

The Ungrateful?

By Shannon Warren for The Journal Record, November 24, 2014

There seems to be an epic failure on the part of business leaders to comprehend the important virtue of gratitude in shaping an organizational culture, fostering productivity and retaining employees. While most companies have formal recognition programs, only about 15% of businesses train their people on how to deliver positive feedback. At least, that is the claim by the leaders of a recognition company gThankYou.com.

We are as stingy as Ebenezer Scrooge when it comes to expressing gratitude. According to a 2012 *Wall Street Journal* report by Sue Shellenbarger, only 10% of us bother to say “thanks” to a co-worker on a regular basis. Even fewer say it to their boss. A 2014 report by the Society of Human Resources backed that up, indicating that 173 million unhappy workers are disengaged from their thankless jobs. While other factors such as bad bosses and office politics play a part, the lack of appreciation ranks high as a cause of dissatisfaction.

A paycheck is not enough. Human beings need praise and recognition. Smart leaders reinforce positive behavior by taking time to frequently notice and acknowledge it. A study by Glassdoor reported by Chad Brooks in a *Huffington Post* article found that “80% of employees are motivated to work harder when their boss shows appreciation for their work.” So, why aren’t managers doing more of this?

Some may be clinging to the tyrannical fear-based approach or are indifferent to their employees’ needs. More than likely, they never learned to properly deliver feedback and feel awkward doing so. Others might worry about costs, but that should not be a deterrent.

Gratitude can take a number of forms, from kudos in a company newsletter to a simple handwritten note. Has an employee worked long hours? Consider sending her home with a gift certificate for dinner with her family. Or, if she has children, maybe an outing at the zoo or movies would be nice. I found that the gThankYou.com offered some practical suggestions. They even gave guidance on how to write meaningful thank you notes, tying an employee’s action to the positive impact it had.

The point is, don’t throw out the spirit of this season with the Thanksgiving leftovers. Making people feel valued is the ultimate golden rule and makes good business sense.