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Jay Greenstein, DC, puts
his staff first when it
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What if 'woo-hoo' doesn't work for you?

Knowing which way to motivate your employees can mean all the difference in your practice

BY MONICA WOFFORD, CSP

DR. BOB WAS NOT A "WOO-HOO" KIND OF GUY. His employees, however, seemed to incessantly give each other high fives, pats on the back, and cheers when they completed even the tiniest of tasks.

Dr. Bob was a firm believer that getting a paycheck was recognition enough and was a big fan of the more traditional style of recognition. The challenge was, however, his Generation X and Generation Y employees that no longer thought this philosophy had any credibility.

He wanted his team members to feel valued, but didn't quite know how to do that and still manage to feel authentic versus being some overly excited cheerleader, which he clearly was not.

He would give his look of approval, which was really more of a neutral look, when the team reached a goal of patient growth or a clean front desk or just about anything really, and then move on to the next item of priority without any words of kindness or praise.

Working with him was not difficult and the pay was decent, so the team just dealt with his less-than-excited reactions and shared their "way to go team" accolades behind his back.

Dr. Bob was facing a new challenge. A new chiropractic practice was opening up nearby and the rumor was that a recent chiropractic college graduate, who was also a former local high school athletic star, was going to run it and hire about 10 employees to cover his ambitions about the practice.

All of Dr. Bob's team members hated to leave, but longed to be understood by their boss, have their needs met in the way of recognition, and were frankly considering a quiet departure, or at least applying at this new practice.

How do you pom-pom?

Despite what you might think about the loyalty of the team you lead, this scenario is more real than you may wish to admit. And no, you don't have to become a pom-pom carrying leader to have employees feel recognized and valued, but you may want to keep at least these few tips in mind:

1. Public versus private recognition. There are four primary types of recognition and most people prefer two of the four.



First, there are the public and private recognition types. Those who prefer public recognition would have you throw them a party, drop balloons from the ceiling, and have everyone chant their name when they receive praise for something they have accomplished.

Those who prefer private recognition would be completely mortified if you put them through that. In fact, at a Parker Convention in Las Vegas we demonstrated this concept by bringing a volunteer on stage in front of 1,200 people so she could show what public recognition looks like.

A private recognition person, who would far prefer a quiet word or two of thanks, would never have volunteered — period.

2. Tangible versus intangible types. Everyone is either public or private in their recognition preference. But, you must also add to that the tangible or intangible element as that will change what you do.

A tangible recognition person will prefer something that shows your appreciation. A paycheck is a "thing" so to speak, but only until it is spent. The same is true for gift cards.

A real tangible item is a certificate, a token, a card, or something that can be put on display for all to see, particularly if that person is "public tangible."

An intangible person is fine with words of praise, a high five, or some kind of accolade that isn't written in stone or engraved on a plaque. Of course, keep in mind the "private

intangible” person doesn’t *want* everyone to know your appreciation and a “public intangible” person wants you to announce it to the world.

3. Be equitable, but not equal. There is always the concern when working with employees that you must give the exact same thing to everyone and keep favoritism or a possibility of thinking it exists, completely out of the office.

The truth is you don’t have to be exactly equal, but it is a good practice to be equitable. This means you would give the same value of item or action to each person.

That could mean you publicly praise one public tangible person in the next team meeting with verbal accolades and a plaque that states employee of the month, and then the following month, quietly send out an e-mail saying someone else, who is a private intangible person, is employee of the month and you have provided him or

her with a gift card (which would be in the same dollar amount as what you spent on the plaque).

Different strokes, different folks

It may also help to dispel any feelings of being treated differently if you explain that you know different people need different recognition needs. If you don’t, the public person will call you on the carpet for not making a big public deal for the private person. It’s all about communication, isn’t it?


Anytime you work with a team, there will be individual differences and needs, and anytime you deal with people, there will be these kinds of unique needs and sometimes those needs may be vastly different from your own.

No one is saying that in order to help those team members you have the privilege of leading you must suddenly get a pair of pom-poms, buy a mascot outfit, and become their biggest fan.

Certainly not!

Just remember people, the key to your business, need to feel valued, recognized, supported, and as if their contributions matter.

The thing that hangs up many business owners is that the personality of most owners is one that is internally driven and needs little recognition.

If everyone you worked with was like that, there would be a chiropractic office being run by each staff member you now work with. Not the case? Then recognize your gifts, and then also recognize theirs. 



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