Five Ways to Show Appreciation

Communicating appreciation to employees decreases the chances of their leaving, increases satisfaction, and improves productivity. *The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace* (Northfield Publishing, moodypublishers.com) posits that everyone has a primary language of appreciation. Here are the five languages and how to use them to assure that every person feels truly appreciated:

1. Words of affirmation. Verbally praise someone by focusing on a specific achievement. "Catch" someone doing something "right" and call attention to it.

2. Tangible gifts. Conduct a survey asking people's favorite musicians, hobbies, and the like. Then give gifts that match their preferences – ballet tickets to someone who enjoys the ballet, football tickets to a football lover, restaurant coupons to someone who likes eating out. To those who value this form of appreciation, the right gift sends a powerful message of support.

3. Acts of service. Ask people if they would like help with their work. Discovering the service that would be most meaningful is as easy as asking, "Is there anything I can do for you that would make your work easier?" Then follow through.

4. Quality time. Give someone your undivided attention, encourage them to share their feelings and thoughts, and listen carefully.

5. Physical touch. Many people wonder, "Is there any place for physical touch in the workplace?" The authors believe there is. Appropriate physical touches are a fundamental aspect of human behavior. In every culture, there are appropriate and inappropriate touches. Affirming, nonsexual touches, such as shaking hands, briefly patting a shoulder, or high-fiving a colleague, can be meaningful expressions of appreciation. Pay close attention as you do so, and if you feel your colleague stiffen, then you know your touch isn't communicating appreciation.

How do you know which language each person prefers? Have everyone on your team complete the Motivating by Appreciation Inventory (mbainventory.com). Or simply try out the languages on people and deduce their languages of appreciation by how they respond. Keep a file of people's responses, their preferred languages of appreciation, and the context in which they would most like to receive them.

ACTION CHECKLIST

- ✔ **Choose someone who values words of affirmation.** Find a chance to praise that person within the next week.
- ✔ **Listen to people's conversations.** Make a note when you hear them say, "I'd like to have one of those," and let that information guide you in getting small gifts for them.
- ✔ **Say "thank you" to a volunteer or paid staff member** at least once today. Be sure you speak from your heart. Hollow words are worse than no thanks at all.
- ✔ **Look for opportunities this week** to ask someone about their personal interests.
- ✔ **Notice whether those in the workplace** frequently pat each other on the back, give fist bumps, or hug others. If so, you can assume that receiving an affirming touch from you would be received as an expression of appreciation. If not, be cautious about touching others at work.
- ✔ **Check in with people** to see if they are feeling supported by you and if there are better ways to show your appreciation for them.
- ✔ **Reflect on your interactions** with someone, and consider the character traits you've observed. Tell that person how much you admire those traits.

Assessing Grantmaking from Within

It can be challenging to evaluate the effectiveness of foundation programs. One way to do so is to determine if foundations are learning from their initiatives. The Center for Effective Philanthropy asked foundation CEOs what they were learning about their funding's impact and reported the results in *Understanding and Sharing What Works: The State of Foundation Practice* (cep.org). Key findings:

Almost two-thirds of CEOs say they have a good understanding of what's working in their foundation's programmatic efforts, but more than 40% say their foundation isn't investing enough time and money in developing this understanding.

Foundations use many sources of information to find out what's working and what's not. These include site visits, grant reports, and anecdotal feedback from grantees. There's little consensus, however, as to which of these sources are most useful.

While they think they have reliable ways to evaluate what works, foundation CEOs admit they have few ways to learn what's *not* working. One problem is that grantees feel pressured to report on successful outcomes and are reluctant to admit a program's shortcomings. By focusing on achievements and minimizing defeats, leaders don't learn the lessons that failure can teach.

Foundation CEOs are using what they learn about their programmatic work to make decisions about subsequent initiatives and are willing to share that knowledge. Unfortunately, fewer than one in five CEOs say they use information from other foundations. There are clearinghouses of grant information that would make such sharing easier, but foundation CEOs tend to spend more time on internal matters than learning from others in the field. The low emphasis on using information from other funders suggests a position of competition – in order to justify foundation programs or even the foundation's existence – rather than cooperation on broad purposes.

There's a lack of clarity by many foundations about what information is actually useful and worth sharing.

While only a basic way to explore the effectiveness of foundation programs, this research does uncover areas in which communication about learning from funding initiatives can improve. Investing more research into transparent, authentic communication may help serve grantees and their communities better.

– reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Study Finds Urgent, Chronic Fundraising Problems – and Some Solutions

Many nonprofits are caught in a vicious cycle that makes it hard to raise the resources they need, according to *UnderDeveloped*, a study by CompassPoint (compasspoint.org). The report warns that this problem is widespread in nonprofits throughout the country and offers an urgent call for action.

Key Findings

Organizations are struggling with high turnover and long vacancies in the development-director position.

Organizations aren't finding enough qualified candidates for development-director jobs.

There are performance problems and a lack of basic fundraising skills among key development staff.

Everyone in the organization, not just development staff, needs to support fundraising. The findings indicate that many nonprofits aren't doing this.

Fundraising Bright Spots

Prompted by the challenges identified in *UnderDeveloped*, CompassPoint has helped create another report, *Fundraising Bright Spots*, that highlights potential solutions and ways to make fundraising more effective, including:

Create a documented plan to distribute fundraising activities throughout the organization.

Make sure everyone in the organization understands what your primary and secondary income strategies are – and why you're pursuing them.

Learn peer coaching skills to motivate action and learning within fundraising.

Provide opportunities for staff, board, and donors to engage together during the year to build trust and relationships.

Hire development staff who aren't just skilled in the tactics of fundraising (such as direct mail, events, planned giving) but are also strategic thinkers with communication and marketing skills.

Focus fundraising efforts on building relationships with donors over time – not just asking for money when needed. Respects donors as individuals and treat them as partners, not just funders.

Invest money in strengthening the organization's fundraising infrastructure, including professional development, training, and technology.

Spend more time on keeping donors than acquiring new ones.

Discuss fundraising responsibilities with prospective board members before they're elected to the board, and include personal giving in board members' expectations and agreement.

Thank and engage donors on a regular and personalized basis to ensure they know their value to the organization.

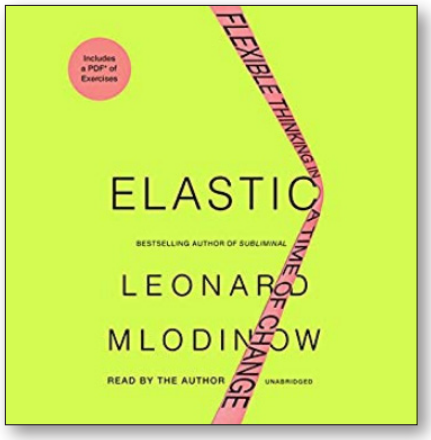
Be sure all staff and board members see themselves as ambassadors for the organization, are involved in fund development, have contact with donors, and can articulate the case for giving.

Give donors, clients, board, and staff plenty of chances to "tell their stories" about their philanthropy. Then use these stories as the focus of development outreach.

You Gotta Accentuate the Positive

There has been a great deal of debate over the idea of positive thinking. Some dismiss it as "wishful thinking" or "pie-in-the-sky dreaming" and consider its practitioners hopelessly deluded "Pollyannas."

But the latest brain research tells a different story. New studies show that thinking positively makes the brain more flexible, as Leonard Mlodinow explains in *Elastic* (Pantheon Books). Positive emotions prompt us to consider a wider range of ideas than are typical. Studies prove that when people are in a positive mood, they do far better in tests of elastic thinking. Such thinking allows more original solutions to surface when encountering problems.



When we think positively, we're more able to learn new things, create new relationships, expand our networks, and open ourselves to absorbing information. Those activities increase resilience and lower stress.

Positivity isn't the same as fantasizing about perfect outcomes. Dreaming doesn't fix problems. What does work is a mindful approach to seeing the positive side of things. Some ideas:

When you have to deliver bad news or criticism, think of good things you can add to what you say. This practice will engender a more positive mood throughout your organization.

Imagine a goal you want to achieve. Consider all the obstacles that may come your way. Then think about how you can overcome those problems. Such "realistic optimism" is a proven way to succeed.

When you have negative thoughts, acknowledge them. Then imagine it's a friend who's having those thoughts. Consider how you would advise your friend. Then apply that advice to yourself.

Make it a regular practice to write down things for which you're grateful and things that are going right in your life. Such lists make you more mindful of positive information about yourself, which helps you play to your strengths.

Ask the people around you what would make them happy, and do what you can to provide it. The happier workers are, the more productive and creative they will be.

