

Sincere Appreciation

In *Spurring People on to Success*, Dale does what every good teacher should do: he repeats what he has already taught, he increases the detail, and he changes the application. This is a repeat of what he taught about *sincere appreciation*. In this case he applies it to encouragement. That means giving people the incentive to change and to continue on the desired path.

It's a very simple formula and very effective: ***praise the slightest improvement and praise every improvement***. He points to B.F. Skinner's work proving that if we minimize criticism, and emphasize praise, then we reinforce the good behavior and we weaken the bad. Dale cautions us that we must always be sincere in our praise. He gives an excellent example of the print shop owner who went out of his way to point out exactly what it was that he appreciated in the young man's work that set it apart. Dale says that being specific in our praise does two things: it proves our sincerity, and it is far more meaningful to the person we give it to.

I was in a hotel a few years ago listening to the evening piano player in the center hall of the hotel. His playing was amazing. Some folks who play at hotels are very rote about it, without finesse or feeling. It's like having the radio on in the background. This man played like he was in a concert hall. I wrote him a note telling him so. I told him how much I liked his playing, but especially his attitude - because when you think no one is listening to you, it has to be debilitating.

A few hours later a note arrived under my hotel door. It went on for a page and half of profuse thanksgiving. I'd made his night - his whole week. He was an out-of-work piano teacher trying to pick up a few bucks where he could. He had been thinking of quitting music, but my note inspired him to continue. My praise was sincere. It was specific. And it changed his life. Someone was listening to him. Someone appreciated him and what he was trying to do. Someone noticed, and that gave him the sense of importance that every one of us longs for.

Try it today. Try it every day. This is something I can teach from personal experience. This gift of praise has changed a life every time I've done it. It can make you an "impact player" if you use it sincerely, and regularly.

Leadership principle: *Leaders are not necessarily more gifted than others. But they are less inclined to give up... In spite of their fears, they obey the call of God upon their life... [Despite past failures and false starts, they recognize that] in the economy of God, there is no wasted time.*

Steve Sjogren.