

Acknowledging the People Who Make it Happen

6.3.13

Things have been getting busier. That's a good thing. However, I find that when we get busy we forget to acknowledge the people who are making it happen. Any suggestions on how to keep that top of mind, and use it as a tool to motivate everyone to achieve greater results in the upcoming year - we sure could use the push!

Thoughts of the Day: Acknowledgement is a powerful tool to motivate behavior. Make sure it's honest feedback. Schedule time to review performance and recognize results. Help everyone to stay focused on their ability to contribute.

Build a positive culture. Make sure that what you stand for is what you'd want written on your tombstone. As you look around the company ask yourself:

- Are my people truly happy doing what they are doing?
- Do our suppliers and customers mirror our positive outlook?

Then move on to a rigorous personal assessment:

- How does my attitude influence everyone around me?
- What can I do to build an upbeat environment by realizing that employees, customers and vendors all strive to benefit each other?

Finally, ask about recognition systems:

- Can my people trust that their efforts will be appreciated?
- What can I do to make people more comfortable giving positive feedback?

The answers to these questions will speak volumes about how well your company does in the acknowledgement department.

As CEO you have tremendous influence. The tone you set leads to more of the same. If you are always criticizing, always looking at the down side, your people will pick that up and mirror it. Regularly recognizing people when they do their best can lead to an environment where people stretch to do their best consistently.

Start by giving credit where credit is due. No company would be where it is if the only person working in the company was the CEO. Give people positive feedback they can build upon by noting their efforts to do a good job.

Don't overlook problems. Pose them in the context of, here's what you've done right, here's what I need you to work on next, I'm confident that given your successful performance on other tasks that you'll be able to master this one as well. If someone is struggling, figure out if they should be in the job or if they should move on. Don't spoil the mood in the company by tolerating poor performance and then being frustrated by what you see.

Acknowledgement isn't just something you do while walking around the company. Set up goals and reports to review performance. Look for specific examples of where people achieve results. Revenue, service levels, profit and productivity are easy to measure and recognize.

Have a monthly meeting where you go over reports, hand out gold stars, and thank people for their contributions. Ask managers to share specific examples at company meetings. Teach all your employees how to give acknowledgements. In addition to recognizing performers, use job-well-done examples to teach other people what you're looking for.

Each day make a list of people you've observed doing good work. Send out thank you notes. Each week spend time walking around, observing and commenting on the good things you see happening. Also make notes on things that need improving, in the context of, "Now that we've achieved x, it's time to work on y."

Encourage people by showing them the upside - the appreciation that goes with a job well done. Reward people when they take initiative by making them shining examples in front of their peers. Make sure that your employees, customers and vendors all know how much you value them.

Looking for a good book? Grateful Leadership: Using the Power of Acknowledgement to Engage All Your People and Achieve Superior Results, by Judith W. Umlas

Andi Gray is president of Strategy Leaders Inc., <https://www.strategyleaders.com>, a business consulting firm that specializes in helping entrepreneurial firms grow. She can be reached by phone at 877-238-3535. Do you have a question for Andi? Please send it to her, via e-mail at AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com or by mail to Andi Gray, Strategy Leaders Inc., 5 Crossways, Chappaqua, NY 10514. Visit www.AskAndi.com for an entire library of Ask Andi articles.

Business owners regularly turn to Ask Andi and Strategy Leaders for advice on how to grow profitable, successful companies. They find what they need time after time. Specific advice is available at www.AskAndi.com. Ask Andi is also published weekly in the Westchester and Fairfield County Business Journals and Hudson Valley Business. Written by Strategy Leaders President, Andi Gray, the Ask Andi column is a rich source of advice for owners of established, privately held businesses. If you are a business owner and you have a question or would like to discuss some aspect of your business, call 1.877.238.3535 or send an email to AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com.