



## Management and Performance Associates – May/June 2006 Recognition

How do you feel when someone wishes you a Happy Birthday, months after the actual date? Worse, what about if they do not even remember your birthday? The feeling is more or less the same when you do not receive recognition or reinforcement feedback for a job well done—or, when results were “only” according to expectations, but they represented an important achievement.

When a manager demonstrates this attitude, not showing appreciation for staff members’ performance, he or she will end up producing negative results for the team. Some examples:

1. Staff members are not aware of the manager’s **standard of excellence**, since the above expectations performance did not receive any positive signaling from the manager.
2. **Self esteem** is the result of a combination of “I can and I deserve it.” If employees do not get the message that they deserve recognition, self esteem will be impacted.
3. **Criticism becomes over-valued**, since the only feedback received, probably, relates to the need to correct a behavior or to change an attitude.
4. The purpose of the recognition or reinforcement feedback is to **stimulate the repetition of the same behavior in future situations**. As the adequate behavior or result obtained was not adequately praised, employees will not repeat a behavior as they do not know if it was positive or not.
5. As there is not stimulation for repeating adequate behaviors or differentiated results, we are also limiting the stimulation for

**exceeding performance standards**, as recognition was not provided.

In addition to these consequences to the team there are also risks for the manager. Perhaps the most important of them is the risk of losing his or her best performers – the stars of the team – to other departments, or worse, to the competition. Yes, your star performers do like and need to receive recognition.

To mention in December, during the Performance Appraisal, that a specific job performed in May was excellent, is the same as wishing happy birthday seven months after the date. It shows no sense of timing, it sounds a little pathetic, and worse, it will have no impact on the employee’s motivation.

Therefore, do not miss any opportunity to recognize your staff members in the moments that performance exceeds expectations. And when an employee’s performance is below expectations in spite of a lot of dedication and effort, at least recognize his or her efforts and show appreciation for their dedication. Results do not always come out the way we planned. We cannot miss the opportunity to motivate our staff members.

Here are some hints to recognize staff members’ excellent performance:

1. Keep looking for what they are doing well, instead of only focusing on what they are not doing well.
2. Reserve some minutes in your busy agenda to recognize a staff member’s superior performance.



3. Be sure to explain the context in which the differentiated behaviors occurred
4. Describe the action performed and its impact on performance
5. Reinforce the relevance of the contribution to the department and to the corporation.
6. Demonstrate your expectation that actions like the ones being reinforced should be repeated in the future.

Although a simple measure, it can strongly impact the employee's motivation. And the additional benefit is that the impact is not only on the individual, but also on the team.

**See you next time. We welcome your feedback.**

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