hard work.”

My Take:

When I was a young leader, I developed the habit of looking for opportunities to publicly give someone credit for doing a great job. I always look for a reason to recognize, praise and to say thank you to an employee.

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is

in your power to act” (Prov. 3:27, NIV).

There are two ways to foster a habit of recognition.

Informal

One way to practice recognition is informal. As a leader, I developed a casual but intentional habit of walking around and talking with our people. During these impromptu conversations, I would listen for positive accomplishments or behavior that was notable.

Then I’d routinely complement the positive behavior to the person and I’d mention it to others in the company. This served to inspire the original person and others that I described their behavior to.

If I heard “Bob” say something positive about “Jimmy,” I would go to Jimmy and let him know about the positive thing that Bob said about him. I became the conduit for positive affirmations and compliments – always ready to pass along and echo favorable comments. This really helped to align the team and increase employee satisfaction and morale.

Formal

Another way to encourage the habit of recognition is through formal awards. Our company set up a number of ways and awards to encourage and recognize our people. These practices and structures served to reinforce excellence and promote self-esteem throughout the entire organization.

Here’s a list of ways in which our business recognizes employees at company-wide meetings/gatherings:

- VIP (Values in Practice) Awards – Given from one employee to another when they see them practicing a company core value.
- Skill and the Will Awards (formally known as a Success Story) – Given to an employee when a good remark comes from a

customer.

- Length of Service Recognition – Given to employees in five-year increments.
- Department Goals Met – Recognize employees in the sales department and the operations department for meeting their perspective departmental goals.
- Log Book Masters Awards – Drivers are recognized when they have submitted on-time, complete and accurate log books.
- One Degree Difference Maker Awards – The military/government traffic department has an award they give, cross-company, where they determine who has made the biggest difference in that quarter.
- QIC-Spotlight (QIC is pronounced “Quick” and stands for “Quality is Contiguous.”) – Given when one employee wants to publicly say “thank you” to another employee.

Once you get your award systems defined and in place, they become guides that help you keep your team motivated and the company going in the right direction.

As leaders, we have a great opportunity to shape our culture by the way we recognize and praise our team.

What about you? How do you recognize, praise and reward your team?

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Bobby Albert started his leadership journey as the young president of his family's five-person business. That small business became a 150+ person organization that he eventually sold to a publicly traded company. He spent decades learning how (and how not) to lead and motivate his people. Bobby coaches and guides Christian business leaders, encouraging them to engage their minds and hearts to improve their

effectiveness. Bobby uses biblically-based principles and practices to tackle the every-day challenges faced by today's leader.

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