



Show Me the Love, then Show Me the Money

By Patti Hathaway, Business Advisor & Author

In an age when customer loyalty is critically important, research has proven that the way to earn customer loyalty is by getting your employees to emotionally connect with their customers. So how does a manager make that happen? By emotionally connecting with them as managers.

We know from research that people make decisions based on emotional reasons, not rational ones. Managers tend to spend lots of time and energy trying to motivate employees with rational incentives, like recognition and awards programs based on meeting goals and sales expectations. They provide reports and sales technique training. Yet, what matters most to employees is whether or not you connect emotionally with them.

What about the old adage, “We’re here to work, not to make friends”? Some managers don’t believe that it is their job to become their employees’ friend. When I talk about connecting emotionally with your employees, I’m not suggesting that you become their friend or go out to the bar with them after work. In fact, that may not be an advisable thing for you to do. I am suggesting, however, that you need to build a relationship with every employee. Building a relationship is different than building a friendship. Building a relationship is as simple as making sure, through your words and actions, your employees know that you care for them as a person. For instance, do you know 3-4 personal things about each of your employees? Do you know their likes or dislikes? Do you know what motivates them? What hobbies they have? What they like to do when they are not working? Invest time in getting to know your employees, the return on your investment will be well worth the time.

When it comes to feedback, overwhelmingly you will get better results, faster improvements in morale, and greater productivity from the use of praise than you will ever get from constructive criticism. Managers can give an employee ten positive messages about the things they’ve done and the employee will remember the one negative comment because it overshadows everything completely. Overwhelmingly, you will get better results, faster improvements in morale, and greater productivity from the use of praise than you will ever get from constructive criticism.

Praise is rare in most workplaces. One poll found that an astounding 65 percent of Americans reported receiving no recognition for good work in the past year. And yet we know that no one ever suffers from over-recognition. Despite what managers often believe, more intangible perks – including flexibility, good communication, and heaps of recognition (you practically can't give too much of it) – trump compensation on the list of why employees like their companies.

Providing positive feedback is extremely valuable because it usually increases the confidence, motivation and performance of others. Here are the basic steps:

1. Tell the employee in specific descriptive terms what behavior s/he did right, and its impact up front.
2. Tell the person how you feel about the behavior or how the behavior will impact others again. Be specific.
3. Encourage more of the same behavior.

It is interesting to note that companies use elaborate methods to track products and sales. Many companies keep track of employee attendance, earnings per employee, and certainly net profit. But few organizations measure the “soft” side of business. Yet, Gallup research proves that caring relationships between managers and employees directly affect a company's employee retention, productivity, profitability, and customer service metrics. The bottom-line is that when managers care about their employees, organizations get results. Employees stay longer, work harder, and develop stronger bonds with customers.

Excerpted from Patti Hathaway's new book, *Secrets for Unleashing Employee Greatness: The Step-by-Step System to Maximize Every Employee's Greatness*, 2005. Patti Hathaway, CSP, *The CHANGE AGENT*, is one of fewer than 7% women worldwide to have earned the Certified Speaking Professional designation from the National Speakers Association for her proven presentation skills. She is a Business Advisor and the author of 6 books that have been translated into 5 languages and have sold over 100,000 copies. Patti solves your people challenges by providing highly customized solutions to meet your needs. Contact Patti at 1-800-339-0973 or at her web site: www.thechangeagent.com for information on her speaking and consulting services or to receive her free e-mail newsletter/blog.