Rethinking Negotiation

We tend to think too narrowly about negotiation, says Deepak Malhotra. We equate it with haggling or hammering out a deal. We consider it something negative. But what is negotiation really? It's about human interaction. The question we're asking in negotiation is: How might we engage with other human beings in a way that leads to better understanding and agreement?

In *Negotiating the Impossible* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, bkconnection.com), Malhotra focuses on tough negotiations – the seemingly impossible ones. He lays out tactics that can help in such situations:

Control the frame. There's almost no limit to the types of frames that can emerge in a negotiation, explains Malhotra. For example, you may look at a deal through a lens that's financial or strategic, short- or long-term, friendly or hostile. The other party may be looking through a different frame. You need, first, to understand what their perspective is, then help them see the situation through your own frame.

Avoid one-issue negotiations. Though it may seem counterintuitive, negotiations tend to be smoother when more than one issue is in play. If you reach a stalemate on one issue, it helps to introduce another one, even if that issue is relatively minor. Giving in on the second issue may give the other party enough of a win so that they'll concede the first issue to you.

Shape the process. Here are just a few elements of process to consider and control as much as possible: When and where will the negotiations take place? How long will they last? What will be on the agenda? Will there be outside observers or mediators? What milestones might help keep the process on track? How will results be implemented?

Use empathy to create more options for yourself. The better you see the other side's perspective, the more likely you are to find a solution. The more you understand their motivations, interests, and constraints, the greater the possibilities for resolution.

Time Travel, True Stories, & Other Useful Exercises

In *Leading the Life You Want* (Harvard Business Review Press, harvardbusiness.org), Stewart Friedman describes a set of exercises that can transform your organization. You can use them to help everyone in your organization feel inspired, connected with others, and excited about the future. A few examples:

Take 15 minutes to remove yourself from your everyday hustle and bustle. Let your mind travel into the future and imagine you've fulfilled your organization's main goals. What would that future look like? What would people be saying about your organization? How would the world be different? Write down some specific actions that will make that ideal future a reality. Ask others in your organization to try this exercise, and compare your results.

Think of true stories of someone putting your organization's values into action. Share these stories to motivate others.

Gather a group of people affected by a problem in your organization, and ask them to come up with potential solutions. Record all their ideas. Discuss each solution, drawing on the wisdom of different viewpoints. As a group, select the best, second-best, and third-best options, and decide on the next action to take on the first-choice solution.

Consider one of your goals and the people who will benefit once you've fulfilled it. Have a quick conversation with those beneficiaries. Focus on finding out what they need and care about. If feasible, commit to providing what they want.

Together with others in your organization, pinpoint one of your organization's core values. Identify one simple action toward a goal that's consistent with that value, and commit to completing this action.

How Should You Handle a Tainted Gift?

At some point in your organizational life, someone will donate money that isn't "pure." There may be strings attached, or the money may be associated with a group whose values don't align with yours. Or what if you accept a gift and later the donor does something disreputable – should you return the donation?

That question arose recently when the University of Louisville announced it was changing the name of its football stadium from "Papa John's Cardinal Stadium" to simply "Cardinal Stadium." How come? Papa John's founder, John Schnatter, confirmed that he used a racial slur in a conference call, thus acting in conflict to the university's values.

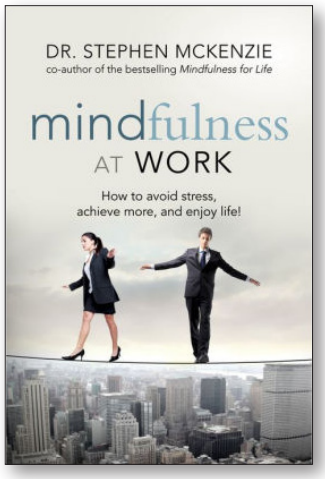
Gifts large and small have prompted similar agonizing in all sorts of organizations, as Leslie Lenkowsky, affiliate Faculty Member, Lilly Family School of Philanthropy (lenkows@iupui.edu) notes. Some nonprofits refuse to accept or keep tainted money, while others argue that gifts should be judged on what they accomplish, not on the character of their donors.

So how do you decide? Gene Tempel, professor at Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy (philanthropy.iupui.edu) urges nonprofits to have gift acceptance policies in place *before* a tainted money issue arises. For instance, if a donor offers a naming gift, you need a policy that explains when and how you might remove the name if necessary in the future.

Dr. Tempel suggests creating an ethics committee to handle these situations. "If there is an ethics committee in place, no organization will have to make a decision by just one or two people (the executive director and director of development, for example)," he explains.

