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## The Value Of Praise: How Acknowledgment Fuels Success

**Shannon Waller:** How do you feel about praise? Is it easy for you to give praise? How are you at receiving praise? Stay tuned for a mini masterclass on how to give and receive praise. Hi, Shannon Waller here and welcome to Team Success. Today I want to talk about praise. How to do it, how to do it well, what it's for, how it works, all of the good stuff. This was a fabulous conversation I had in one of my advanced Team Leader workshops and it just sparked a lot of conversation. If you've ever received praise poorly or been given it poorly, you'll know how important it is. So I cannot wait to share some of my thoughts and insights and, dare I say it, research with you. I think it'll be really fun.

So first of all, what is praise? Praise is when you really take the time to acknowledge and appreciate what someone else has done. Now, we're going to primarily talk about this in a business setting. However, it absolutely applies to your personal life as well, certainly with your family, your spouse, your partner, your children, your siblings, your parents, all the things. So I want you to kind of, as you're listening today, think about, oh, okay, how am I using this in my personal life as well as my professional life? So praise is really, again, stopping to acknowledge and letting people know what they're doing right. That is how I define it. And why is this important? Well, in a business setting, I like to really stress when people are doing things right, because first of all, it is what I appreciate about them. It's also what I want to see more of. It's like, oh my God, this is incredible. Love when you do this.

And the other part about it is often people are very blind to what they are doing well. They don't recognize it because it's so easy for them. It's simple for them. They take it for granted. You know this for yourself. People praise you and you're like, well, that was no big deal. Like, why are you making such a fuss? Because you're doing something so easily, so instinctive for you that you can't imagine that other people can't do it as well or as easily as you can. And the truth is, they can't. So it comes with, you've heard me probably say a million times, the value of know thyself. You know, when you really know and appreciate your strengths, it means that you acknowledge that not everyone has the same ones. We all have different capabilities, different experiences, different insight, different wisdom, different applications of our skills and talents. And if you're kind of, again, blind to that, then you kind of take everything for granted. What other people do, what you do, you don't see those distinctions.

I love Dan's expression, your eyes only see and your ears only hear what your brain is looking for. When you start to actually look for the uniqueness in people, you can never not see that again. That also includes your own. So praise is a way to acknowledge that uniqueness. It's a way to help other people see it. It's also a way to kind of create the future that you are looking for. If you're really great at doing something and you don't want to do something else and the person that you're working with is great at that something else, you want to be free of doing that activity for a long time, which means you need to be in partnership with them. You need to be in teamwork with them. And if you don't let them know that you really appreciate what



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they're doing, they may think it's not that important, or they may go off and do something else, and then you're left with a thing.

Like, if I ever had to take back scheduling, my life would shrink. It would be horrible. It would not be fun. I am not good at scheduling. I have very little mental energy for it, very little skill, like none, for scheduling. And I have my brilliant support partner, Katrina, who is masterful at it. She treats my calendar like Tetris. She's very good at Tetris, by the way. She's an expert level player. It's a creative act to design my calendar and I respect it so much. I don't mess it up. That's partly how I acknowledge what she's doing is I don't take it for granted and I lean into what's been created for me. Obviously, we collaborate on what it needs to look like, but she does all the heavy lifting with creating how my life plays out. So, and I acknowledge her a lot for her capabilities in doing that, because she's so good at it. And also, I want to keep this collaboration and partnership going for a long time. If I were to ever take it for granted, well, I don't know why someone would keep doing that.

So, I want to make one thing really clear. It needs to be genuine. We'll talk about some really great strategies for how to give effective praise that is meaningful and long-lasting and does all the things you want to do, but it has to be genuine. You're not doing this to manipulate someone. You are doing it because it's coming not just from your head, but also from your heart. You care about this person. You want to see them lean into and improve what they're already great at. This is a maximizer strategy. So it's got to be real. You cannot be fake about this. It's gross when it's fake, if you know what I mean. You want to be someone who's known for being very genuine. And I have to tell you, it's very attractive when someone looks for the uniqueness of other people and acknowledges it and shouts it out.

Now, to speak about shouting for a second, one of the conversations in our workshop around this was how people like to receive praise. So there's giving it, which we've been talking about, but then there's also receiving it. And I have to tell you, it's a hit or a miss, whether or not you understand how someone wants to receive praise. Most of the people that I work with, especially closely, are not the front stage, wanting applause, any of that kind of stuff. In fact, if you acknowledge them in front of other people, they kind of freak out. Scary and not fun and frankly not appreciated to be called out even for really good things in front of other people. What do they appreciate most? A handwritten, heartfelt note. And you all know this because if you give someone a thank you card with, you know, the whys and wherefores of what you appreciate about them, they keep it on their desk for years, and I'm not kidding.

