

“Hug” Your Employees

Written by: Carol Heady

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When was the last time you hugged your employee? I don't mean in the physical sense, I mean metaphorically. "Hugging" your employee demonstrates you appreciate them and recognize the quality of their work. So, have you thanked them for going the extra mile for a client or getting a project done ahead of the original due date? If you haven't its not too late to start, and if you hug your employee they will hug you back. In other words, if you appreciate the work they are doing they will look for opportunities to go above and beyond to exceed a customers expectation or stay late for the success of a project or team.

What we recognize multiplies. What we focus on we get more of. This is the theory behind attraction and the power of positive energy. If managers "hugged" their employees more frequently they would have happier more productive employees, a more positive work environment, more satisfied customers, and people would look forward to going to work-oh and so would managers. This doesn't require having a sophisticated, costly incentive program. "Hugging" your employees doesn't cost any money and takes about 30 seconds of time. I stumbled upon this concept while reading about an upscale family owned clothing store in Westport, CT that practices this with their customers. They demonstrate appreciation for their customers by "hugging" them. Again not in the physical sense (although some of their employees have been known to give a bear hug), but by hand delivering altered apparel, making appointments outside of "regular hours", custom tailoring slacks and sports jacket on Christmas eve for an event that evening. Jack Mitchell, author of *Hug Your Customer* runs this family owned business using this "hugging" philosophy to the tune of 65 million dollars in annual sales. The company believes in creating relationships first, both with their employees and customers, as a result they create loyal employees and loyal customers.

When I'm working with managers on how to effectively coach employees, I'm always amazed at how often they don't recognize people for quality work. It never fails that we get 100% recognition when we do something wrong or make a mistake or miss the proverbial "mark" but we get zero or little recognition when we do something well. Think about this for a few seconds, and ask yourself when was the last time you recognized good, very good, or exceptional performance? It takes as little as 30 seconds to recognize a job well done. And now ask yourself, how much did it cost? Verbal recognition is one of the most powerful forms of "hugging" and the most cost effective.

There is one more good reason to "hug" your employees; it has its financial rewards. According to research done by The Jackson Organization (independent research company involved in a break through study involving 200,000 managers over a ten year period), there is a direct correlation between the practice of effective recognition programs and financial performance. For more on this study and best practices I urge you to read *The Carrot Principal* written by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton.

What are you doing to "hug" your employees?