"The first consideration is whether the individual who is donating or has donated the money committed an illegal act," Dr. Tempel says. "If so, the money is automatically tainted and should be refused or returned. In the John Schnatter situation, he did not break the law. In this case, it's a values conflict." In addition to identifying your values and deciding whether the donation violates those values, Dr. Tempel says to consider the totality of your organization and the effects of accepting the money on your reputation.

Take-to-Work Tips on Mindfulness



Can mindfulness help you and your colleagues work more harmoniously and productively? The short answer is yes, says Stephen McKenzie. In *Mindfulness at Work* (Career Press, careerpress.com), he provides advice:

Begin all work in stillness, and separate the components of your work with pauses. Withoutpausesyouractivitieswillblurintoeachother! It's only in the stillness of true listening that you really hear anything, that you really learn anything. When you listen, you can make optimal decisions.

Take time before making any decision. Mindless decision-making is characterized by haste, attachment to a certain result, not listening, and excessive emotions – all of which are the opposite of mindful traits.

Less can be more. Consider what's essential, and focus on that. Delegate or let go of the rest.

Keep your eyes and mind open. As Steve Jobs said, "When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do anything; they just saw something."

Always ask, "What action will create the greatest good for the most people and bring all of us closer together?"

Whatever you're doing, do it with your complete attention and acceptance.

Mindful relationships lead to true connection. The best way to connect with fellow workers is to actually see them – up close – at least occasionally.

Use the Platonic form of dialogue, in which you ask questions that can take you, and the people with whom you're communicating, to the truth. This is the opposite of the adversarial system that's commonly used. A vital principle of the Platonic approach is to start off with the idea that you might be wrong.

Great leaders transform people by transforming themselves. Remember the difference between a boss and a leader. A boss says, "Go!" A leader says, "Let's go!" Or as Lao Tzu puts it, "Be a conductor, not a controller. To see things in the seed, that is genius."

SOCIETY *for* NONPROFITS
Advancing the nonprofit world together

Tap the Greatness of Your Staff and Your Self

The Brian Tracy Success Library (harpercollinsleadership.com) is a series of brief, practical, pocket-sized books on subjects that include: Leadership, Negotiation, Management, Marketing, Delegation & Supervision, Motivation, and Time Management. These little gems are packed with helpful action exercises and tips, such as:

Save time – and boost motivation and productivity – by using the management-by-exception tool. Tell people, "If everything's going fine, there's no need to report to me other than an occasional e-mail. I leave it completely to you."

Remove the two great demotivators for employees: fear of failure and fear of rejection. Drive out fear by making it clear that no one will be criticized for making mistakes.

Always check references three deep. That is, ask the given reference for the names of others the candidate has worked with. When you interview three additional people whose names aren't on the candidate's resume, you may be surprised what you learn.

Treat staff members like friends and family. Expect the best of them. Tell them continually how good they are and how impressed you are with their work.

Read biographies of great leaders. The more you study what constitutes effective leadership, the more you'll be able to internalize the same behaviors.

Beyond the Briefs

To explore issues raised in these briefs in more detail, take a look at these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

Embrace Mindfulness as a Leadership Practice (Vol. 36, No. 2)

A Path to Stronger Programs, Greater Engagement, *and* Less Burnout? (Vol. 36, No. 1)

How to Energize Your Thank-You Letter (Vol. 26, No. 2)

Debunking the Myth of Bill Gates: Finding Major Donors (Vol. 16, No. 2)

To Accept Or Not to Accept: That May Be the Question: A Guide for Dealing with Tainted Money (Vol. 19, No. 1)

Time's Up! What Do you Really Want? (Vol. 33, No. 2)

The Overwhelmed Office: Six Fixes for the Stressed-Out, Productivity-Challenged Workplace (Vol. 28, No. 4)

The Power of Story: Bring Your Brand to Life (Vol. 34, No. 4)

Don't Be Sued for Negligent Hiring (Vol. 21, No. 3)

Nonprofits & Funders: Two Sides of the Same Coin? (Vol. 24, No. 4)

Leading from Feeling (Vol. 27, No. 1)

Can We Call a Truce? Tips for Negotiating Workplace Conflicts (Vol. 27, No. 6)

How to Impress the Wired Wealthy (Vol. 30, No. 3)

Should Chief Happiness Officer Be One of Your Titles? (Vol. 36, No. 3)

Fighting Harassment & Improving Inclusion (Vol. 36, No. 2)