



Performance Motivation

Praise in the workplace

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Praise in the workplace

Praise expresses recognition, reassurance or admiration. Praise can be verbal or given through body language.

Why do we need praise?

Pride, pleasure and increased feelings of self-esteem are all common reactions to being paid a compliment or receiving positive feedback.

This is because being praised triggers the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps control the reward and pleasure centres of the brain.

Dopamine also contributes to innovative thinking and creative problem solving.


Researcher Lori Kay Baranek found that these well-intentioned rewards and incentives have a negative impact on a person's long term motivation.



Praise & the workplace

Workplace recognition motivates, provides a sense of accomplishment and makes employees feel valued for their work.

Recognition not only boosts engagement, it has also been found to increase productivity and loyalty, leading to higher retention.

A man with glasses and a beard is looking at a woman with blonde hair in an office setting. They appear to be in a meeting. A large teal circle with a dark blue center is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

Recognition and praise are two critical components for creating positive emotions in organisations. Those who receive regular recognition and praise increase their individual productivity, increase engagement among their colleagues and are more likely to stay with their organisation.

What are the benefits of praise?

Increased productivity

Researcher Carol Dweck found that praise is a powerful, effective, motivating force.

Praise that is focused on effort rather than ability is sincere rather than disingenuous, and is specific rather than general, appears to contribute to enhanced performance.

Praise helps nurture a growth mindset

Carol Dweck stresses the importance of praising effort.

When we praise students or employers for their effort rather than their ability, we help them understand that intelligence, skills and ability is malleable and that they can master new skills.



Study

A study conducted by Dr Jooa Julia Lee, co-author of the Harvard study, asked participants to solve problems.

Approximately half of the participants were told to ask friends and family members to send them an email prior to their participation that described a time when the participant was at their best. Overwhelmingly, those who read positive statements about their past actions were more creative in their approach, more successful at problem-solving and less stressed than their counterparts.

For example, participants had three minutes to complete Duncker's candle problem. 51% who had read emails prior to the task were able to successfully complete it; only 19% of those who didn't receive 'best-self activation' emails were able to solve it.

Those who received praise were also significantly less stressed than the control group.



A background image of a business meeting. In the foreground, two men are seen from behind, looking towards a group of people in the background. The man on the left is wearing a blue patterned shirt and glasses, and the man on the right is wearing a light blue shirt. An orange rectangular overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing the text 'B & F' in white. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a professional setting with bookshelves.

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