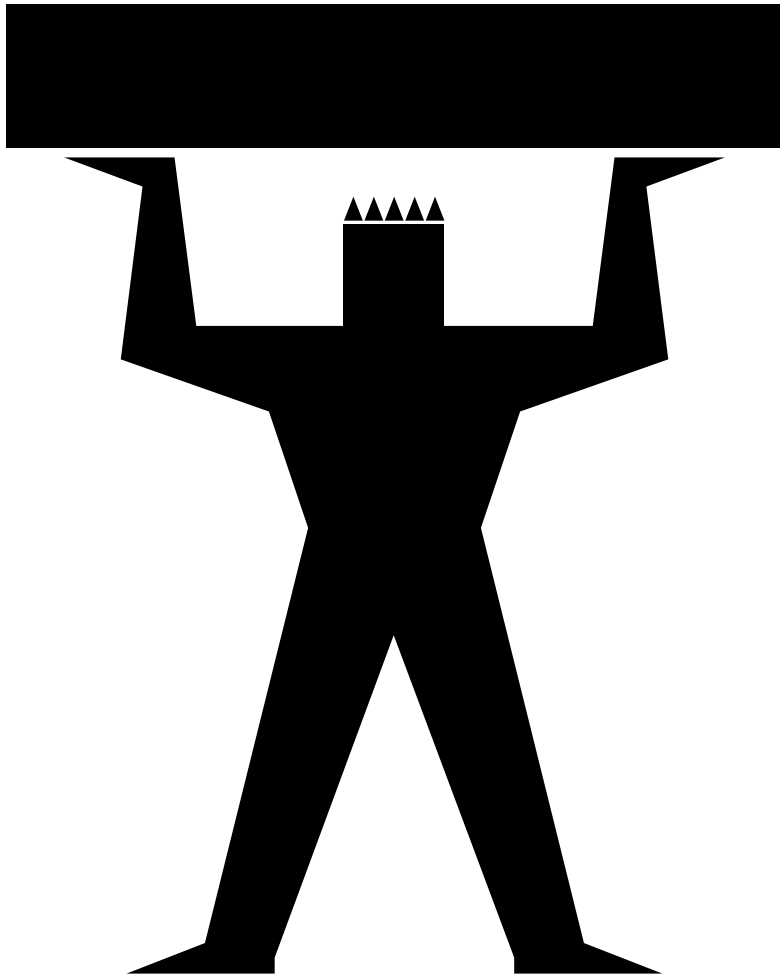

LEADERSHIP SKILLS



THE POSITIVE POWER OF PRAISE

Why praise is effective and tips on giving it

"There are two things people want more than sex and money... recognition and praise."

—Mary Kay

A few years ago, a television newscaster happened upon a man dressed in a stupid-looking red Spiderman suit. He had placed suction cups on his hands and feet to climb the side of one of the tallest buildings in the world. He climbed 125 stories.

When he came over the top, there was thunderous applause, as well as police and reporters waiting for him. They asked, "Why in the world would you risk your life to climb this tall building?" He thought for a moment and then responded, "I love to hear the applause."

Like this "Spiderman," the employees who work at your company love to be applauded, to be recognized for their accomplishments and safe behavior. Sadly though, most employees feel like the little boy who asked his mother, "How come you never say anything about the dirt I track out?"

As a safety leader, you're probably quick to notice unsafe behaviors and conditions. And though a person may thank you for pointing out a hazard—like reminding them to put on their PPE—they'll appreciate a compliment much more.

Offering compliments based on a person's actions inspires them to perform in such a manner that invites additional praise. People tend to live up to the compliments they receive. When you combine this concept with the psycholinguistic research that indicates a person's mind takes 48 percent longer to understand a negative statement than a positive one, it's easy to see how compliments can become a dynamic force in motivating others.

The power of praise is limited only by its lack of use. Praise is not used enough because managers and supervisors often misunderstand what actually is rewarding to employees.

Studies show that regularly giving informal recognition to an employee is a stronger motivator than formal rewards. Simple praise is long remembered because it tells an employee that you noticed his or her efforts and took the time to give a personal thanks. It doesn't matter that you are not the boss. A compliment from a safety supervisor/manager will build an employee's self-esteem and brighten his or her life.

Reward a Deed Now, Not Later

The president of Foxboro was so pleased with a scientist's solution to a problem and so bemused about how to reward it that he rummaged through the drawers in his desk, found something, leaned over the desk to the scientist, and said, "Here!" He handed the scientist a banana, the only thing he could put his hands on immediately. Since then, the small "gold banana" pin has been the highest accolade for scientific achievement at Foxboro.

To have the biggest impact, you should recognize a "good job" as soon as possible after an achievement. Don't wait until the next safety meeting or holiday party to give out praise. The further away you get from the event, the less impact the acknowledgment will have.

Don't Praise Employees in the Hallway

Be sure you have a person's full attention before you offer praise. Don't try to give a compliment when you or the employee are scurrying down the corridor or rushing through the plant to meet a deadline or arrive at a meeting on time. Instead, set up a convenient time and place. If you plan to praise the employee in the break room or in the field, be sure to do it right.

Maintain Eye Contact

Looking employees in the eye is critical because people perceive lack of eye contact as insincerity or lying. On the other hand, employees are likely to look away from you because they probably haven't had much practice accepting honest, straightforward praise.

Sound Sincere

The most heartfelt praise will miss its mark if your tone of voice does not convey genuine enthusiasm. Your level of excitement, as well as your words, tells people how you really feel. Saying, "I was impressed with the way you set up that job yesterday," actually may come across as an insult if your voice is monotone.

The Benefits

You will benefit personally from giving praise. Dale Carnegie once wrote, "The rare individual who honestly satisfies this heart-hunger [praise] will hold people

in the palm of his hand, and even the undertaker will be sorry when he dies.” Also, by catching people doing things right and rewarding those behaviors, we create a sense of pride in the organization. People will feel better about their jobs, be more likely to stick with the company, and most important of all, be more apt to follow safety procedures.

What’s Most Important!

A national survey asked workers to rank, in order of importance, what they wanted most from their jobs. At the same time, managers were asked to guess what the employees would find most important. Here are the results:

	Workers’ Responses	Managers’ Guesses
Appreciation for good work	1	8
Feeling “in” on things	2	10
Help with personal problems	3	9
Job security	4	2
Good wages	5	1
Work that keeps you interested	6	5
Possibility for promotion	7	3
Personal loyalty to company or boss	8	6
Good working conditions	9	4
Tactful discipline	10	7