

Hello and welcome to the Coach's Corner. I'm coach Joette, and today I'd like to discuss the importance of recognizing and rewarding good performance. It's a fact that everyone wants to feel appreciated, and none of us seem to have outgrown this basic human need. But as supervisors and leaders, we are often too busy or too stressed out to remember that the recognition we crave—well, others crave it too.

A study conducted by Kepner-Tregoe in 1995 determined that only 50% of managers say they give recognition for high performance. So that means that the other 50% of the workforce believes that accomplishing extraordinary things is just a normal part of the job. We literally have half of the workforce starved for recognition. Unless we turn those statistics around, we will never be able to motivate an organization to achieve excellence.

Research also shows that when we encourage others, we boost their performance—that's what cheerleading is all about. We need to hear others cheering for us, and when we connect to the hearts of others, we are more inclined to do our very best. The researchers and bestselling authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner call it "encouraging the heart". At the heart of leadership is caring, and without caring about others, leadership really doesn't have a purpose. When you don't show others that you care,

other people won't care about what you have to say as a supervisor or manager, or they won't be interested in knowing what you know.

Also, it's really important that others believe your gestures and actions of support are really genuine. This is an area where you just can't fake it. Faking it doesn't make it.

Have you thought about how you like your recognition? Not everyone likes recognition the same way you like yours. Don't make the assumption that you know what another person prefers. Some like recognition done privately, while others like to be recognized in public. As a supervisor, the best way to explore this is to simply, and directly—ASK. Ask your employees how they prefer to be recognized and rewarded. It sounds so easy and is common sense, but it is amazing how many supervisors make this decision without ever consulting their employees. Some employees prefer time off, others prefer cash awards, and some are just happy if you tell them “thank you for doing a great job” in front of their peers.

When you see good behavior that you would like repeated, use positive reinforcement. Providing others with recognition and rewards and visibly celebrating successes of the team reinforces good behaviors.

So how do you do this? We've all heard the story about organizations not having extra funding available for awards and recognition—especially in tight budget times. But recognition and “encouraging the heart” doesn't have to be expensive. There are numerous books available that will give you some great ideas. Some examples are small thank you cards and gift cards that you personalize. There are inspirational lapel pins available that are motivating and don't cost a lot. You could bake cookies for someone you would like to recognize, take someone to lunch or recognize birthdays of others with a card or a cake.

I personally sing “happy birthday” to my employees, and if they are not around the office on their birthday, I sing it to them on their voice mail. It really makes people laugh and smile—especially when they hear me singing! I try to remember their anniversaries or other special days they have. In the workplace, another example of recognition you could use is to keep a large blank sheet of paper attached to the wall, like flip chart paper, and allow others to write encouraging words to someone they work with when somebody does something worthy of recognition.

Or, you can attach a symbolic meaning to something ordinary like a rock. Create the “You Rock!” award, and pass it around the office. Let employees give this award to each other when someone does something that really

rocks! The amount of free things you can do to recognize and reward others is endless. Use your creativity, show your heart to others, and it will pay dividends in productivity.