



# GALE MOTE ASSOCIATES

*Training People, Inspiring Growth*

## Eliminate the Excuses and Start Showing Appreciation!

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All of the research on motivation and employee engagement supports the power of positive recognition. “In the last seven days have I received recognition or praise for good work?” is one of Gallup Organization’s 12 Questions of a Strong Workplace. As a matter of fact, it ranks #4 out of 12!

Indeed, a “pat on the back” or a sincere “thank you” will get miles of positive results. A kind word never goes unheard and unfortunately, too often goes unsaid!

In my work with organizations, managers give me all kinds of reasons why they do not celebrate success and praise efforts. The most common include lack of time, not wanting to deal with negative repercussions like favoritism or creating hard feelings among team members, creating a culture of entitlement, tight budgets, and my favorite, “I don’t reward people for doing their job!”

Let me begin by saying that recognition is one of those organizational activities that is relished and loathed at the same time. Abraham Lincoln said, “you can please some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can’t please all of the people all of the time.” I say, move beyond your fears and do something! 10% of something is better than 100% of nothing! If you make a mistake (and the odds say you will), apologize, learn from it and move on! “How fascinating!” As for the most popular excuses for not giving recognition, let me offer some thoughts to help you take the next step to “shower the people you love with love.” (Thanks, JT!)

**Lack of Time:** It’s not about time, it’s about priorities. If you really want people to bring their best to work each day, than match that energy with your commitment to catch people doing things right. Focus on the benefits of what you’ll receive, not the cost of what you have to give (which by the way is minimal!) If you need to create a habit, write it down on your “to do” list each week until it becomes a natural act. Writing a quick thank you note, making a phone call, or sending an e-mail will take less than 5 minutes and will give you days of high octane performance. Give a little and you get a lot! Another way to help with the time challenge is to encourage peer-to-peer feedback. There are more team members than managers. You can get the momentum moving when employees are encouraged and supported for celebrating each other. With clear expectations and the right

parameters, peer recognition is an awesome motivator!

**Negative Repercussions:** I find that employees usually cry “favoritism” and “unfair” when the recognition is not contingent on behavior, when performance standards are not clearly defined, the feedback is not specific or well communicated, and when, quite frankly, there is just not enough recognition going around. People are so starved to be noticed that anytime someone does get acknowledged, jealousy and anger is the response rather than celebration and gratitude! I believe that managers should be held accountable for showing appreciation and celebrating individual and/or team accomplishment. If you are afraid of leaving someone out, ask the team members themselves who contributed to the success of a project or goal accomplishment. They will tell you who should be included and why.

**Entitlement Mentality:** When employees do not understand what they are being recognized for or that the appreciation is tied to specific performance, they begin to develop the “I deserve something for nothing” attitude. Bring donuts to every breakfast meeting and I guarantee that when you don’t, people will ask, “Where is the food?” Mix it up and use variety when showing appreciation. When people are not sure what to expect, it’s not expected!

**No Money:** I would like to highly recommend two resources that I believe should be on every manager’s book shelf: The 1001 Reward and Recognition Fieldbook by Bob Nelson ([www.nelsonmotivation.com](http://www.nelsonmotivation.com)) and 180 Ways to Walk the Recognition Talk by Eric Harvey ([www.walkthetalk.com](http://www.walkthetalk.com)). These books have hundreds of ideas on how to recognize employee and team performance with little to no cost. If you believe you are not creative in coming up with new, fun ways to “light people up” you will surely find many ideas to explore and implement.

“It’s their job!” Rosabeth Moss Kanter said, “Compensation is a right. Recognition is a gift.” I tell people, “You get your paycheck for doing your job. I’m recognizing you for the manner in which you are doing your job.” Recognition is an acknowledgment and a reinforcement that increases the likelihood that people will keep doing their jobs. It’s a simple way of saying that I saw what you did and it matters to me!

Everyone agrees that showing genuine, timely appreciation is a critical success factor for high performance organizations. Alas, the road to success seems to be paved with good intentions. Bob Nelson said, “You get the best effort from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within them.” Light the fire! Take action. Be a risk taker! Eliminate the excuses and start today! You’ll see the positive results and be glad you did!

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PO Box 300 • Mt. Vernon, IA 52314 • 319-895-8185 • 319-350-3861 mobile  
[gale.mote@GaleMoteAssociates.com](mailto:gale.mote@GaleMoteAssociates.com) • [www.GaleMoteAssociates.com](http://www.GaleMoteAssociates.com)