So, you know, I remember giving some cards to Nicole, my previous support partner, and literally I keep seeing it every month on the same card next year. I would give her more cards, don't worry. But those are really meaningful and people hang on to those. If you're ever having a bad day, look at the cards that people have given you in appreciation. I mean, in fact, I have one on my desk right now. I'm so grateful for this amazing care package that my client and



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friend Rachel sent me. So thank you, Rachel. She just took the time to write a beautiful note and send me some lovely chocolates, which are gone, long gone, and some other goodies, which I also love. But that is super meaningful for me. She's letting me know that that time I took to have a one-on-one conversation with her at the workshop was really important and meaningful for her. And then she added a tangible to it, which is so cool, to the point where I'm actually telling you about it.

So knowing how people want to receive it is critical. And especially for your quote-unquote back stage team members, you know, sometimes they're okay with being called out in front of their immediate team. And by me, called out, I mean called out in a good way. But if you were to bring them up in front of a crowd of strangers, that does not go over well. All they're going to remember is the embarrassment and feeling like they're put on the spot. They will not get the praise. However, you might be someone who wants that applause, and there is nothing wrong with that—having public recognition, especially in front of the audience that you consider really important. So, it's important that you let people know or you find out how people want to receive it and then let them know your gratitude in a way that they can receive in a really good way. So, ask people. It is not that complicated. It's like, you know what? If I were to give you a compliment, would you rather me bring you up in front of the whole team and we all applaud or would you rather have a handwritten note?

It's a little bit like love languages. Do you know what I mean? Or gifts, are gifts your thing? You know, let people know. I kind of always jokingly say to people, the things I really value, dark chocolate and Amazon gift certificates. It's true. It's amazing what I will do for those two things. And I remember it, and it's personalized for me. Those are things that I really appreciate, so I tend to tell people. I don't wait to be asked. It's really good to be aware of how you like to receive appreciation, but you might need to do a little bit of digging to find out how the person you want to thank and appreciate prefers to get that, if that makes sense. So again, I just really want to stress why it's critical to appreciate people. It means, you know, they know that you're not taking them for granted.

And the part of me that is kind of, I'm always a little, not shocked, but surprised that people don't know their own strengths. It's not how physically strong they are, but they're unaware of their excellent and unique abilities. They take them for granted. And I've coached this for 29 years now, and I'll be coaching it for another 29 if I'm lucky enough. But people are kind of clueless about the contribution and the value that they are creating. And so I have yet to find a person who can't use more of this. It's like everyone needs to have their Unique Ability and even their excellent abilities validated. And it doesn't feed people's ego, which is you might be worried like, oh, if I just tell them they're great all the time, they're going to get all egotistical. Well, first of all, that's the wrong person to be hanging out with. But the other thing is people are actually kind of very humble that I've found about the things that they're special at. And every time I validated that for someone, they've been deeply appreciative. It is not like, oh, I'm



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so fabulous. It's like, wow, thanks. I really appreciate knowing that that made a difference for you.

And it's good. And again, I do Unique Ability exercises with my clients all the time. And every single time it hits home. It is a meaningful exercise. So you emphasizing this encourages people to lean in with their minds, to increase their skill level, to put more heart into it, to put more energy into it, to become even better. Like, why wouldn't you do that? If you want to see brilliance come out of your team, your people, your family, why would you not do this? If we're going to be great leaders, which I think we all want to be, this is a key part of it. Do not skip this step. It is vital. Just be a good leader by making sure that you acknowledge and appreciate people.

Now, I want to share with you some of the key ways to do this, because there's some great ways to do it and there's some not great ways to do it. And I want to make sure you've got a great template for this. And I'm completely going to lean on The Collaborative Way. So we've got tons of coaching from The Collaborative Way. I highly recommend the book, Collaborative Way. We'll put the resources in the show notes for you. But there's some steps. Perplexity.ai was super helpful with putting together this podcast, by the way. It's my podcast friend, my research partner. But one of the ways to not give praise effectively is to be really general. Say, oh, great job or good job. People are like, huh? Like, what for? Or if you were to like leave a long time between the event, what happened and then when you're actually acknowledging it, also delayed. I mean, this is part of really good child rearing. Praise your child for what they've done well and do it immediately. So they make that neural connection in their brains that this is important to do.

