
LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Lesson 5: Praise, Recognition and Rewards

Good Job!

TOPS does an excellent job of recognizing the success and effort of its members through its various reward and recognition programs. As a leader, you can probably see the effect that praise, recognition and reward have on encouraging members to continue their weight-loss efforts, to feel good about their successes and to encourage other members to succeed as well.

In the business world, giving praise is recognized as one of the most powerful and effective behaviors that a leader can practice. Praise—both receiving and giving—affects us in many positive ways.

It's Chemical

Chemical changes occur when we are winning or succeeding at something. These changes create more of the chemical dopamine, which makes us feel well and is crucial to both memory and learning. Dopamine provides a feeling of enjoyment and satisfaction. Hearing positive words has been found to activate regions of the brain related to reward.

The best leaders are always finding something to praise their people about. It's been proven that receiving praise results in higher productivity and lower employee or participant turnover. When you combine the dopamine related benefits of praise with the fact that giving praise does not cost any money, giving praise becomes one of the greatest opportunities in the business world today.

Additionally it's been proven that the benefits of praise work both ways. When you compliment someone or praise them, you also benefit from this action, as positive chemical changes occur in your brain, too. Giving praise, then, is a win-win behavior, with multiple benefits and no associated cost.

It's been discovered, though, that our dopamine levels change quickly—every seven days—so make sure that you consistently give praise in order to keep your team feeling good about themselves. Of course, the praise has to be deserved and given in a timely, sincere, and appropriate manner in order for this to work.

Recognition

Another way to help team members feel valued and appreciated is to recognize their efforts by communicating their successes to upper management. When team members get copies of this kind of communication in addition to the dopamine related benefits, they feel that their work is valued and that it makes a difference to the success of the organization. This kind of reward also has no cost associated with it.

Rewards

Although giving praise or recognition is a very effective way to recognize the efforts of your team, giving rewards also helps incent people to work at their best, and it also helps them to feel appreciated. Giving rewards usually comes with a price tag, but the cost does not have to be high. There are many inexpensive ways to give your team members rewards that will help to make them feel appreciated and valued.

Rewards are usually based on performance, so most rewards are linked to contests or promotions. Some rewards, however, can be given spontaneously for work well done. In any situation, it's not the reward, but the idea behind the reward that stays in the recipient's mind.

Suggestions for Inexpensive Rewards

TOPS has many different reward-related items that are used for members, which would also be appropriate to give to your team. Additionally, you



should consider other “health and wellness” related rewards such as exercise, nutrition or general wellness-related items. Here are some suggestions for some inexpensive items:

- Gift certificates for wellness-related items, like healthy food or exercise wear
- Candles or other aromatherapy products, like incense or soaps
- Wellness CDs on meditation, exercise or soft/easy listening music
- Book store certificates or books such as self-help books, journals, stationery, pens or calendars
- Spa, museum or movie passes
- Flowers
- Packages of tea or flavored coffee
- Pretty accessories

Your Assignment

Think about how your team functions, and how you currently contribute to their success by offering praise, recognition or rewards. Consider what changes you can make in your behavior to increase their sense of being appreciated and valued. Develop a strategy for being a leader who practices giving praise regularly, and document your plan and your progress.

Tip

Any reward you give should have lasting value or be useful, reflect the effort of the team member, inspire pride, and reflect the image of TOPS.