

Communicating Appreciation Effectively When You Manage Large Groups

Posted on 04-02-2018, by:



Dr. Paul White
[Appreciation at Work](#)

Practical steps for supervisors who oversee 20+ employees

When conducting an Appreciation at Work training session with a work group, a common comment and question is similar to what Jack, a manager at a senior care living center, asked: “I ‘get’ the concept of communicating appreciation to my team and the need to make it personal and individualized. But I have team members who report to me that I rarely see. They work a different shift or on the weekends and while we communicate through email, texts, and occasional calls, I really don’t have much actual interaction with them. How do I communicate appreciation to them?”

Similarly, Nancy, a nursing manager at a hospital said: “I oversee 50-70 nurses at our facility. I don’t see how I can make this work with that many direct reports.” I agreed. Trying to authentically communicate appreciation to that many team members (and in the ways that are important to each of them) is not possible. (I also thought to myself, but didn’t say: “Wow, having that many people reporting to one supervisor isn’t going to work.”)

So, what do you do when you have a large group of employees you supervise? There is no singular ‘magic bullet’, but there are a number of strategies that can help.

First, prioritize. Remember the research that found 79% of employees who leave voluntarily cite a lack of appreciation as a primary reason they quit? Take that to heart. If you have key team members who you don’t want to lose, you better make sure they feel valued. If you don’t, they will eventually be looking for another place to work. Find out how your “stars” like to be shown appreciation and make a point to begin to do so. Secondly, if you know some of your colleagues are worn out or discouraged, it would be wise to do something to encourage them. [Find out their primary language of appreciation](#) and what actions they value, and reach out to them. (Appreciation and encouragement are largely the same actions but with a different time focus. Appreciation directed toward the past – what they’ve done that you value. Encouragement is focused on the present and future – coming along side and encouraging them to persevere and keep going.)

A second strategy is to delegate. [As stated elsewhere](#), supervisors and managers cannot provide all the encouragement and appreciation needed. This is especially true when there is a large number of team members. Try to find a lead employee who ‘gets’ and values showing appreciation to others, and bring them alongside you to share the responsibility in modelling appreciation and looking out for those who need encouragement. Better yet, form a small group of team members who want to become the ‘lead cadre’ in appreciation and determine specific team members they will focus on.

Thirdly, take bite-size steps. Don’t try to eat the whole hog at once; take one bite at a time over time. Don’t attempt to set up a big, overarching program or draw up a spreadsheet where you (and even your appreciation partners) try to reach everyone on the team in the next month. Take one step at a time. Do a little here. A little there. As you do, you will become aware of all of the opportunities there are daily to communicate a little appreciation to someone (even if it isn’t in their primary appreciation language!), and you will become more adept at doing so effectively. Also, when your colleagues see that you are trying, they often become a bit more gracious and are even willing to take a step themselves

in showing appreciation to their co-workers.

Are there challenges in effectively showing individual appreciation when you work with a large group? Absolutely. But don't let the challenge prevent you from doing what you can. Remember this principle: Start somewhere with someone. You will get a better result than doing nothing at all.

Author Bio

Dr. Paul White is the Co-author of *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace* with Dr. Gary Chapman, author of the NY Times #1 Bestseller, *The 5 Love Languages*. His most recent book, released in 2017, is titled *The Vibrant Workplace*.

This article was published in the following issue of Excellence:

[April 2018 Leadership](#)

Excellence Publications give you an interactive online experience with access to articles, case studies, industry trends, links to videos and audio clips. You can also receive monthly notifications for each of your favorite publications.