

A Job Well Done



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Acknowledging others, especially family members, is invaluable to the success of your business.

With respect to job performance, many family business members often joke “no news is good news.” What they mean is that people in the company shouldn’t expect to be complimented for their good work. They go on to justify this attitude by statements such as, “People shouldn’t receive praise for doing what is expected of them” or “I wasn’t raised hearing compliments from my parents.”

I’m not suggesting praise for substandard work; this kind of acknowledgement can come across as inauthentic. However, recognizing another person’s good work or efforts in the family business is important and has several benefits.

1. REINFORCES EACH PERSON’S VALUE. The act of acknowledging someone’s good work sends a deeper underlying message. It tells them they have value, they mean something in your efforts to build a business, and there is a purpose to their work. It gives the recipients of your praise confirmation that their labors are making a difference.

Tony Schwartz, president and chief executive officer of The Energy Project, writes, “Whatever else each of us derives from our work, there may be nothing more

precious than the feeling that we truly matter—that we contribute unique value to the whole, and that we’re recognized for it.”

In too many family businesses, recognition of each person’s purpose and value is often assumed by virtue of the family relationship. As a result, the praise tends to go unspoken. The thinking is, “You are valued because you are my son or my daughter, my wife or my husband,” not because of the specific contribution you make to the family business. Consider verbally recognizing the good work done by family members to offer both short-term and long-term reinforcement of their value.

2. SETS THE TONE FOR PRODUCTIVITY. Acknowledging someone’s accomplishments shines a light on what they’ve achieved. And since getting things done is a hallmark of organizational progress, recognizing and celebrating an individual’s success encourages momentum, providing a shot of energy to additional forward movement.

In a family business, however, the ownership idea that “someday this will all be yours” is often expected to be enough of a carrot to keep people engaged over the long haul. Instead of telling family members “good job,” we expect them to remember that they will inherit the business. A shorter-term reinforcement and positive comment on their work reminds them they are moving in the right direction. Such remarks can help ensure high levels of productivity.

3. POSITIVELY IMPACTS CULTURE. Giving only negative feedback reinforces individual feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem, fosters a lousy workplace environment, and creates high turnover and low morale. Such results spell trouble for rural and agricultural businesses needing a qualified labor force. When your workplace develops a reputation for negativity, your ability to attract quality help decreases. Your culture is seen as “toxic.”

A culture of sincere recognition not only helps people feel better about themselves but also where they work. The families I’ve seen express gratitude for one another’s efforts seem to enjoy a more pleasant work environment. Their appreciation of others often starts with those in the family and spreads to others in the organization. Voicing gratefulness is a foundational habit on which a positive culture is built. The resultant fun, deeper relationships and enjoyment of one another is the evidence of this positive culture.

What does it cost to recognize a family member for doing good work? Alternatively, what might it cost your organization if people don’t feel recognized for their efforts?

I realize in a family business environment it can be awkward to verbally acknowledge loved ones. However, an investment in recognizing someone can truly benefit everyone. ●



LANCE WOODBURY

Write Lance Woodbury at Family Business Matters, 2204 Lakeshore Dr., Suite 415, Birmingham, AL 35209, or email lance@lancewoodbury.com