

Why people don't need praise - but appreciation.

From my blog: <http://www.persoenlichkeits-blog.de/>

“You could give me some praise for speaking with David's teacher!” she says.
“That's true, you really did a great job”, he answers.
“You're only saying that because you were glad you didn't have to do it” she answers.
“Whatever I do, it's going to be wrong!” he thinks.

What went wrong here?

Lots of books about relationships or leading people tell us we need to praise people more often.

- “You did a great job!”
- “What would I do without you?”
- “The department is proud of you.”
- “You're the best mum!”

But, the reaction you were hoping from often turns out to be different. Because the person you were trying to praise intuitively sees a manipulative intention behind the praise. And the team member or partner feels used, withdraws, and just ignores all further attempts to praise them.

At first glance, praise, recognition and appreciation seem to be one and the same thing.

But each of these types of praise have different objectives and are quite different in the way they are expressed linguistically - and they have quite a different effect on the recipient.

- **Recognition**
is the umbrella term and covers praise and appreciation.
But recognition is given for the effort shown and the hard work it involved. This could be crowned by success, but doesn't necessarily have to be. When a child studies hard, it is worth recognizing this, even if the grade was not as high as perhaps desired.
- **Praise**
is something we give when we want to recognize a positive action that got a positive result. The recipient can be an adult, a child (*but also a dog*).
The action being praised is visible and can be defined in time and place. Praise is usually given in a timely manner. So, the type of praise given in such cases is at the level of action.
- **Appreciation**
is about the person as a whole and is independent of what they have achieved. In this instance, it's more about the characteristics of the person. It's not about a concrete behavior and cannot always be given in a timely manner. So, the type of praise given in such cases is at the level of being.

Praise always contains an evaluation.

So, for that reason, it only works hierarchically, top-down. A father can praise a child: *"What a good boy!"* The child wouldn't say that to his father. The manager can say *"You are managing your people well!"* But a departmental head would not say that to his or her manager.

Praise can make people feel small and often appears to be patronizing.

You often hear that people are praised too seldom at work. But is it really about getting more praise from the boss? Actually, it's probably more about lack of appreciation and not in the form of praise but more about recognition at eye-level.

Praise is addictive.

If children are praised when they have cleared out the dishwasher, they soon get used to getting praise for it. If you ask them to do it without praise, it might just become routine for them and they do it unwillingly. The same can happen with employees.

Praise can often be manipulative.

You can often find this in guidelines for employee conversations:

"If you want to offer criticism, first tell the employee what he or she did right.

Really? We are talking about adults here, and not obedience training for pets!

As opposed to just praising someone, expressing appreciation means really noticing the person in question. When praising, we mention the other person's behavior and evaluate it as good. *"Well done, keep going."* But we as human beings remain hidden.

When you show appreciation, you show a piece of yourself.

However, if we want to express appreciation, we have to come out of hiding. We should express what we are feeling inside and what we want to thank the other person for. In a laudation or personal speech honoring another person, for example, the speaker won't only just talk about the person they are honoring but also about what they personally find most important about them, their work or achievements. Because of this, it happens quite often that the person being honored is touched. That would never happen with praise. Because it doesn't come from the heart.

Praise manipulates - to encourage performance or good behavior.

- *“You finished the project in exemplary fashion. Great job!!”*

Appreciation does not intend to manipulate or improve performance - it is the honest pleasure about what the person has done or how the person is or the goals they achieved.

- *“I was very impressed about your persistence in seeing this project through to completion.”*

According to Wikipedia, the **definition** of the German word for appreciation “Wertschätzung” is (in English, no definition has been given yet):

*... the **positive evaluation of another person**. It is based on a general feeling for the other person. Appreciation is about the whole person, their whole being. It is rather independent of actions or achievements, even if these do influence the appraisal of a person and appreciating them.*

Appreciation is coupled with respect, goodwill and recognition and is marked by expressing benevolence, interest, attention and friendliness.

How appreciation can work.

Recognition works best if done in four stages:

1: What exactly are you appreciating?

Here you say what you liked or gave you pleasure.

“I was impressed by the amount of creativity and your courage in your approach.”

“Although it didn't work out at the beginning, you continued to look for a solution.”

2. Why is it important to you?

What do the actions of the person mean to you? Why is it important? What wishes or needs are fulfilled by this?

“It was important to me, because I think we can only attract more customers if we have fresh, new ideas.”

“We have often talked about the fact that it’s not about the result itself, but that you always do your best. And that’s what I saw in you today.”

3. What feelings did it evoke in you?

Do the actions of the other person make you satisfied, relieved, happy, relaxed?

“I am relieved that I can relax a bit since you joined us and I know that things run well without me having to be there.”

“You make me feel very proud of you, son!”

4. Thank the person!

You can just thank the person, or say how you want to express your appreciation further.

“I was surprised how conscientious you were in chasing up the customer. Thank you for your persistence.”

“Thank you! And now, I’d like to invite you for a pizza!”

Why don’t you give it a try?

Praise is the rule. Appreciation is still the exception to the rule.

Praise keeps the other person at a distance. You are speaking about the other person. When expressing appreciation, however, you open up. You approach the other person. You also speak about your own feelings.

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