



PRAISE MATTERS

In working with businesses and organizations of all kinds, I hear the same concerns everyday:

How do we increase productivity?

How do we improve Customer service?

How do we keep people actively engaged in their work and with others on their team?

How do we reduce turnover?

How do we improve safety?

Even if you aren't thinking about or concerned about every one of those questions, I'm sure at least one of them has kept you up at night in the past.

As leaders we think about these things because they impact the success of the organization. As coaches we think about how to impact these things day-to-day, person-by-person.

As a coach, someone helping people improve their performance for the benefit of both the individual and the organization, there are typically two types of feedback that you could provide on their performance at anytime. Constructive feedback (sometimes called criticism) and positive feedback (which I will call praise).

Forgetting the words for a minute, these two types of information are important to anyone trying to do anything better. We need to know what we aren't doing quite right, so we can adjust, and we need to know what we are doing well, so we can replicate that. Makes sense doesn't it?

Now, let's look at the words. I looked up criticism in my thesaurus and here is what I found:

"1. censure, faultfinding, disapproval, condemnation, disparagement 2. a judgment, evaluation, appraisal, analysis, assessment, estimation, valuation, 2 b critique, review, commentary.

I also looked up the word praise, and found:

"v. 1 acclaim, laud, applaud, pay tribute to, compliment, commend, eulogize, extol, honor, sing the praises of, pay homage to, endorse..."

Now, think about these two lists of synonyms. Granted, not all of them make sense in a business context, but ask yourself these questions:

- Which of these things have I received more of in my professional life?
- Which of them motivates and inspires me to strive for greater achievement and higher performance?

And now with your coach's hat on, think about these questions:

- Which of these things do I share more often?
- Which will help me most inspire and motivate others to reach their potential?

If you are like me and most everyone I've ever discussed this with, you have received more negative, "constructive" feedback than positive, encouraging feedback at work. And you believe that with more encouragement or praise you might have been more successful quicker.

The point in two words?

Praise matters.

Want some more proof?

According to a Gallup survey outlined in the book, *How Full is Your Bucket?* 61% of American workers received no praise at work last year. 61%! And the #1 reason people leave their jobs is because they feel unappreciated.

It is undeniably true. You can prove it from your personal experiences and from the hard data. Praise matters. And it is vastly underused as a coaching tool by most people most of the time.

As you finish reading this and walk away from your desk and begin interacting with people (whether you coach them or not), keep these things in mind:

- **Everyone needs recognition and reassurance.** Hopefully the exercise and the data above confirm this fact for you.
- **Praise gives us pride in our jobs.** Given a choice, would you rather have people who take pride in their work, or not?
- **Praise generates enthusiasm and commitment.** Committed people can work miracles, so it pays to build commitment.
- **Praise builds loyalty.** What are the real and hidden costs of employee turnover?
- **Praise prevents people from feeling taken for granted.** When people feel taken for granted they are less committed and loyal, aren't they?
- **Praise motivates us to "go the extra mile."** The extra mile is often where we find satisfied customers, higher returns and more.
- **Praise improves our relationships.** Would you like to have better relationships with those you lead, coach and work with?
- **Praise takes hardly any time and costs nothing.** There are few things in life that can produce such great returns for such a small investment.

Get that praise tool out of your toolbox. Dust it off and allow it to become shiny with use. It is an easy tool to use. It is a fun tool to use. You might even want to take it out of your mental toolbox and lay it on top of your desk so you remember to use it more often.

If you want answers to the questions at the beginning of this article, start with praise, because praise matters.