

Learn the essential habit of recognizing, sharing successes

My friend John is the CEO of a health care company. A few years ago, in a presentation to his managers, he did the unthinkable.

John walked on stage with a printout of the company's core values in one hand and a garbage can in the other. He set the garbage can down in front of him. Then he read each of the core values and associated description: "Caring people, customer service excellence, open communications." Each value consisted of words you would expect—not at just a health care company, but any company for that matter.

John finished reading. He paused. And then he dropped the core values into the garbage. He stood stone-faced, yet filled with a purposeful confidence. An awkward silence filled the room. I mean, you could hear a pin drop. After a few seconds (that seemed like an eternity) John asked, "Oh, were those important?"

His question was met with even more silence.

Finally, a manager spoke up: "John, those core values are posted everywhere. They are on the walls in every location. They are on our website. We tell employees when we hire them how critically important they are to our success. We've had them for more years than I can remember."

John nodded thoughtfully. "When we all walked in here today, how many of you could remember the values? Better yet, can anyone give me an example of how we've successfully taken these supposedly important values off our walls and ingrained them in the hearts and minds of our employees? How many of you can honestly say you regularly think about, talk about and use the core values to guide how you lead and manage your workforce?"

Managers sat back in their chairs. It was obvious they were reflecting on a stark reality—their CEO was right. They murmured to each other about how they didn't regularly think about or talk about the core values and how they didn't "manage with the values." They certainly agreed that the work environment would be much better if every employee understood the values and how to live them.



ON PERFORMANCE

Gregg Lederman

After a few moments, John reached into the garbage.

"Like me, you know these values are incredibly important to our work culture and customers' experience. However, it seems we may not have a strong enough grasp on why they are so important and how to perform them.

"We need to rethink what these core values provide us. They are a management tool that enables us to lead our workforce. As leaders, we must create the environment where people feel respected and important because of the work they do. And if we create that environment, employees will tap into the motivation we all want to see more of."

John stood before his troops, ready to lead them into a mindset that would disrupt "business as usual" for many of them.

So what did he do?

John informed his managers that it is their job as leaders to create an environment where employees can become more motivated and committed to living the core values every day. He shared examples of research from over the last seven decades about what really motivates people at work. He spoke about the three primary motivators:

1. Respect: Employees want to feel respected.
2. Relationship: Employees want a good relationship with their boss.
3. Relevance: Employees want to have relevance and purpose in their work.

To equip his team to manage by the values, John introduced them to an essential habit for being a trusted leader: recognizing and sharing success.

Recognizing and sharing success is one of the most cost-effective and powerful

ways to help create an environment where employees are motivated and committed. This habit is a three-part process for effectively recognizing employees when they demonstrate the values:

1. Highlight the activity performed.
2. Link it to one of the company core values.
3. Share the business impact or how the action helps the company improve and grow.

It's simple, but not easy. We know that recognizing people when they do a good job is important. It just makes sense. But often a chasm exists between knowing and doing. That's where the essential habit comes in. Unfortunately, as it turns out, we as humans struggle to create managerial habits that stick. But it is possible.

Step 1: Change your mind. To create a habit you must decide that change is necessary and that change is possible. For most, a mindset shift must take place. Not only do you need to see that recognition is important, you also have to believe that you should invest time in it.

Step 2: Create a routine. For example, John recommended that each manager schedule 10 minutes, once a week, on their calendar to think about opportunities to recognize employees for living their company's core values.

Step 3: Feed the habit. In order to commit the time, energy and focus needed to make the habit stick, you need to provide the necessary willpower and reinforcement. Self-motivation is critical. At first, the level of focus and effort will be great. However, over time the routine will become second nature and the work habit will become easier and easier. Pay attention to the gradual impact. Notice the increase in alignment and engagement among your workforce. Feel stress decrease as trust increases in the workplace. Notice how it just "feels good" to manage to your values, constantly reminding employees about the values in ways that make them feel good too.

Curious about what happened with John and his managers?

Ninety-seven percent of his managerial

team actively participated in developing the essential habit. More than 15,000 examples of the values in action were recognized and shared across the company—equal to approximately twice a month per each manager. The company has not spent any money on traditional rewards-oriented methods for motivating employees. These efforts have contributed to an increase in

profitability of more than \$4 million.

John's speech was another reminder for me that though some leaders may hold the corner office and a fancier title, to truly lead you need one thing: followers who trust you. The essential habit of recognizing and sharing successes will help you become a more trusted leader.

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rity, is a professional speaker on the customer experience, leadership and culture change. He is an adjunct professor at the Simon Business School at the University of Rochester and is the author of the New York Times best-selling book "EN-GAGED!: Outbehave Your Competition to Create Customers for Life." Read more from Gregg at www.gregglederman.com.