

Be A Praise Dispenser:

Employ the Power of Praise to Reward and Incent



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Be A Praise Dispenser: Employ the Power of Praise to Reward and Incent

Written by Craig Harrison

Workplace surveys constantly remind us that what employees realistically want more than money, titles and corner offices, is recognition and appreciation. They want to be noticed. They want to be appreciated. They want recognition for their efforts. So simple, yet so wanting.

What does it cost to praise an employee, recognize a colleague or acknowledge appreciation of someone else's efforts? According to Cindy Ventrice, author of *Make Their Day! Employee Recognition That Works*: "57 percent of the most meaningful recognition received is absolutely free. No budget, special equipment or legislation is required. Just a willingness to extend oneself."

Many coaching clients confide in me their manager doesn't recognize them or their relationship partner isn't praiseworthy, and thus they feel unappreciated. Yet when I ask them if they praise their own direct reports, or compliment their mate, they sheepishly reply: "On occasion." Other times they murmur: "That's not my style" or simply say "They know I appreciate them." Herein lies the problem.

Some of us grew up in environments devoid of positive feedback. We've come to believe we either don't deserve it, or perhaps

convince ourselves we don't need it. We tell ourselves: "I'm tough, I'm strong." After all, we're adults. We're professionals! We don't need the strokes or handholding. Payment is our reward. Yet our ability to receive praise when given feeds our foundation of success.

The Power of Praise

A heartfelt compliment, genuine kudos or a well-placed pat on the back goes a long way toward expressing the appreciation you feel. American humorist, writer and playwright Mark Twain stated it well: "I can live for two months on a good compliment."

There's power in the praise you give to those in your life. And a funny thing happens, too. When you give it to others you get it back in return. Whether recognition comes from the party you praised, or elsewhere, payback is a beautiful thing!

Payment in Praise

Let's face it, most managers don't have lavish budgets to dispense bonuses for employees doing things right or performing roles well. They can't give workers promotions to new offices, extra vacation time or fanciful titles as rewards for commendable performance. But they can certainly lavish them with well-deserved praise, both publicly and privately. It's a powerful form of currency we as humans are under-utilizing.

According to Dr. Elayne Savage, Psychotherapist, communication coach and author of *Don't take it personally — The art of dealing with rejection*: "Praise is both a reward and a motivation. If we

don't get rewarded for certain behavior we'll start slacking off. We don't try quite as hard or put as much energy or time into it. We all want the attention. The bottom line: we need that validation, whether we admit it or not. We need the reward."

Dr. Savage continues: "Praise is also a motivator to do more things, think out of the box, be creative, or whatever we've been complimented on. We enhance those qualities. That's why it's important to be specific when giving praise. Specific praise given will inform the direction a person grows in. They receive it and decide Oh, this is what's important!"

Not All Praise Is Equal!

The power of praise derives from the combination of words spoken and their source. When your buddy says "good job" it may not carry the same cache as a similar acknowledgement from your club president or area governor. In the work world recognition from managers (from supervisor to senior management) accounts for a full 70 percent of the most meaningful recognition employees receive, according to workplace recognition expert Cindy Ventrice.

So be advised: your words of support of other carry the weight of what you say, how you say it, who else hears it and who you, the issuer of the praise, is. If you, as a leader, praise a newcomer it will simultaneously encourage and inspire them. It also has a positive ripple effect throughout your department.

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PEZ: Praise & Encourage with Zeal

Ultimately, we as leaders, like those popular Pez candy dispensers, can reward achievement with praise and also leave a sweet taste on achievers' mouths that leaves them poised to earn more!

Putting the Power of Praise into Action: Steps to Success

- Identify colleagues, co-workers and others who are praiseworthy.
- Now deliver heartfelt praise, whether privately or publicly.
- Don't combine praise with criticism — it diminishes or even negates the praise.
- Beware of hyperbole. Simply give your praise honestly and with love.
("He who praises everybody, praises nobody." — Samuel Johnson)
- See the reaction of the person you are praising.
- Meanwhile, how do you feel when you have praised someone else?

Congratulations, you've just become a Praise Dispenser and created a win-win. Praise be thou!!!

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