

Appreciation: approval, positive reception, admiration, enjoyment, pleasure, gratitude.

“Feeling Under-Appreciated In Your Current Role?” This was the catchy title of a professional services firm’s recent job ad in a major newspaper. The firm is tapping into the growing research on what it takes to attract and keep good people, and to build a great organisation where people enjoy working. For example, the Gallup Organization’s research reveals that appreciation is one of the leading factors in enhancing employee engagement, performance and wellbeing.

A friend - who is highly effective in their organisation – recently told me their story about feeling undervalued and underappreciated by their boss and colleagues. I hear similar stories repeated by many others. For example, these comments from clients:

“Around here, it seems that the problem people or the ones who yell loudest get all the attention, but if you’re doing a great job you’re ignored.”

“My boss is so busy, they have no time to meet with me and the other executive leaders.”

“We meet to discuss the problems at work, the stresses and urgent issues – there is no time acknowledging or appreciating what’s working well, or what we’re good at.”

They are all grown-ups, high-performers, holding senior positions at work. The pattern is similar: disappointment which dampens their enthusiasm and capacity to do a great job, or worse, leading to thoughts of leaving the organisation altogether. This damage has a ripple effect through the organisation. At the core of this issue for all these people is a common denominator: *appreciation*.

No matter what their age, level, role: everyone wants a little individual appreciation; wants to feel valued for who they are and what they do. Developing a climate of appreciation in people, teams and organisations leads to better performance, more engaged workers, more satisfied staff. It lifts the individual and collective mood – it’s infectious. It creates an attractive place where people want to work. It impacts customers and clients. And it’s not hard to do.

At the **Gallup Leadership Summit** in Washington D.C. earlier this month, I heard some interesting CEO panel discussions about the importance of friendship at work. These CEOs are leading large, profitable organisations. There was universal agreement about the importance of appreciation: pay attention to people; show respect; value them; build their self-esteem. Bill George, former CEO and now Professor of Management Practice, Harvard Business School & author of *Authentic Leadership* commented that:

- “Leadership is closely linked to one’s humanity: By accepting and embracing this, leaders can appreciate the humanity and potential of others and connect with, attract, and motivate them”
- “Leadership is a human undertaking, not a scientific undertaking”
- “Authentic human connections engender trust, a critical ingredient leaders must have with people”
- “The motivation of people depends on human connectedness”

At the **Positive Psychology Summit** also in Washington D.C. earlier this month, a number of presentations tapped into importance of appreciation and ‘looking for what’s right’. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, a great presenter and author of the very interesting book “The Happiness Hypothesis”, talked about the importance of humans as social beings. ‘Do unto others’ is fundamental to success; information flows better between friends; “am I working for myself or would I take a bullet for these guys”. Appreciation - valuing each other – is the building block for successful workplace relationships.

Tom Rath, from the Gallup Organization, writes in his book “Vital Friends”: “All employees deserve a manager who cares about their general wellbeing. The bottom line is that we spend roughly 50% more time with our customers, co-workers, and bosses than we do with our friends, significant others, children and other relatives combined. If you want to be happier and more engaged at work, consider developing a few strong friendships at the office, maybe even with your boss.”

Building Appreciation....

In working with clients to build a climate of appreciation in the workplace, my local and international colleagues and I take a multi-pronged approach. It's more than just helping people to say "thank you, job well done". It's about:

1. Helping individuals to understand the concept of appreciation for self and others; how to build and attract; how to develop this in their teams
2. Helping leaders and managers understand the concept of appreciation and its importance to organisational success; how to build the necessary skills and behaviours in themselves, their staff and their teams
3. Helping process owners and executive leaders to take a strategic view of appreciation across the organisation, how to engender an overall climate to support leaders and teams

Questions to ask yourself:

- When things go well for a colleague, boss or member of your team, how do you respond or react? Do you build on that achievement and show interest? Do you value their unique abilities and strengths? Are you specific in commenting on what they do well or how they contribute?
- Do you seek too much appreciation? When's enough enough?
- Are you too busy focusing on pressures, problems and stresses to take time to notice and appreciate what's right?
- Is showing appreciation an expected behaviour in your organisation? What's being done about it?
- Do you understand the business benefits?

The best managers and leaders find ways to make everyone feel uniquely appreciated – in an authentic way.

About this email...

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