

RECOGNITION

“When someone does something good, applaud! You will make two people happy.”

– Sam Goldwyn

Imagine you are a new member of an organization. You volunteer to coordinate a big project and put hours and hours of work into it. The event comes and is a huge success. You walk into the next group meeting beaming with pride, half-expecting a party to be thrown in your honor. But no one makes mention of your event – not one word! How do you feel?

Recognition is an important part of success in our country. As a wise person once said, a pat on the back is only a few vertebrae above a kick in the pants – but what a difference it makes! Sometimes it is easier to point out flaws than to congratulate success. We need to turn this around!

There are four elements of recognition:

- Acknowledgment. It is so basic, but so important.
- Attention. Give time and energy to supporting your group members.
- Feedback. There are two forms: positive and negative. Make yours constructive.
- Praise and criticism. Be specific, timely and appropriate.

Searching for ways to give recognition? You do not have to hold a formal dinner in someone’s honor or dig deep into your pocketbook to recognize the accomplishments of others. Brainstorm different ways to show appreciation. Be creative! Here are some ideas to get the brainstorming process rolling:

- Mention the accomplishment in your group newsletter or memo.
- Email the person (and copy the rest of the group) to thank her for a job well done.
- Allow him to discuss the success in the next group meeting.
- Greet each member by name.
- Smile and make eye contact.
- Make a poster to honor someone.
- Praise her in front of others.
- Volunteer to write a letter of recommendation.
- Ask for his ideas and opinions.
- Make an award, certificate or button.
- Enlist her to train others.
- Take time to talk.
- Take him out for coffee.
- Bake goodies for the next group meeting.
- Select a “Member of the Month” – post her photo and a description of her accomplishments in the office.
- Plan social events.

- Send a thank you note.
- Nominate him for awards.
- Say “we missed you” when someone is gone or ill.
- Provide support.
- Applaud.

Don't be afraid to ask the person how she would like to be rewarded. Due to cultural differences, personal preferences or shyness, some people will be truly embarrassed or upset by public recognition. If she tells you she would rather just have her accomplishment mentioned in the newsletter rather than a round of thunderous applaud, be considerate of that.

Sometimes you will have people in your group who do not accomplish a great deal or are not especially outstanding, yet they are faithful to the group and always willing to help. Do not forget to recognize them too!

One of the most effective, non-threatening forms of recognition I have ever experienced can be done in fifteen minutes and its results will last a lifetime. Have each person write his name on the top of a piece of paper. Then, pass each piece of paper around the room and have each person write something nice about the person whose name is at the top of the sheet (“I like Jane because she is so good at making people feel welcome,” “John is a great member of the group because he is so supportive and always willing to help”). After everyone has written a statement on everyone's sheet, return them to the person whose name is at the top and watch the smiles form. Though it seems like a simple, perhaps childish, task, you can bet a large number of members will save these pieces of paper in a journal or drawer for years to come. It is a great way to honor everyone in your group, regardless of how shy, motivated or quiet they are. Give it a try!

Reference:

Emmons, D. (1994). “Applause! Applause! Applause!” National Association for, Campus Activities – National Convention.

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