

How to Give Sincere Praise

Always be sincere. Even the most cunning flatterer is ultimately detected and discovered. Complimenting someone sincerely for something small is better than complimenting someone insincerely for something big and grand. If, instead of being constantly self-focused, we are attentive to others, we will always find building moments where we can deliver honest and sincere praise. Even Napoleon figured out that men will die for blue ribbons. Men will sacrifice their lives for praise, honor, and recognition.

Often it is more effective to praise the specific act rather than the person. This way, your praise is attached to something distinct and concrete. It is harder to be interpreted as flattery or favoritism when there is a specific and concrete thing you have praised. General compliments may have temporary effect, but can incite jealousy from others and create even more insecurity in the recipient because that person is often not really sure what they did to deserve the compliment. Then they feel pressure to live up to the standard you have set, even though they're not sure how or why it was set. They may even subconsciously fear that you will retract the praise because they don't know how to keep it. Things really backfire when that person feels mistrustful toward you. Ever remember a time when all the co-workers gathered to complain after a "pep rally" with the boss? Instead of feeling inspired and motivated, everyone gripes about how the boss is full of it. Of course, during the meeting, everyone played along, but when all was said and done, not only do they think that the boss is full of it, but they begin to wonder about their superior's personal agenda.

So how do you effectively give someone a compliment they can live up to without feeling anxiety? Instead of barking at your assistant, "Why haven't you finished these files?" say, "Thank you so much for helping me get these files done! I know I can count on you get them done in a timely manner." Because the latter statement incorporates your assistant's behavior into how you view her, you can be sure she'll follow through. Consciously or subconsciously, she will want to maintain the apparent image you have of her. Consequently she will continue that pattern of behavior so as not to disappoint you.

As a supervisor, your responsibility to praise and recognize your employees is paramount. In your supervisory capacity, you should regularly communicate the organization's changing objectives and priorities and you should show employees you feel they are important enough to be aligned with your goals. Invite new ideas from workers, stressing that there are always better ways to do every task. Trust workers by delegating responsibilities that give growth opportunities. Check with employees to determine what extra time or equipment they need and work to provide them with these requests. Be fair to all. Playing favorites undermines morale. Praise each employee for any job well done; orally is okay, but putting it in writing is even better. Want to know another plus? Sincere praise costs your organization absolutely nothing!