So I'm going to go through The Collaborative Way list, which is just so genius. So number one, pay attention. Stay awake to opportunities to praise. And again, what behaviors do you want to encourage? Look for things that will help people grow, encourage constructive behavior, generate enthusiasm, and forward the action. I think that's our job, to be able to do that. Now, choose when to acknowledge. As I mentioned, timing is critical. The more immediate, the better. You know, if I did something a month ago and one of my colleagues tells me today, oh, by the way, that was really cool. I'm like, okay, but 18 million things have happened between then. It's not going to land. If instead they came out to me right after and went, wow, I was really impacted by what you just did. Here's the difference it's going to make in my life. Thank you so much. I'm going to feel it completely differently.

Now, the fact that they're remembering a month later, also cool. I will take it any way I can get it. But at the same time, it doesn't have quite the same impact as the immediacy would have. Maybe there's things I could have used that praise to make even better in the last 30 days that now I won't have that opportunity. So just the more immediate, the better. And it doesn't take long. I'm someone who I have good intentions for but my Follow Through is short. So quick,



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could be a text. It could be a quick conversation. It could be a voicemail. I like leaving voicemail, but I hate getting them. So kind of 50-50 on that one. You know, whatever it is that you can get out of your head and heart and into them, the better. So just really try and make sure that you do that. The quicker the better. And as I said, really learn their style of appreciation. Is it a quiet thank you note or a public round of applause? Figure out what works the best.

Now, the most important thing, other than the other two, is to really be specific. This is not being general. This is being very specific. I really loved how you did such an accurate spreadsheet. It really made a difference to know that I could trust all the numbers, rather than a great job on the spreadsheet. Like what does great job on the spreadsheet mean? It could be anything. So say what you specifically appreciate about it. Does it increase your confidence? Does it increase your trust? Does it allow you to make decisions that you couldn't have otherwise have made? So really make sure that you are reinforcing the specific behavior that you are looking for with that one.

Now, the other one, and this is specific to Collaborative Way that I've learned, is acknowledge the circumstances. And this is pretty cool. So talk about what they had to go through or overcome to produce the results. This adds power and meaning to our acknowledgement. So were they super busy? Did they have to learn something new? Did they have to, you know, in our Four C's Formula, did they have to have commitment and courage to deliver on this capability that they gave you? So what did they have to go through in order to do that? Did they have to overcome some resistance, internal or from other people? There's lots of things that people have to overcome and that also shows that you know them. You're not just taking it for granted that they can do this with the drop of a hat.

I know in our company, we are busy. I know I just did a podcast on, I hate the word busy, but let me put it this way. There's a lot going on. Schedules are full. People have to be super responsive and adaptable. And just being able to juggle all of those things, I have to tell you, almost every single person that I could acknowledge for anything, I'm like, I know there's a lot going on. I know there's a lot of competing priorities. Thank you so much for making sure that we were able to deliver this on time to the recipient. Thank you very much for making sure everything was accurate. Thank you so much for making sure it was beautiful, because I'm often doing presentations. Like, I can be very specific about what else was going on, because people have to apply their creativity to my presentations, and I am just very, very grateful for that. Yeah, I mean, thanks for making me look good to our audience. That is a very specific thing to be able to say.

So while I want to acknowledge the circumstances, and number five, also acknowledge the impact on you. This part is often overlooked and it really reinforces and deepens the relationship. If you can say, you know what, what you did just gives me a ton of confidence.



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Now I know I can really trust what you've put together and that makes me more confident going out to do what I have to do. Oh, that's a pretty impactful piece of praise. And so you have to kind of examine your own self a little bit. You have to reflect, okay, how does this impact me? How do I feel about this? What am I able to do differently as a result of your activities and actions? So that's pretty special.

And the last one is to acknowledge what's possible in the future when it's appropriate. It won't be for every circumstances. So, here's what's possible in the future that you see for them. Maybe they can do more of this type of activity or work, or maybe that means you can extend into a market that you haven't been able to do before. So, acknowledge that the future has opened up for that person, your partnership with that person, the team, or the company. What is now possible as a result of what they've done? You know, I think about all the work that's going into our messaging and to our new website. Oh, my gosh, the impact on prospective clients and our current clients and ability to communicate what Coach is up to and who we are and what we do. That's going to be transformed as a result of all of the work that's gone into this, which is a ton. Oh, my goodness. Right.

