

## Appreciation at Work

What does it mean to feel appreciated at work? Does it mean more money? More responsibility? More recognition? What makes one person feel appreciated can be totally different than what speaks to another person. What makes you feel appreciated at work?



Take Lucy for instance, a customer service rep for Company ABC. She works daily answering phone calls from customers. She works in a cubicle in a room with 6 other people. Lucy often receives small financial bonuses for call productivity and quality. However, despite these bonuses she feels unappreciated at work. All she really wants is someone to stop by her cubicle and tell her she is doing a great job.

Then there is the case of Stan, a sales rep for Company XYZ. He is out and about each day talking with potential customers, meeting with

managers, etc. He has face-to-face meetings with important people almost every day. Despite this high visibility and responsibility, Stan questions whether he is truly appreciated

by his company. He does not think people understand the cost of doing his job, especially when it comes to gas and food expenses. An occasional gas card or sandwich shop gift card would make him feel truly appreciated.

The above examples showcase the difference in how people understand and receive appreciation. Unlike *recognition* or *awards*, **appreciation** speaks to an employee on a personal level. It isn't part of a company-wide program or initiative.

Appreciation is individual, personal, and deeply motivating when given in the right way.

In their book, "The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace," Gary Chapman and Paul White identify five key ways (or "languages") that can be used to express appreciation. Knowing which language works most effectively for you can help you identify how to help show and receive appreciation more effectively. So, what language do you speak?

**Words of Affirmation** – For people whose Recognition Language is "words of appreciation," written and/or spoken words are crucial. In the above example, despite the awards and financial recognition for her efforts, Lucy is more motivated by hearing someone tell her she is doing a great job.



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Don't forget, a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated.

~ H. Jackson Brown



The words matter. They make her feel important and proud of the work she does. The worst thing you can do for someone motivated by Words of Affirmation is to say nothing at all.



**Quality Time** – People who speak this appreciation language are motivated by time spent together. Whether it is face-to-face meetings, lunch out together, a quick stop by the cubicle to say hello, it is very motivational to them to know they have that time with another person. It can be a boss, a fellow co-worker, or a friend, but it's the time that is spent together that makes them feel appreciated.

**Acts of Service** – People in this category will typically say “words are nice, time together is fine, but if you really want to make a difference, jump in and DO something.” Acts of Service folks are motivated by offers to help. Sometimes it can be helping with a project at work, but other times it can be completely separate – offering to make copies on the copier, picking up lunch when you are already going out, etc. The appreciation comes in knowing that someone sees what you are doing and is willing to contribute.

**Tangible Gifts** – Unlike Recognition and Awards programs, the language of Tangible Gifts is less structured and smaller in scale. It is not about the “item” per se, it is more about the thought behind the item that makes the difference. In the story about Stan, giving him a small gas card or gift card for lunch tells him that someone noticed how his job impacts him financially, and that they cared to do something to tell him they noticed.

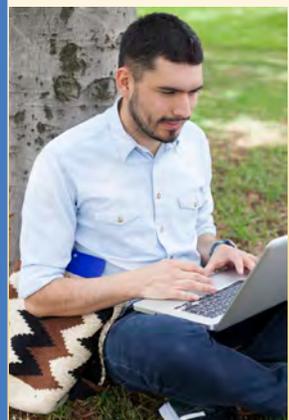
**Physical Touch** – While not usually a primary language of appreciation



at work, appropriate physical touch can also be a means of showing appreciation. Examples include handshakes, a pat on the back, a high five, etc. Used at the right time, and with the right person, a pat on the back will convey far more than any other “language”.

Discovering which Appreciation Language you speak can be enlightening, But even more important is being aware of how those around you experience appreciation. Showing appreciation is more than just doing what works for you. It is recognizing what holds meaning for the person you want to show appreciation for. By practicing the art of appreciation, we all have the power to help create a positive workplace.

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