

The Power of Acknowledgement

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We all like to hear praise and compliments from others. It feels good when someone says, "Great work," or "Good job." As a direct-selling leader, you probably find yourself recognizing an accomplishment or praising progress nearly every day. What I have noticed however, both in myself and in my team, is that the power of a compliment is short lived, often disregarded, or forgotten in minutes. It was not until I became a professional coach and learned the skills of coaching that I came to understand *the true difference between recognition and acknowledgement, and the impact acknowledgement can have on our relationship with others.*

When we give a compliment, we are speaking about what the person has *done*. An example of a compliment might be, "Great presentation!" or "You ran a good meeting yesterday." Acknowledgement, on the other hand, goes much deeper and has a more powerful impact upon the person receiving it. In Principle-Centered Coaching, we call this ICU Acknowledgment (*as in I See who You are!*) because it goes beyond the person's action to recognize the qualities and characteristics *that enabled her to do what she did*. ICU Acknowledgment recognizes her inner character, who she is, and meets her basic need to be "seen." Here is an example of the contrast.

Recognition: "You ran a good meeting yesterday, Laura."

ICU Acknowledgement: "Laura, as I watched you run your team meeting, I saw your ability to deeply listen to your team. Your openness and patience allowed them to speak honestly, which in turn helps them grow."

Looking for positive qualities in your team member, rather than looking for problems to be fixed, creates a significant shift in the interpersonal dynamic and establishes an environment of trust and mutual respect. Often a team member is not aware of her own strengths and capabilities. As a leader, you have an opportunity to reveal to her the strengths, qualities, and capabilities she displays. When you acknowledge her, you hold up a mirror and say, "This is the person I see in you!" Often for the first time, you awaken in her an awareness of qualities she might not have noticed or accepted before. This new self-knowledge builds self-esteem and empowers her to keep learning, growing, and doing her best!

There is a gift here for you as well. As a leader, there is nothing more rewarding than watching someone light up as she recognizes her own greatness and then moves forward with new enthusiasm to reach her fullest potential!

Learning to Reveal Her Character

ICU Acknowledgment takes a bit more time and thoughtfulness in the beginning, but with practice it becomes very natural. There are three basic steps.

1. Identify the qualities that enabled your team member to do what she did. Some qualities to look for are: patience, dedication, commitment, perseverance, caring, thoughtfulness, creativity, initiative, enthusiasm, clear communication, or wisdom.
2. Keep your acknowledgement simple and to the point. I have found that a shorter statement delivers a greater impact.
3. Be honest and speak from the heart. When your team member can feel your authenticity, it deepens the impact and creates a lasting effect.

As you internalize the practice of ICU Acknowledgement, you will find that your team members follow your lead. Soon ICU Acknowledgement will undergird your fellowship and you'll find yourself in another kind of ICU: an Intensively Caring Unit!

I hope that you can see the transformative impact that ICU Acknowledgment can have on your relationships with your team and your business. When used with the other four skills of Principle-Centered Coaching, it helps you support your team in taking powerful actions toward their dreams while you experience the joy of making a significant contribution to another person's life!

Today's Actions for Acknowledging Others

Study the list of characteristics in step one above. Commit them to memory. Today and tomorrow, practice identifying at least one of them in anyone who describes an achievement to you—and watch her light up!

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