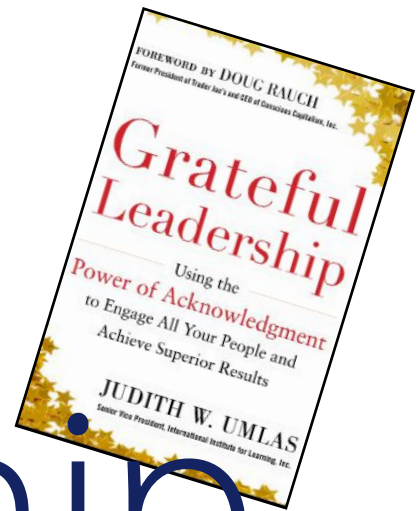


Grateful Leadership



All around us there are opportunities to successfully step into a leadership role and help those around us excel. Earlier this year employees had an opportunity to learn how to do so by using acknowledgement as they read the book "Grateful Leadership" by Judith W. Umlas.

Approximately 60 employees met weekly for four weeks with Learning and Development Coordinator Geoffrey Varner to discuss "Grateful Leadership." Participants discussed their own experiences and gained new insights about engaging those around them by using the power of acknowledgement.

"Grateful Leadership" not only provides information for supervisors on how to engage their employees but also shows how those who aren't in a formal leadership role can use acknowledgement to work better with other team members, help those around them achieve more and be a leader within their peer group.

Though acknowledgement can be defined more than one way, Judith defines it as "the heartfelt and authentic communication that lets people know their value to their organization or to their team and the importance of the contribution they make."

She tells many stories in the book about what a difference it can make not only to those receiving acknowledgement but also to those giving it. Most importantly, Judith shares how to give sincere, effective acknowledgement. To explain, she discusses "The five Cs: the acknowledgement practice that works miracles," which she considers the key steps of becoming a grateful leader.



Consciousness

In the book, Judith explains that most people think about acknowledging others nearly everyday but stop themselves from doing so. In fact, many of us have done it so many times that it actually becomes an unconscious thought process. For instance, we consider that someone has done an exceptional job but it never crosses our mind to actually tell them. By taking the time to recognize these moments, you become conscious of the opportunities you have to acknowledge others.

Choice

After you begin to recognize the many opportunities you have to acknowledge others, you're faced with a choice to make as to whether or not you will do so. As Judith says, "...make your choice a yes whenever possible." It can be uncomfortable to acknowledge a co-worker but the cost of stepping out of your comfort zone is far less than the cost of seeming ungrateful and unable to thank people. A brief moment of stepping out of your box is a worthwhile investment.

Courage

Saying "thank you" may seem simple, but giving true acknowledgement goes much further and does require some courage. You may focus on what the recipient's reaction will be and worry they'll think you aren't genuine, are being manipulative or are weak. In all reality, most people accept acknowledgement without considering ulterior motives, so don't waste time worrying about it. Judith does advise that when done correctly, acknowledgement can feel strange but you shouldn't be afraid to take the steps to recognize someone deserved.

Communication

Just as important as making the choice to acknowledge someone is deciding how you will acknowledge them. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to showing gratitude or recognizing achievements because every person is different and has a different idea of how they prefer to be acknowledged. Rather than doing what is most comfortable for you, consider what would make them most comfortable. Whether it's acknowledging them in front of others, through email, with a card or just a personal conversation, the key element here is that you're acknowledging someone in a way that they are comfortable with.

Commitment

After you form the habit of recognizing opportunities to acknowledge others and following through, the most difficult thing to do is to continue doing so. The busier we get, the more likely we are to let good habits go. As you're faced with busy, stressful or critical situations, rely on the power of acknowledgement. When you're committed to being a grateful leader – even if that means being a leader among your peers – you'll likely see those around you follow your example.

For more information about "Grateful Leadership" or to borrow a copy of the book, contact Geoffrey Varner, Learning and Development Coordinator.

