



Practice Thanksgiving At Work

Insights

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Although Americans have celebrated some sort of Thanksgiving since 1661, Abraham Lincoln established Thanksgiving as a national holiday by proclamation on November 28, 1861. The Thanksgiving holiday takes on more meaning when one considers that an American people so exhausted by war, nonetheless gathered together to offer thanks.

We seldom consider the concepts of “gratitude” and “Thanksgiving” as part of our management strategy. I wrote earlier this week about reframing corporate goals so that employees can have a decent shot of being “happy at work.” So let’s talk a bit about cultivating “gratitude” in the workplace.

I found a UC Berkeley article, [“Five Ways To Cultivate Gratitude At Work.”](#) The author sums up our possible reasons for not displaying gratitude at work:

Why should anyone thank you for just doing your job? And why should you ever thank your coworkers for doing what they’re paid to do?

These are common questions in American workplaces, often posed rhetorically – and sometimes with hostility.

Elsewhere in American life, we say “thank you” to acknowledge the good things we get from other people, especially when they give out of the goodness of their hearts. We say “thanks” at home and in school, in stores and at church.

But not at work. According to a survey of 2000 Americans released earlier this year by the John Templeton Foundation, people are less likely to feel or express gratitude at work than any place else. And they are not thankful for their current jobs, ranking them dead last in a list of things that they’re grateful for.

The article posed several surprising conclusions. First, although most employees said that they crave gratitude at work and that grateful bosses are more likely to succeed, few thanked people at work. Even more interesting, the Templeton survey reported that saying “thank you” to colleagues “makes me feel happier and more fulfilled,” but on a given day, only 10% acted on that impulse. The article reports that 60% of respondents said that they “either never expressed gratitude at work or

do so perhaps once a year.” These comments partially explain many of the grievances, discrimination and other workplace claims hitting my desk.

I commend this article and the Templeton survey to you for more detailed mining. The article closes with five simple suggestions to build a culture of gratitude at work:

1. Start at the top;
2. Thank the people that never get thanked;
3. Aim for quality, not quantity;
4. Provide many opportunities for gratitude; and
5. In the wake of crisis, take time for Thanksgiving.

With suggestion No. 5 in mind, and in light of the challenges our nation has faced in recent years, I will conclude with the text of Lincoln’s Thanksgiving proclamation:

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.

I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of

November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

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