

RECOGNITION IS CRITICAL

I recently asked a friend how often she'd been complimented or otherwise specially recognized for her work during her career. She replied: "Not often enough."

Unfortunately, it's true for most of our employees, and I often wonder why. I have some ideas I'll share, and the first is denial. Most managers and supervisors think, "I pay Charlie a lot of money to do his thing for the company – why would I need to praise and recognize him for doing what I'm paying him to do?"

That fact is, money will get employees through the doors of your business, but it won't keep them there. What will? Recognition. Praise. Feeling valued. Let's face it, most managers and supervisors have no training in recognizing their employees. Many were promoted to their positions without receiving the essential know-how for interacting with and motivating their charges.

I've found that the most intelligent people are often the worst when it comes to soft skills. They have a hard time getting out of their heads and verbalizing what they need others to hear. They don't realize that you can't take your employees for granted. You have to let them know you value them and what they're doing for you.

Recognition, to be effective, must be genuine, specific, sincere, and timely. It's not enough to recognize your employees and their contributions once a year at a performance review. It's also not enough to say, "Alice, you did a great job." Tell her what job you're talking about. Be specific about what she did that impressed you, and let her know how proud you are of her and her work.

It's also important to recognize employees in front of their coworkers. It not only increases their pride at being singled out and complimented, it will motivate the other employees to do well and be recognized.

You can take it a step further and recognize your employees in front of the customers. If you're walking the floor and you notice Alan helping a customer, you might stop and introduce yourself to the customer and say, "Alan is one of our best employees. I know he'll do a great job taking care of you."

A wonderful thing about recognition as a motivator is that it doesn't cost you a penny. In fact, it saves you money by reducing

employee turnover and the costs associated with hiring and training new employees.

If you want to give someone a raise, you'll have to get approval from others, but if you want to recognize them, it will cost you nothing and no approval will be required. You're free to reward your employees with your words and build a team that will work well together and drive your business. If an NFL coach doesn't motivate his players to work together and win games, that coach will be fired.

My research shows that given a choice between \$100 in cash or a complimentary note written on a manager's personal stationary, most employees will choose the note. Why? Because once they've spent the \$100 it'll be gone, but a handwritten note is personal and lasting. I have a friend who has saved the many complimentary notes she's received over her career. She reads them once a year to remind herself that what she does is appreciated.

Now, I must say this: There are employees who simply cannot be motivated, no matter what you do. Although they show up every day, they've mentally left you. Ford Motor Company recently announced that it would be giving white-collar employees who'd been identified as underperformers the option to leave and take a severance package or enroll in a performance enhancement program. Employees who choose the enhancement program but whose performance doesn't improve will be terminated without a severance package.

Ford Motor has realized what too many companies haven't: if you've tried everything to recognize and motivate your employees, and nothing changes, you should cut your losses and let them go. **RO**

John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant. He is the president and founder of Service Quality Institute – the global leader in customer service – with operations in over 40 countries. John speaks more than 50 times each year and is considered one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. Contact John on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

