

# “Dare to be.... Celebrate Success”

With most of my clients, at some point, we discuss employee motivation, employee engagement and how to deal with under-performers. It may just be human nature, or maybe we have been conditioned via the media(?), but we seem to spend considerably more time discussing and addressing negative issues, problems, difficulties than we do spend “celebrating success”

When something positive happens we tend to take it as expected, or fail to follow through on good intentions to praise, or justify our ambivalence with a “*well that’s what I pay them for*” attitude.

In this article I want to give a counterbalance to the negative and accentuate the positive – I want to encourage you to *Celebrate Success* more often and with good purpose. All the research and evidence shows that improving employee recognition has a direct impact on your bottom line, less absenteeism, lower staff turnover, better productivity, greater team work, less clock watching, more commitment..... So Why wouldn’t you want to re-balance the scale (at least a little bit) toward developing positive employee recognition activities.

There are two critical components to Celebrating Success:

1. *Immediacy*: Long service awards and employee of the month type recognition has its place, but it is more powerful if you recognise excellent work place behaviours and positive outputs quickly (particularly when they link to business strategic objectives, company values, desired culture, team improvement etc). To do this try and have a “positive behavioural scan” - always looking for and actually catching employees in the act of demonstrating positive activity and behaviours.
2. *Authenticity*: It is important to make any celebration of success authentic. If they are undertaken without passion, delayed, too dry, too bureaucratic, too liberally given, then your good intentions will be watered down to just another work progress. Be genuine, be heart-felt in any praise or reward that is given.

## Section 1: Some Basics:

1. Manage by walking around and actively look for positive behaviours.
2. Describe the specific behaviour you're recognising, followed by the value it creates or the problem it solves. Share your genuine positive feelings by delivering your message in real time with a real smile that comes from how you're feeling about the work or values-creating behavior.
3. Don't embarrass or stress out your introverted employees or team mates with loud public praise. Speak each employee's personal "language of recognition". Treat everyone as they would like to be treated not necessarily as you would like to be treated.
4. Smile Genuinely. A real smile comes from an honest and highly intentional assessment of the value your employee is creating through their work and positive interactions with others. If you don't feel it they won't - and that's ineffective recognition!
5. Avoid a "praise sandwich" where you mix praise with corrective or negative feedback. Corrective feedback needs to be delivered separately as part of your employee performance coaching process.
6. Encourage or formally establish a peer group recognition programme. It's hugely motivational when your colleagues formally recognise your performance and nominate you for an award.
7. Start an employee recognition program. Give points for attendance, punctuality, teamwork, etc. Provide rewards to employees who reach certain point goals (see below for ideas).

## Section 2 Creative "Celebrate Success" ideas (the options are endless but here are some ideas):

- Give someone a thank-you card or a large post-it note that has a personal message that states the specific behaviour or value that has been created e.g: *"I really appreciate the great job you did at ...."; "I want to tell you that I have received a lot of positive feedback about xxx from your colleagues. Thank you and congratulations for winning the*

*appreciation of your teammates.”; “I appreciate all the extra overtime that you have put in over the past few weeks, please accept this gift as acknowledgement of your hard work and great can-do attitude.”*

- Ideally deliver by hand and when the employee is doing or completing a great job.
- If not by hand, leave the message on a desk, chair or PC – make sure others know it is there.
- Avoid praise by email – it’s too impersonal and implies that you’re too busy and not authentic in your celebration.

The great thing about "thank you" and descriptive praise notes is that employees can enjoy reading them more than once. And each time they read it, it reminds them of the time you took to really acknowledge a job well done; this way, it's kind of like you're giving them that recognition all over again.

- Formally shake someone’s hand when you offer praise.
- Arrange for an outstanding employee to have lunch the MD or Senior Manager – maybe a breakfast to make it a bit different. If you think that might be embarrassing for the individual, give them and their work colleagues free pizza/cakes/fish and chips and tell everyone why.
- Get the person responsible for social media to post about the success, publish it your newsletters and blogs.
- Create a video about the success.
- Have a company support a charity (Cancer Research, Children in Need) that gets supported with funds as part of the recognition process - this taps into the desire of many people to “give back” and to have a strong positive impact on their communities, the environment and the world in general.

- Involve the family - When someone has done a great job send a letter of thanks/flowers/gift, to their home or partner.
- Provide a special car parking space close to the entrance for a period e.g 1/3/6 months.
- Create a wall of fame for each recognised employee. Be sure to write below their picture what they did that you're recognising them for.
- Have their car professionally cleaned while they're at work
- Get a catered lunch, or a picnic basket, and invite their partner to enjoy it with them during an extended lunch break.
- Give a pair of movie tickets, and the time off to go see a movie during the workday.
- Put a gift in each of three offices and close the door. Then have the employee choose the door they want, and they get the gift behind it.
- Flowers. The all-time classic method of giving recognition. Add a handwritten thank you note for an important personal touch.
- Have their home cleaned – or get their ironing done – or shirts pressed – dry clean their suits.
- Random Gifts but with a note saying something like “Thanks for all your hard work. I noticed!”
  - Personalised mug that reinforces the behaviour e.g. “For outstanding teamwork”
  - Gift certificates/vouchers: Starbucks; M&S; Amazon; Apple etc
  - Movie tickets,
  - Box of sweet
  - A card with lottery tickets inside.
  - Personalised thankyou socks from [www.alphs.co](http://www.alphs.co)
  - A mug filled with treats.
  - Bottle of wine
  - Fruit basket
  - Any personalised gift that’s on [www.NotOnTheHighStreet.com](http://www.NotOnTheHighStreet.com)

- Personalised photo from [www.CreateYourMessage.com](http://www.CreateYourMessage.com)
- Give a puzzle as an award to a problem solver.