

## Introduction —

Enjoyment, fun, laughter, recognition, appreciation . . . these are the things that we can't get enough of. These are things that contribute to the quality of our lives. These are things that we can contribute to our workplaces to help enhance our own lives and the lives of those around us.

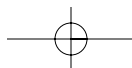
I began to study this very important topic: appreciation. People are hungry—starving—for it. Recognition and appreciation for a job well done is a key motivator for employees. But many managers don't understand how powerful it is, and they often don't think about giving that recognition. Supervisors have a great influence on employees' performance and a huge impact on their effectiveness at work. Studies have shown that people who enjoy their work are more productive and creative, in addition to experiencing greater job satisfaction. (HR Focus, February, 1993)

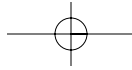
The 1980's research conducted by Kenneth Kovach and the 1990's research by Bob Nelson showed that there was divergent thinking of what supervisors believed their employees wanted from their jobs and what the employees said was important. The supervisors believed that the top motivational factors were:

- Good wages
- Job security
- Promotion/growth opportunities
- Good working conditions
- Interesting work (*Nelson and Spitzer, 2003*)

On the contrary, the employees said the following were what motivated them:

- Full appreciation for work done
- Feeling “in” on things
- Sympathetic help on personal problems
- Job Security
- Good Wages (*Nelson and Spitzer, 2003*)





There is also a correlation between the way employees are treated and the way they treat those around them. People frequently leave jobs when they don't feel appreciated, and are less productive prior to their departure. Rather than attending to the job at hand, they are focused on preparing their résumés for their next move.

I talked with a woman who had been a student in one of my graduate classes. She taught kindergarten and was truly a master teacher. I would want all students to start their education with her. In our conversation, I asked how her school year was going, and she said that she had left teaching and was now selling insurance. In shock, I asked why and she told me, ***because I wasn't appreciated.*** She felt that the principal and the parents didn't appreciate everything that she had put into the job, so she left. What a sad statement.

A friend of mine worked for a countywide educational service center. He had successfully written a large, competitive federal grant proposal that was awarded to the district. He expected and awaited the many *atta boys* that this accomplishment deserved, but they didn't come. He continued his professional pursuits and published a book for classroom teachers. Certainly that would get him the praise he deserved. But the acknowledgment was minimal. Then, one day, it happened! An event took place that drew great attention his way. Staff members stopped by his office all day, a long banner was hung in the hall, a blurb went into the office newsletter, and at last, the long awaited and hoped for occurred—the Superintendent stopped by to extend his congratulations. What had my friend done to warrant such attention and accolades? *He won the Super Bowl pool.* That's it! He won the football pool. It was on that day that he decided to look for another job where his professional achievements would be appreciated.

It is going to become increasingly important to retain good staff members, especially in the educational arena. Education is facing huge teacher shortages that will only escalate in the future. It is predicted that the U.S. will need 2.4 million new teachers by 2008–09 due to attrition, retirements, and increased student enrollments. That number increases to as high as 2.7 million when factors such as declining student/teacher ratios are factored in based on nationwide

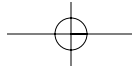


class size reduction efforts (*National Center for Education Statistics Predicting the Need for Newly Hired in the U.S. for 2008–09*).

The teaching profession experiences a high turnover rate. Twenty percent of all new hires leave teaching within three years (*National Center for Education Statistics*) and in urban districts, close to 50 percent leave within their first five years of teaching (*Darling-Hammond & Schlan, 1996*). In a typical year, an estimated 6 percent of the teaching force leaves the profession and more than 7 percent change schools (*National Center for Education Statistics*). Creating a work environment that is fun and where appreciation is shown is crucial.

Typically, those entering the workforce today do not feel the same level of commitment to their employers that previous workers have felt. HR directors share stories with each other about the creative, yet unprofessional ways in which people have left their jobs (e.g., sending their boss a cake with a resignation letter inside, sending the message via a singing telegram, or writing *I Quit* in the snow on the windshield of the boss' car.) You can even go to a website ([www.Iquit.org](http://www.Iquit.org)) that will e-mail your resignation to your boss. In one of the districts where I worked, a principal faxed in his resignation after his first week on the job.





