

PROVIDING POSITIVE FEEDBACK

BY BILL HOGG

I must admit, I am uncomfortable when someone compliments me about my work. Of course I want people to be happy about my behaviour (performance) and I want positive feedback versus the alternative, but for me, I am uncomfortable responding to praise, or compliments. I'd like to hear something specific about my work rather than some generic comment about me.

For example I prefer: "That was a great idea you proposed for" versus "Your idea was brilliant. You're very creative." (Okay, I like that too, but I prefer the former).

You're probably thinking I am over analyzing and I should take all the positives I can get and shut up. Probably good advice, but I can't change my emotional response to flattery, praise, or compliments -- they make me a bit uncomfortable.

I prefer a positive comment about the specific behaviour and its effect. Nobody has to add anything personal or gushy to make me feel good. The behaviour speaks for itself.

For instance: "That comparison you used in the first paragraph really helps the reader understand your point." Instead of: "You're a great writer—so eloquent."

Describing the behaviour and the effect is a particularly good approach if you are just starting to provide positive recognition for behaviours.

It also works with someone you may not have a good relationship with. Anything you say to that individual is going to be hesitantly received -- they are sensitized to every phrase, gesture, tone, and inflection. If you have a real good relationship with someone, then you have larger margin for error.

Some other examples of positive feedback include:

- When you apologized for the inconvenience to the customer who had to wait in line and thanked them for their patience, which really demonstrated our principle of empathy.
- That recommendation you made about _____ really demonstrated your knowledge about that aspect of the business. It will really save us time.
- Your PowerPoint created a buzz after the meeting. The senior team said your presentation made it easy for them to understand the issue and take action.
- I noticed that your email was sent late last night. I appreciate your commitment and know I can count on the project to be delivered on schedule.

Stay away from describing the person and focus on describing the valued-added behaviour and its effect

After you have laid the groundwork based on what they did and what effect it had, then you can add personal appreciation.

You can then start you comments with "I appreciated you taking the time to...." You have now added a personal touch based on creating a positive relationship of recognition.

Employees want to be acknowledged, to know that the company is aware of their contribution or even

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more important -- their efforts to overcome the limitations of their equipment, unforeseen problems, outdated systems and processes are noticed and appreciated.

People don't leave companies -- they leave Managers. Two of the biggest reasons are; Managers who doesn't know how to recognize people effectively, and having to work around poor performing co-workers, bad systems and other problems and not being appreciated and acknowledged.

When your feedback describes what they did and what they had to overcome, you defuse any pent up frustration and create a positive, supportive, high performance culture where everyone is working to improve, and where adding value gets noticed.

Try this technique and I guarantee employee engagement will go up and surveys will have positive responses about management and supervision. In addition, turn-over and absenteeism will go down and performance and productivity will go up.

Bill works with senior leaders to measurably improve their essential business outcomes by clarifying and focusing their organizational goals around the customer -- then aligning the priorities, accountability and service delivery model to drive performance, productivity and profits. He does this by equipping leaders with the principles, processes and tools to activate an engaged customer-focused culture that fosters and rewards exceptional performance and productivity.

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