
The Power of a Rose

By Cora Whittington

The way to an effective organization is through motivated, dedicated people who feel good about who they are and what they do. Catching people doing things well is a technique that costs nothing and produces incredible results.

During the last two years I have spent considerable time listening to people talk about leadership. I have spoken to numerous groups and worked on two leadership needs assessment projects. All too often I have heard comments such as "I'm not the leadership type" or "I'm not comfortable in an executive position."

Leadership can be defined as "any act that helps a group to achieve its goals." Nowhere in the definition does it say that only those in executive positions can provide leadership. This is a very important concept. Many people act as leaders everyday and don't realize it. I edit a bulletin for a group and recently a member came to me and said that she would like to write an article. Now that is leadership! She had the courage to risk, try something new and act on it. Leadership is demonstrated when new ideas are brought forward and are carefully considered. It is demonstrated when someone diffuses a volatile situation. It is demonstrated when individuals clean up after a meeting.

The single best way to encourage continuing acts of leadership is to realize the power of a compliment. Most of us would probably agree with Mark Twain's observation: "I can live two months on one good compliment." Yet we often leave praise out of our groups and organizations. Here are some simple ways to encourage leadership in your group:

1. Use Every Opportunity

We need compliments often. Opportunities to show our appreciation are all around us. Thank the person who showed initiative. Compliment the person who replaced a sick person at the last minute.

2. Be Creative

Move from the ordinary to the insightful. The compliment "Thanks for the good job" has more power when it is elaborated. "We appreciate how well or-

ganized you were. All the details were attended to and we were impressed with the way you came up with a solution when some of the last minute plans fell through. You obviously worked hard on this project. Thank you."

3. Be Spontaneous

Recently a stranger turned to me in church and told me what a lovely voice I had. That may not seem like a big deal to you but for me it was an incredible compliment. Having been told numerous times, particularly in my younger days, that I had no musical talent this came as quite a shock and I glowed for days. How many times do we think a compliment and never deliver it. I particularly like Ken Blanchard's quote: "Good Thoughts Not Delivered Mean Squat." Deliver those compliments!

4. Be Sensitive

We all need affirmation - more so at some times in our life than others. An honest compliment paid at the right time can work miracles for our self-esteem. On the other hand the lack of a compliment from someone important can hurt for a long time. This is especially true in families, but also in organizations.

5. Be Specific

Have you heard the speaker being thanked with "Thank you very much for your talk, the next speaker is ...?" An appreciation is much more effective with specifics. Recounting how you felt about the presentation and stating a benefit will be much more helpful to the speaker. "I really enjoyed the poem, you delivered it with emotion and candour. It is certainly something that I think we need to hear and I thank you for sharing it with us."

6. Please Touch

Never forget the power of a silent compliment. As someone gets up to give a presentation, simply touch their arm and squeeze gently. It can give them the confidence that they need. Similarly, a warm handshake and a smile can also be encouraging.

7. Write a Note

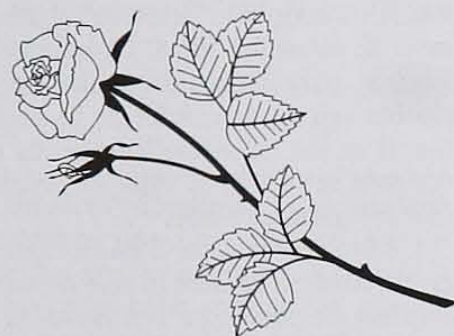
While the spoken word can be quickly

forgotten, a written note can be read over and over. A short note or the use of a stick-on note can be very effective. When I received a number of articles for our bulletin, on top was a yellow stick-on note complimenting me on a recent presentation. This meant a lot that someone took the time to do this. This is also a great way for complimenting family members. Very often you will find these notes stuck on the back of a door or a mirror months after delivery.

8. Inexpensive Awards

One of the loveliest compliments can be an unexpected public comment. I was a guest speaker at a Retired Teachers group and they gave roses to four of the stalwarts in their organization. One was given to the lady who sent out the get well, birthday and condolence cards. Another went to a lady on the telephone committee, another to a lady with perfect attendance and another to someone who always seemed to help out whenever they were in a pinch. These are the people showing leadership in their organization. There are other ways such as using humorous certificates, a home-made collage, a crocheted rosette or construction paper ribbons. These are all inexpensive ways to pay a compliment.

There are many simple and inexpensive ways to motivate members and encourage leadership in your organization. And remember, don't underestimate the power of a rose!



Cora Whittington is a graduate of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. She has a social work background and gives presentations on self-esteem, raising positive children, communication, and personal and organizational leadership. She and her husband have a cow calf to finish beef operation in Peterborough County.