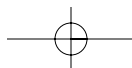
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average worker has about nine jobs by the age of thirty-two. Companies invest a tremendous amount of money in training their employees. They lose \$20,000–30,000 for each high school graduate who is hired, trained, and then leaves—and the figure for college graduates is \$40,000–50,000. People quit when they are unhappy, and when jobs are available, there isn't a need for them to stay in a job and be unhappy. Acceptance, recognition of contributions, and encouragement of personal growth help to create employee loyalty . . . and retention. As an administrator I wanted to ensure that the best educators stayed in our district and that the best would want to come there as well. I wanted to make my building the most joyous place to work so that my staff would look forward to being there and would enjoy their jobs.

Elements of a recognition and appreciation program include:

### **Staff members should be part of the development and implementation of the program.**

I presented my idea for a Staff Recognition Program to my boss and four counterparts and it met with semi-acceptance: one of the men responded that we already showed our appreciation every other Friday when the staff members received their paychecks. But there is a huge difference between *compensation* and *recognition*. *Compensation* is what employees receive for the job assigned to them—it's money—financial. *Recognition*, on the other hand, is what they receive for efforts that are above and beyond. It is praise from supervisors, peers, or subordinates. It's non-financial. People want and need the compensation, but recognition of a job well done can be an even stronger motivator at work.

Before initiating the program I conducted a survey of the staff to find out how they wanted to be recognized. I then created a committee comprised of members from each employee group to develop and implement the program, and found that just including staff



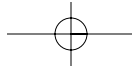
members in the process was a method of recognition in itself. You can provide structure by helping the group members set their goals, but let them plan the program. The program then becomes theirs and not management's. Likely there will not be much of a budget allocated for these activities, so this group needs to be one that will have creative minds working for successful outcomes on a shoestring. And although managers think appreciation has to be "budgeted," a thoughtful sincere, spontaneous expression of appreciation can be just as effective as one that appears on a spreadsheet.

### **Recognition and rewards need to come in a variety of forms depending on the individual recipient.**

Each person is unique and because of that, the way we want others to treat us is not universal. It's not a "one size fits all." No longer does the saying, *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you* hold true. What holds true for you may not hold true for another person. Therefore, it is important to figure out what types of appreciation/recognition activities are meaningful to the recipients. So, *Do unto others as **they** would have you do unto them.* Giving recognition in a manner that is not meaningful to the individual has little impact.



"This is nice, but I would have preferred a cash award."



Some people are auditorily oriented, some visually oriented, and others kinesthetically oriented; these individual differences affect how each person likes to receive recognition.

## **Auditory —**

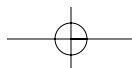
People in this category want to *hear* the recognition—they want to have you tell them or somebody else about their achievements or accomplishments. I once made the comment to the staff that I would rather receive praise than a raise. Many people disagreed, but for me the rewards of the job were not monetary.

When I was an undergraduate student, a professor challenged me when he said, *Give three genuine compliments a day and your life will be greatly changed.* Well, I didn't believe it, but I was willing to try this as an experiment for a week or so. Wow—was I in for a surprise! What I found was that, until then, many compliments had remained in my head; I had never given them to the person. I love Ken Blanchard's quote, *Good thoughts not delivered mean squat.* So I made an effort to tell the person what I was thinking. What a difference it made in my life—and theirs.

It came back the other way when I was going to my high school reunion. I went to an affluent high school; however, I had made it into the school district's boundaries by one street, and my parents were not affluent. My classmates had gone on to be doctors, dentists, CEO's, and although I had a Ph.D., the title of "doctor" in my name didn't pay much. I just wanted to go to the reunion with dignity. An hour before it started I was still trying on the half-dozen different outfits I had brought with me. As I was walking out of the hotel a woman stopped me and said, *You look lovely!* Did that give me an air of confidence? Did I walk into that reunion knowing I had selected the perfect outfit? Oh, yes! That lady had no idea what a difference her three words made to me.

