THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNITION IN LEADERSHIP

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WHEN was the last time you received genuine praise from your leader that made you feel like you really matter?

Thinking about your role, is it one in which you feel significant and recognised for the value you contribute?

For many people, the answer to each of these questions will be less than affirmative. This “recognition deficit” not only has an impact on how people perform, but it also affects the overall performance of the organisation and the company’s bottom line.

In fact, there are many research studies that support the notion that acknowledging and rewarding employee performance is good business – improving many things from employee satisfaction to financial performance.

In a 2016 survey commissioned by former Yum! Brand chief executive officer and author David Novak, a staggering 82% of American employees feel they are not recognised enough by their leaders for the contributions that they make. This lack of recognition, explains Novak, “takes a terrible toll on morale, productivity, and, ultimately, profitability.”

Another key finding of the survey found that 40% of Americans say they would be more energised in their roles if they were to receive more recognition for their work. Novak also concluded that recognising others and showing appreciation cost very little (if anything) and are hardly time-consuming.

Leaders who make a point of showing recognition and offering sincere appreciation to their team stand to gain a significant return on their small investment – a team that is renewed in their commitment to their leader and organisation, and dedicated to doing all they can to help their company thrive and succeed.

In essence, global research conducted by the Citerne Group shows that well-recognised employees have more drive, better work relationships, improved personal standing and stronger connections to their organisation.

By regularly acknowledging effort, leaders can engender a healthy and positive work environment, build trust to accelerate business performance of the organisation and the various initiatives that were run. It was one of the most nerve-wrecking moments of my career. I was delighted as Sherin gave me his undivided attention as we talked about the key points that were raised. He recognised the efforts we put in and offered a sincere “job well done!” That day, I felt a sense of significance, and I pledged my loyalty to GE again, feeling re-energised and believing that every little thing I did mattered and added value to the people, the team and the organisation.

There were five key factors in Sherin’s leadership approach that made recognising others a priority for him. Let’s take a look at them.

1. **Giving undivided attention**
   Sherin didn’t once check his emails or phone during our conversation. And yet, leaders have to constantly stay on top of their communication. Offering undivided attention is something I personally struggle with as the emails, WhatsApp messages and meeting schedules run into one another.
   However, when I do give people my undivided attention, I can see that it achieves great results in terms of their motivation and focus, as well as the clarity and communication that exists both ways.

2. **Acknowledging effort**
   Though our plans probably had loopholes and may not have been as ‘world class’ as GE headquarters (HQ), Sherin acknowledged our efforts to localise our plans and said we were on to something that we probably could share and teach HQ.
   It can be worth more than gold when your efforts are recognised and held in such high regard.

3. **Offering feedback and encouragement**
   As we talked about our plans, Sherin was engaged in the dialogue and expressed his honest opinions about how we were moving forward. He also shared his considerable knowledge to help us in our endeavours.
   This level of involvement made it clear that he respected our team and genuine concern to help us improve in whatever areas we could.

4. **Helping to connect the dots**
   Whether you’re working as a local team or as part of a global organisation, it can be difficult to know how your contributions affect the bigger picture. Sherin took the time to tell us exactly how our efforts helped the company, and made me and my team realise that our roles made a difference to the organisation.

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