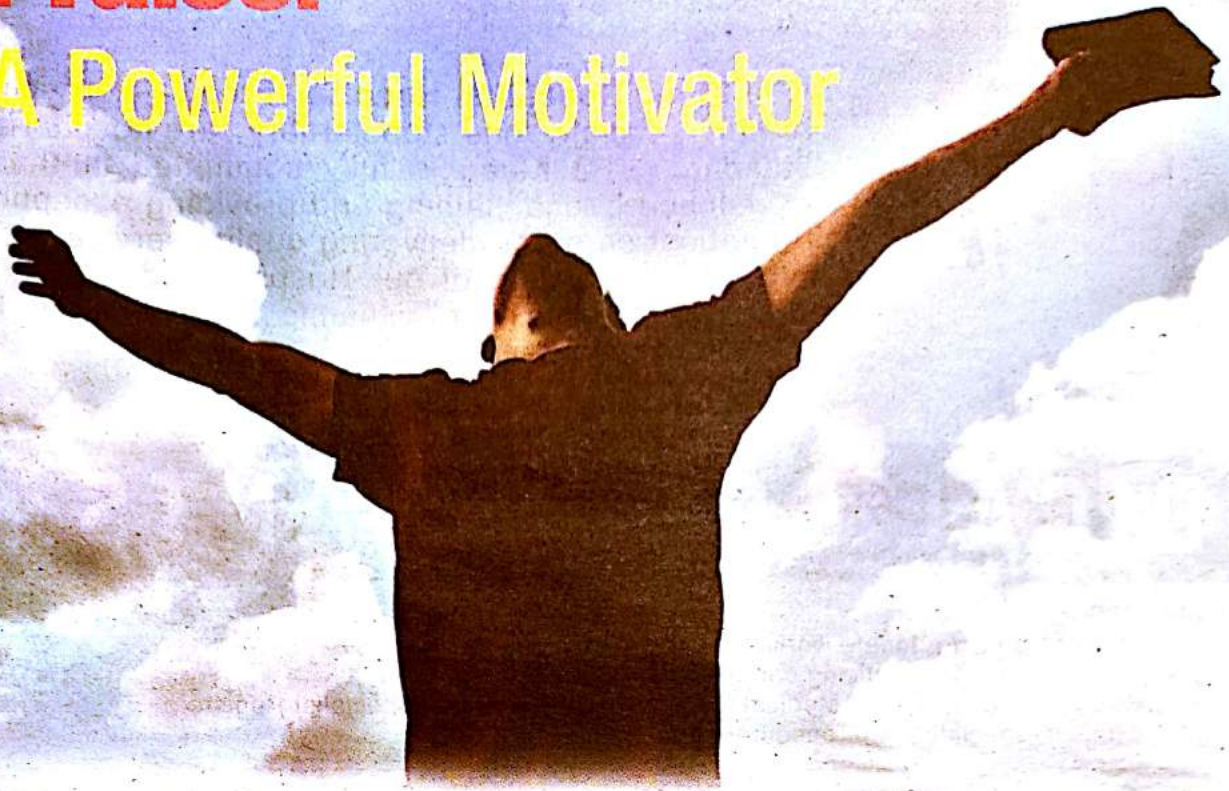


Praise: A Powerful Motivator



When was the last time you praised someone? When was the last time someone praised you? A common error managers make is neglecting to show sufficient appreciation for the work of their subordinates in their daily work. Many Malaysian managers in particular feel that praise is not necessary even if the individual has done exceptional work. Why?

■ by Harban Singh

Praise has a definite effect on attitude and morale. When done at the right place and right time, it can have a far-fetched and infectious effect. Taking the time to express appreciation is one of the most powerful and positive things a leader can do. It inspires and motivates the other person. People love knowing that their actions are appreciated, and they normally live up to the superior's "self fulfilling prophecy". On the contrary, a subordinate who is often criticised (the opposite of praise) may suffer a lack of confidence and self-esteem.

Most managers and leaders who seldom offer praise have the notion that their subordinates or peers are paid to do good work, so praise is not warranted. Gone are the days when we take our employees for granted in this dynamic and competitive business world where human resources are accepted as key assets. We need to constantly adapt and change. We need to motivate people and give them feedback on their work performance, irrespective of their position and status. This is part of talent management. Simply put, praise is something each of us must practice

and inculcate. It does not cost us anything, but it works wonders. This is reinforced by Kenneth Blanchard in his best-selling book, *One Minute Manager*, on the need to constantly praise good performance. Remember, it is also vital to praise "progress", if it is done proficiently. "Ideal behaviour" is a journey that comes about one step at a time. A manager's job is to manage the "progress" towards the goal. Thus, a good manager constantly looks for opportunities to praise "progress" to achieve objectives.

Unanimously, it is agreed that a competitive salary is vital for everyone. However, surveys show that the workforce rates something else well ahead of money. What is it? Praise, as a form of appreciation. Without money, you cannot eat. But beyond a certain point, money doesn't mean as much as the personal satisfaction of being needed and wanted. (Think about Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.) No matter how much money you put in employees' pockets on payday, they also like some personal attention from the boss, maybe even from their peers and loved ones.

Are there limits to how often and in what manner you praise subordinates or peers? Individuals react differently to

praise. Some blush or wonder, others claim they were simply lucky, and some may question whether what they said or did merits praise. Consistent practice of praise brings a lot of direct and indirect dividends. When people feel that their efforts are appreciated, they work better and more diligently. Likewise, when people feel their work is not appreciated, the result is the opposite. Remembering to thank people for what they do and showing that you are constantly aware of their contribution is an important part of a manager's job. It gives you respect and more support. Praise need not be a mantra, but it has to be spontaneous. Those who advocate this limitless "best practice" will testify to its unlimited returns both at work and at home.

For those who have hardly praised others before, think of someone who you have never expressed appreciation for. Now you can make it a point to let them know that you are thankful. Can you fancy the profound effect it will have, especially when you give praise deservedly? They may even pass on the positivity to their subordinates and loved ones.

Why wait until people have worked for 25 to 30 years before you give them a gift pin and appreciate

their loyal and esteemed service? Do it now. Then tell them again every time they achieve a new successful feat. Recognition of your subordinates' efforts is a key managerial function and does not take much time or effort. Irrespective of their age, all employees, as individuals or teams, love to hear that "tinkle" in their ears (more so in public) that they are doing a good job or that they are contributing effectively to achieve the department's objectives. It is contagious and a sure motivator.

Finally, put more compassion, devotion and passion to praise that will bring a new dimension to one's inner self. The result: higher productivity, loyalty and better morale, accentuated by good self-image. As Cicero the great statesman and philosopher said: "We are all excited by the love of praise, and it is the noblest spirits that feel it most."

Do it often! Do it today! Do it now!

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