So I pass the challenge on to you: Give three genuine compliments a day, and your life will be greatly changed. Try it!

Be aware of how you deliver the message—there is more to it than just saying the right words. Communication studies show that



55 percent of any message is delivered through non-verbal communication, 38 percent by the way you say it (the inflection in your voice), and 7 percent by the actual words you use.

## Visual —

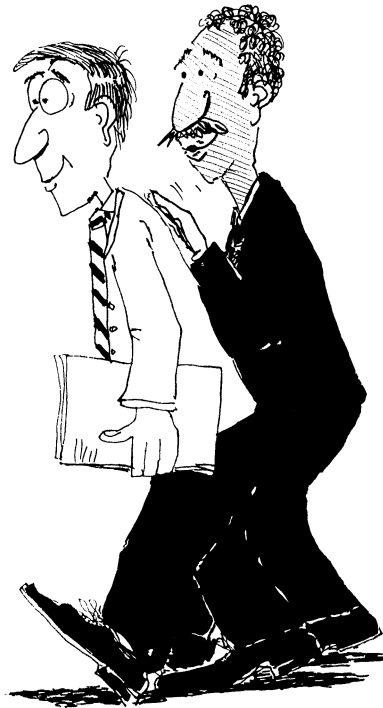
To show appreciation to someone who is visual calls for physical items such as certificates, plaques, letters, cards, smiles, awards, memos, gifts, etc.



I worked with a wonderful man who was also very frustrating. Because I had such high regard for him, his approval and disapproval had meaning; however, he never learned to praise those who worked for him. I struggled to gain his professional approval, but giving compliments was not a natural part of his being. Yet it was the essence of mine. I once had prepared a report for him and when it was returned to me, *Nice Job!* and his initials were written on the cover page. I was ecstatic. I framed this page and kept it tucked inside my desk drawer. I worked for him for fifteen years, and those two words from him helped keep my spirits up through many challenges.

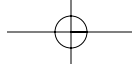
## Kinesthetic —

Other people are kinesthetic and are more touch oriented. They need a sensory experience through physical connection and motion. They like to have appreciation expressed through a pat on the back, a handshake, or a hug. Dr. Virginia Satir, an internationally known therapist, said, *Everyone feels skin hunger through their lives,*



*and unless that hunger is satisfied by touching, there's a vital void in the emotional make-up that's going to cause deep unhappiness. We all know that babies thrive on frequent stroking. Well, adults are no different. When they are not patted on the hand, embraced around the shoulder or hugged, they withdraw into themselves. I prescribe four hugs a day for survival, eight for maintenance, and twelve for growth. Choose the recipients of this form of recognition carefully so that the appreciation is not mistaken for sexual harassment.*





## **The program should be visible to others— coworkers, community, customers, students, etc.**

***Be proud out loud.*** The program should be both public and published. Get notice of the recognition to as many people and sources as you can think of, e.g., cable news channel, notes home to the family, banners, newsletter articles, memos, etc. This gives the recipient recognition from people both at work and in the community.

## **Change the program frequently so that it's fresh with new ideas and activities.**

The same thing over and over again becomes routine and starts to lack the luster. Keep the creativity alive so that it stays interesting—and fun. Make sure the activities are consistent with the organization's philosophy and goals, but try to keep things lively with variety.

The first section of the book focuses on Appreciation and Recognition Activities. The next two sections are filled with ideas for fun things that can be implemented at work to make it an enjoyable environment. Walt Disney's quote says it all. *You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful place in the world, but it takes people to make the dream a reality. People rarely succeed at things they don't have fun at.*

Many of the ideas in this book were implemented in the districts where I was employed, but additional ones were sent to me from other organizations. Use these suggestions to develop a program and an environment where everyone will be ***Looking Forward to Monday Morning.*** Drive your colleagues **HAPPY!**

