

# A WEEK IN *Learning*

## THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

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As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday this week, I have been thinking a lot about the power of gratitude. It's easy to link the holiday to our personal lives and our families—and this is certainly important. But gratitude plays a big role in our work life as well.

Last week, our fabulous Enrichment Team provided us with the opportunity to participate in an “Attitude of Gratitude” campaign using “Kazoo” to share words of thanks with folks all across our organization. I spoke with Katie Ferguson, Goodwill’s Enrichment Coordinator, about the campaign, and she shared some pretty incredible results. Compared to the week prior, the number of Kazoo recognition posts during the campaign jumped from 206 to 4,947. That’s an increase of over 2000%!

Thinking about this huge increase in Kazoo participation made me curious. I wondered if saying “thank you” more often at work might produce more—and better—business results. Of course, my instincts told me there had to be a connection, but I wanted to do some research to see what specifics I could find. Turns out, showing gratitude at work is one of the most effective ways to build a strong organizational culture—and improve business results. Here are some things I discovered:

### **Size Does NOT Matter**

Don't fall into the trap of saying thank you only after really big efforts or after large projects are completed. Multiple studies, ([like this one from Deloitte](#)), show that most people like to be recognized any time they perform well, no matter how small the task.

### **Winning Isn't Everything**

Remember that a colleague may perform really well even if an overall project does not succeed. In these situations, we still have the chance to recognize the effort, knowledge and expertise that was contributed. You may also be able to show gratitude for their commitment to living our Goodwill values. Look for great individual work as hard as you look for great project outcomes.



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### **Any Time is the Right Time**

There is no wrong time to show gratitude. Sometimes we remember an outstanding effort well after it has occurred. It's easy to think that the right "moment" to show gratitude might have passed. We might even feel our colleagues may not even remember the situation. Mention it anyway. Showing gratitude in these situations is especially powerful because it shows that not only do you remember and value the contribution, but that the effort has also made a lasting impression.

### **Good for You, Good for Me**

When you praise someone else, you also receive benefits. First, it simply feels good to say nice things about someone else. Chip and Dan Heath, authors of the book, *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact* note that when you show gratitude to someone you are creating a "defining moment." The moment impacts you as well as your colleague, and can boost your own happiness level for as long as a month. Second, when you praise someone else, you are more likely to receive praise in return. Another researcher, Shawn Achor, calls this a "virtuous cycle." In his book, *Big Potential: How Transforming the Pursuit of Success Raises Our Achievement, Happiness, and Well-Being*, he notes, "The more you give, the more you enhance your own supply. When done right, praise primes the brain for higher performance, which means that the more we praise, the more success we create. And the more successes there are, the more there is to praise."

Thanksgiving is absolutely a great chance to show gratitude to others, but let's also remember that the power of gratitude is available to all of us year-round. Our work at Goodwill is important — and we should practice the element of our core value to "Celebrate and Recognize" as often as possible. The more we can make saying "thank you" a part of our culture, the more likely we are to become the best versions of ourselves. In a year that has been as unexpected, challenging, and stressful as 2020 has been, remember that a little gratitude will go a long way.