So if you think about a website, or a presentation, or even a spreadsheet, or the financials, or a really great quarterly review with your team, all of the things. There are great results that are now possible that weren't before for the future. So really taking time to actually acknowledge all of these things. Now, will you do every one of these steps for every single thing? No, you won't, which is totally fine. But if you kind of try and go in depth with at least a few of them, you will be in awe of what is possible. And then Collaborative Way also points out a few pitfalls. So forgetting to acknowledge and appreciate, giving inauthentic acknowledgement, as I said, you'll totally lose credibility. And then people do not believe anything you say. So I said earlier, you have to feel it, super important. And again, if you only give general acknowledgements, like good job, great job, you know, people are like, oh, there she goes again, there he goes again, doesn't actually have a clue what's going on is actually what people are thinking. You don't want people thinking that about you, so be specific.

Now, here's a fun one. Not asking for it when you need acknowledgement. I'm gonna tell you a funny story. I think it's hysterical. One time, I was super busy, and I like being independent. I don't like people looking over my shoulder anywhere, anytime. Strong need to be self-reliant. But one time, I walked up to Babs, co-founder of Strategic Coach. I said, Babs, tell me I did a great job. She goes, great job, Shannon. What'd you do? And I have to tell you, it feels just as good having her say that, even though she didn't know until afterwards what I'd done. It was fine. I just, I needed her to know that I was doing a really great job and I needed to ask for it. And I'm kind of okay with that because again, I don't want someone looking over my shoulder, but it feels great. And if you need some acknowledgement, go get it. There's no shame in that, none whatsoever. So ask for acknowledgement when you need it. You can make it fun. It doesn't have to be all super heavy or weird. So make sure you do that.



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Not acknowledging up. Now this is a big one. Please, please, please acknowledge the leadership as well. And if you're the entrepreneur, sometimes you can ask it from your clients. I was doing a kind of interesting medical procedure and I was chatting away as it was happening. You know, just had some light anesthesia. Don't even be super curious what the hell I'm talking about. But it was kind of funny. He's like, oh, I just have to tell you what I was just doing. That was really tricky, but it worked really well. And I was like, good job. To acknowledge the doctor with what he was doing, it was quite fun. But I was really glad that he told me. He wanted acknowledgment for what he was up to at the moment. And he was doing a great job on me, so why wouldn't I do that?

And then lastly, not fully receiving acknowledgments. Oh my gosh. If you have trouble receiving acknowledgments or praise, and this is almost everybody, I'm going to coach you on how to do that. There are two steps, and I don't care what the hell's going on in your head. I want you to do these two steps. Number one, smile. And number two, say thank you. You need to receive an acknowledgment as you would a gift. How do you receive a gift? You smile and you say thank you. You don't say, oh, it was nothing. Oh, anyone could have done it. You're actually dissing someone when you do not receive the acknowledgement. And I don't care if you have to bite your tongue, smile and say thank you.

I have actually coached entire groups on this because I gave someone a compliment and they brushed it off. I'm like, okay, stop, stop everyone. I want to teach you how to receive a compliment. And they're like, all looking all weird. So I said, two steps, smile and say thank you. And then I said, you know, complimented them as a group. You're such a great group. You're so fun to talk to. I learned a ton from you. This goes into my podcast. I did all the things. And I'm looking forward to what we can create together, future acknowledgement. So I said, okay, you've just received a compliment. Now what do you do? I said, okay, smile. They all smiled. I said, say thank you. And they all said thank you. It was so much work. It was funny. And I had to do it a couple of times because it is tough. So do not deflect it. It discourages people from complimenting you if you actually never receive the gift that they are giving you.

So this is a two-way street, my friends. You cannot just give it and not receive it. It upsets the balance, which is so important to make sure that you maintain. This is an exchange. One of my recent conclusions is, I only want to work with partners. I want every team member I work with, I don't care if I'm more senior or been around longer, I don't care, I just want Unique Ability partners. That's my thing, which means I want partners in receiving and giving praise, too. So just to quickly summarize these steps, because I'm sure you're going to want to remember this. Number one, pay attention to opportunities. Two, choose when to acknowledge. The more immediate, the better. Three, acknowledge the specific. Tell them exactly what was so great. Number four, acknowledge the circumstances. Number five, acknowledge the impact on



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you. And number six, acknowledge what's possible in the future. And be very gracious when you receive the praise, and that will make sure that you have that exchange.

Hopefully, this was a little bit of a summary masterclass on praise. It is critical. You may realize, oh, I want to get praise for something. Don't feel weird about that. It's healthy. And then the other thing is you may realize, oh, I've got some acknowledging to do. So again, figure out how the person wants to receive it—publicly, privately, combination, gift certificates, who knows—and then go have some fun with this. I have to tell you, it will feel great, and you'll feel like a great person and a great leader for doing it. I hope this inspires you. I hope you have fun with this. Any questions or comments, please let me know at [questions@strategiccoach.com](mailto:questions@strategiccoach.com). And as always, here's to your team's success.