

I Saw What You Did & I Know Who You Are

Bloopers, Blunders, and Success Stories
on Giving and Receiving Recognition
(Janis Allen)

Summary

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The point of the book is that recognition (positive reinforcement) is highly important to a high performance organization. The challenge is that many of us struggle to be effective in delivering and receiving recognition.

This summary includes key points from the book rather than a chapter-by-chapter presentation.

*Be careful what you reinforce;
you will get more of it.*

Common Mistakes in Recognition

- Massive reinforcement attempts can appear impersonal. (A person may be pleased that you approve of the group results; however, they may not feel that you appreciate them individually.)
- Having someone do the reinforcement on your behalf generally leaves the recipient feeling unimportant.
- Just recognizing results causes people to feel you don't care about them as people.
- Using the sandwich technique (a small praise followed by bad news ending with another small praise) causes problems. If this is your habit, people will always be looking for the axe to fall whenever you say something nice.

Giving Quality Recognition

- **Frequency:** Unless positive reinforcement for performance occurs frequently, it has little effect on behavior.
- **Personalization:** An intended reinforcer will only be effective if the recipient wants it. Don't assume everyone appreciates the same reinforcer. Giving recognition requires effort. It becomes difficult when the person you recognize does not respond well to your efforts. Sometimes, the way you are recognizing the person is not a good match for what they find reinforcing. Don't give up on recognition; however, do some investigating to find out what would work best for that person in the future.
- **Developing Self-Reinforcement:** Once a person knows why you value their work, they begin to remember your approval and reinforce themselves when they repeat the desired behavior. Your role is to help the person become aware of the specific behaviors you value.
- **Right Time and Place:** Reinforcers are most effective if you deliver them while the person is performing the desired behaviors.

Receiving Recognition Gracefully

Some people struggle with receiving recognition. Reasons include:

- They believe only perfection merits recognition, not simply improvement.
- They believe they could have put more effort into the task and feel guilty.

When you receive praise or recognition, be gracious.

- Listen to the praise without rebuffering or deflecting it.
- Say, "thank you" or "I'm glad you liked it."
- Smile.
- If the person praising you also contributed to the result, say, "We are a good team, aren't we?"
- If other people contributed to the results, say, "Thanks for noticing. By the way, did you also know that ___ did ___ to make this a success."

Recognition Tips

- **Reinforcement Tour:** Occasionally, wander with reinforcement and recognition in mind. Don't use every time you see a person as an opportunity to give them more tasks or point out what they did wrong.
- **Stand-alone Reinforcement:** When you deliver reinforcement, don't mix in other things in the same meeting. Do those another time.
- **Specific:** Mention specific commendable behaviors and how those contributed to good results.
- **Positive Gossip:** When someone tells you a good thing another person did, share that with the person. It has double the reinforcement power.
- **Tangible Reinforcers:** Generally, for tangible reinforcers to be effective, people must receive four times as many social reinforcers. When that happens, the tangible reinforcer can serve as a symbolic reminder of the behavior or result.
- **Group Recognition:** When you recognize a team, there's usually at least one person who has made a more significant contribution than the others. Go to that person(s) privately, ahead of time, to tell them specifically what they did that impressed you.
- **Card Stash:** Keep a stash of greeting cards on hand for reinforcing those who prefer personal notes.

- **Recapturing the Moment:** If you are unable to provide immediate recognition, meet with the person later. Ask that they talk to you about the event. Do your best to help them recapture the moment. Your praise will be more effective.
- **Phrases and Gestures:** The following phrases and gestures tend to reinforce people:

<i>Phrase</i>	<i>Gesture</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You did good.• I'm proud of you.• Tell me about it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• thumbs up• smile• head nod

- **Regular Preference Survey:** At least once a year or whenever there have been major changes, do a Reinforcement Preference Survey. On the survey, ask if the person prefers public recognition or one-on-one recognition. Provide a list of available recognition options, asking which ones they would find reinforcing and which they would not like. Options could include:
 - ▶ Group recognition event
 - ▶ Opportunity to tell about the achievement in public
 - ▶ One-on-one meeting
 - ▶ Logo wear or items such as pens and mugs
 - ▶ You asking them for their opinion on possible changes
 - ▶ You keeping them personally informed
 - ▶ Personal note about something they did well
 - ▶ Getting to work on a special project in their area of interest