Appreciation Motivates Employees To Work Harder, Study Says

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It's the carrot, not the stick that keeps employees motivated in the workplace, new research shows.

A study by online career site [Glassdoor](http://www.glassdoor.com/) revealed that more than 80 percent of employees say they're motivated to work harder when their boss shows appreciation for their work, compared to less than 40 percent who are inspired to work harder when their boss is demanding or because they fear losing their job.

Showing gratitude also helps keep workers from developing a wandering eye. More than half of those surveyed said they would stay longer at their company if they felt more [appreciation from their boss](http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/3734-qualities-good-boss.html).

While more money is the type of recognition employees would prefer most, employers can also keep their staff happy with a number of less-costly methods. The study found that 46 percent of employees would feel more appreciated if their boss gave them an unexpected treat, like snacks, [lunches](http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5185-the-cost-of-lunch-adding-up-for-most-employees.html), dinners or thank you notes, while 24 percent would enjoy a company-sponsored social event, such as a holiday party or happy hour.

"There is a wide variety of ways to show employee appreciation that can go far towards keeping employees satisfied, engaged and retained," said Allyson Willoughby, Glassdoor's senior vice president of people and general counsel. "Even inexpensive forms of appreciation, like thank you cards and treats, or offering flexibility like telecommuting, show employees you value them."

Other forms of no-cost appreciation that employees want from employers include:

* Being involved in [decision making processes](http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/3987-power-decision-making.html)
* Career opportunities
* Recognition at a team meeting or in a company newsletter

The research shows that with Thanksgiving approaching, employers have a number of opportunities to show their staff some gratitude for their hard work. Topping employees' wish list is having the day before and after the holiday off. Other perks employees would appreciate around Thanksgiving include a cash bonus, a grocery store gift card, a pre-Thanksgiving meal at work and the option to telecommute in the days before the holiday.

The study was based on surveys of 2,044 adults over the age of 18, of whom 891 are employed full or part time.

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Feeling Appreciated? Why It Can Make All The Difference [**Margie Warrell**](http://www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/) **CONTRIBUTOR** *A few words of appreciation can go a long way*

Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, once said “Appreciate everything your associates do. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They’re absolutely free and worth a fortune.” Likewise, Donald Peterson, former chairman of [Ford Motor](http://www.forbes.com/companies/ford-motor/) Company, said the most important ten minutes of his day were spent boosting the people around him.

Whether or not you subscribe to the Tiger Mum philosophy of not over-indulging children in praise, the truth is that as human beings we all want to be valued and be recognized for our efforts. It’s not about being ‘needy’ but simply feeling appreciated. There’s a distinct difference.  In my work in organizations and in my life beyond it,  I’ve yet to meet a person who felt over-encouraged, over-appreciated or over-praised. I do however,  regularly encounter people who feel just the opposite. In fact, when running leadership programs, one of the most popular exercises is focused on giving and receiving acknowledgement and praise. So many… *too* many… people feel like their effort isn’t acknowledged and go to work everyday starved for  appreciation. It’s not because they’re insecure or needy. It’s because they are human.

Do you recall when Sherlock Holmes solved the crime because he noticed the dog *wasn’t barking*? Likewise, if you don’t notice the absence of problems, you will be even less likely to take the time to praise people for what they are doing right.  Too often people are a little suspicious about being overly encouraging or generous with praise. They worry about going over board and giving people a big head or having people become dependent on their praise. “I don’t need it and never got it, so why should I give it?” people sometimes say to me. Why? Well for starters a few well placed and sincere words of praise make others feel more valued and when people feel that you value them, they become more engaged in what they are doing, and care more about doing better in the future.

Research has found that when  managers acknowledge people for what they’re doing well during times when things are running smoothly, those same people are more likely to go the extra mile for them when things aren’t going so well – digging deeper during crisis because they know that their efforts aren’t going unnoticed or appreciated. As I wrote in [*Stop Playing Safe*](http://www.stopplayingsafe.com/), “actively supporting people to be more successful puts deposits into the relationships bank account that can make a crucial difference when circumstances change and the chips are down.” Indeed studies have found that how we support and celebrate people when they are enjoying success makes an even bigger impact on our relationships with them than how we support them in times of crisis.

Mark Twain once said he could live for two months on a good compliment. The importance of taking the time to build others up is something that the very best leaders know all too well.  Of course, encouragement is about more than just getting the best out of employees, boosting engagement and lifting performance. It’s about making a meaningful impact on another human being. Not only can a few genuine words of encouragement brighten someone’s day today, but you may be leaving them with something they will cherish for a lifetime, even if by tomorrow you may have long forgotten what you said. **With**

So my challenge to you is to make a daily habit of asking yourself who you could encourage – and then be more generous with your words than you have been up to now. You don’t need to wait for someone to accomplish some monumental feat before it’s fitting to direct a word of praise their way. A word of encouragement for something small or for someone in the midst of challenging times is far more meaningful and valued than waiting until someone’s crossed the finish line or won the gold.

Who knows what impact your few words can have on another person’s spirit? Who knows what an impact your few words can have on your own!  … Keep in mind that it’s a universal law of life that what goes around, comes around.  So when it comes to encouragement: give generously.

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