



APPRECIATION AT WORK

On March 5th we celebrated colleague appreciation day with a virtual chat featuring our CEO and an invitation to share what we each loved about our colleagues and our culture. While this particular March holiday is new to me, it is not new to Drs. Gary Chapman and Paul White. In 2011, they co-authored *The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace*.

It includes an assessment, the Motivating by Appreciation Inventory (MBA), which identifies colleagues' preferred method of receiving appreciation. This resource could be the missing link to a more positive work experience at a time when 71% of us are insulated in our home offices.

The first of the five languages is words of affirmation. This language uses words to communicate a positive message to the other person. It could be praising a job well done, affirming a character trait such as kindness or honesty, or appreciating a personality trait such as optimism or extroversion. The method by which the appreciation is conveyed is equally important. It could be personal in a one-on-one setting, praise in front of others, public affirmation or a simple thank you note. Many companies over rely on this language when they recognize individual performance in a public setting. Chapman and White report that 40-50% of employees do not want to receive recognition in front of a large group. A second misstep is hollow or inauthentic praise. When using words of affirmation, make certain they are specific. I recently celebrated 10 years at BKS. I loved the personal notes from leadership. The commemorative plaque and the gift from a catalog were not nearly as meaningful to me.

The second language is quality time. Quality time is focused attention in the moment. We pride ourselves on being multi-taskers, but there is nothing affirming about conversing with someone while they answer emails, scroll through their social feed, and look beyond you to nod to passersby. There is a concept in coaching called "authentic presence". To achieve authentic presence, coaches practice quieting their own minds to the point where they can take in information without distraction, interruption, or judgement. I love quality time with like-minded colleagues. I recently spent a Sunday morning playing golf with some dear and fun colleagues-turned-friends. That four hours reminded me that I am part of a community. That community is easy to forget when all of your interactions are on zoom.

The third language is acts of service. When this is your primary language of appreciation, you recognize a hand in need, but you have trouble asking for it yourself. If you see someone who appears overwhelmed, make sure you can volunteer assistance without reservation. Then ask how you can help. Don't assume you know what they need or want. If you are going to help, do it their way. This is not the time to find process improvements. And finish what you start. Guess what the most frequently requested service is? IT. So, here's to you Nerd Herd (that's our IT team)! Thanks for keeping us afloat during this past year. We literally could not have done it without you.

The fourth language is tangible gifts. While my 10-year anniversary gift from a catalog didn't really make me feel appreciated, I have colleagues who loved their big screen TV's and Roomba vacuum cleaners and cookware. They shared their delight with anyone who would listen. The key take-a-way here is you have to give a gift that the recipient values. This may be why I enjoy our annual White Elephant gift exchange so much. The reactions people have when they open yet another as-seen-on-TV treasure never fails to crack me up.

The last one, physical touch, is the language which evokes the most discussion and discomfort. It is, however, a very human way to express appreciation. A high five or a firm handshake can mean the world to someone. I have lots of friends who are huggers. And they go right in for it without asking. Do the non-huggers a favor and ask if it's OK before you go for it –especially at work. I have twin sons and one is a big hugger. The other one will tell you straight up – I am not a hugger and he stiffens up like a board when someone gives him a squeeze. Mom is not going to take credit or blame for it. They are just different people.

So, in this month of colleague appreciation, ask your colleague how you could best express your gratitude to them. Mop slippers? Ped Egg? Key Ninja? No thanks. What I'd really like is to spend some quality time with you sometime soon.



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20+ years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

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Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

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