

## Expressing Appreciation at Work

February is the month of love and over 150 million Valentine cards are sent out yearly celebrating the people in our personal lives we love. The average person spends a third of their waking hours working, yet most of us do not spend enough energy showing our coworkers appreciation.

Communication is at the heart of every relationship and a one-size-fits all approach to communication will fail.

Studies show that the number one factor for job fulfillment is feeling appreciated and valued for the job they do and conversely lack of appreciation is cited as a key reason for leaving a job.

Since our personal and work lives are intertwined, it is important to look at the big picture of what is going on in people's lives instead of just looking at the current situation. Everyone is a product of their life history and work experience. Put yourself in their shoes and try to feel what it would be like to have their job, earning what they earn, with their chances for advancement.

Dr. Gary Chapman published *The Five Love Languages* twenty-five years ago that was written to assess and address how, on an individual level, our preferred language of love differs. The basic premise Dr. Chapman asserts is that there are five "languages" of love. By identifying your and your partner's primary love language, you can work to use the language the other person responds to best. The five ways of expressing love are: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Acts of Service, Tangible Gifts and Physical Touch.

Dr. Chapman and Dr. Paul White expanded the topic to the workplace with their book, *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People*. The five categories of expressing appreciation are the same as the

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. *Expressing Appreciation at Work*
2. *Public Courses*

All articles, quotes, and material in this newsletter are copyrighted. © 2015. No part can be reproduced in any form without specific written consent from copyright holder(s). All rights reserved worldwide.

ones for expressing love, but the ways you go about it are tailored to a work environment. Chapman contends that individuals use different emotional languages when communicating. People like to receive appreciation and be rewarded in ways they recognize as most valuable. When workers feel used and not valued, rewarding them in a way they do not appreciate will backfire.

The key is valuing team members for who they are and not just what they produce.

Appreciation is not hierarchal. People want to be appreciated by their bosses, coworkers and the people who report to them. To determine what someone's preferred language is notice how they express appreciation to others or what they request most often. Also take time to look for the nonverbal signals as they are sometimes a better clue than verbal ones.

Here are some effective ways to show the different types of appreciation in the workplace.

### Words of Affirmation

Dr. White says, "almost half of all employees (over 45%) prefer receiving verbal praise as their primary language of appreciation." I think most people want to be recognized with a compliment weekly. The idea is not to start saying "good job" more often, instead make specific statements that show you are paying attention. You can give praise for performance, character or leadership traits. Asking for feedback or opinions is another way to show others they are valued. Here are some examples of specific praise:

Your positive attitude made a difference during the meeting. You were instrumental in finding the solution to the problem. I am glad you joined our team. Your role was important to our success. Please show me how you did that. I value your opinion and would love your feedback. You went above and beyond this week, thank you.

## Quality Time

Webster's defines quality time as "time spent in giving another person one's undivided attention in order to strengthen a relationship." Listening is the basis for quality time and requires you to stop talking, look people in the eyes and let others express themselves. If an employee's preferred language is quality time, a one-on-one conversation will be more impactful than a team lunch. Taking time to ask about how their day is going or share a joke together can be ways to show someone they are valued. Even during short conversations, practice good listening by observing body language, asking questions and giving your undivided attention. Listening to understand vs. just to respond will also have a bigger impact.

## Acts of Service

People who prefer acts of service tend to think talk is cheap. It is about the thought and effort you put into showing appreciation. One way to make them feel appreciated is to notice when they are overloaded and offer to help. It can be as simple as offering to drop something off for them or making an extra set of copies for the meeting to help them out. Another way is to stop and answer a question even when you are running late for an appointment. Also, reminding a coworker about a meeting or deadline might be a small gesture, but to someone who appreciates acts of service, it might be a sign you value them as a friend and coworker.

## Tangible Gifts

People who respond to tangible gifts are not necessarily focused on material things. It is not the cost of the gift, but the sentiment behind it. One way to display you are thinking of them is to pick up an extra latte for them when you are getting one for yourself. Sometime, an offer to share gum or mint can be way to show you are thinking about them. Put coworkers' birthdays on your calendar and remembering it with a small gift is another way to show you appreciate them. One of my clients has a 'trophy' they move around the office daily based on who received a positive customer compliment the day before.

## Physical Touch

This language does not make as much sense in the workplace as in family life and there are limited ways to show it that are appropriate. In the right context and taking in company policy, there are a few instances where physical touch might be acceptable. One might be after securing a new client, a high five might be appropriate. Another could be when giving a handshake, you can give a hardy one or even a two-handed one. Or when a close friend at work has a personal tragedy, a hug might be

appreciated. Remember to take into consideration how your physical touch will be perceived because making someone uncomfortable is the opposite of making them feel valued.

To be a more effective communicator, boss or coworker, you need to learn to speak all five languages of love and appreciation. That starts with viewing the people you spend time with as unique, with different ways of giving and receiving appreciation. As you go about your week, I challenge you to look for the good that is happening and acknowledge it. Set a goal of finding someone to recognize before lunch and another to praise in the afternoon. Expand the goal to everyone you encounter from the server at lunch, to your next-door neighbor, to your partner. As you continue to practice acknowledgement, it will affect you as much as others.

A successful manager taps into talents and resources with the purpose of supporting and bringing out the best in the individual and team. An executive coach can help you maximize the human talent present in your company regardless of where they work. If you're interested in exploring a coaching relationship contact Bill Burtch at Harmony for a consultation at 901-272-7390 or [bburtch@harmonycc.net](mailto:bburtch@harmonycc.net)

### Suggested Reading:

- 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People by Gary Chapman and Paul White
- How Full is Your Bucket by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton



Bill Burtch  
PCC, SPHR, SHRM-SCP

1650 Faxon Avenue  
Memphis, TN 38112

Tel: 901-272-7390

[bburtch@harmonycc.net](mailto:bburtch@harmonycc.net)

[www.harmonycc.net](http://www.harmonycc.net)

## *Schedule of Public Courses*

The following courses are being offered to the public by Harmony Coaching & Consulting. Click on the associated link for more information on the program or to register.

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>For More Information/Registration</b>
<a href="#"><i>The Coaching Clinic</i></a>	<a href="#"><i>March 21 &amp; 22</i></a>	<a href="#"><i>8:30 am – 5:00 pm</i></a>	<a href="#"><i>Register Now</i></a>

