

Undercover Boss: Inspire Your Team With Praise

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In the television series "Undercover Boss," the CEOs of some of the most successful companies in America go incognito to work alongside their employees. Each CEO experiences working conditions firsthand, including the stresses and challenges of doing different jobs within their company. They also get to witness just how integral their employees are to the business, and have the opportunity to acknowledge their individual contributions to the overall success of the company.

Chiropractors, unlike the CEOs featured on "Undercover Boss," have the unique perspective of working alongside their practice team members on a daily basis. You don't need to go undercover to experience what it is like to work in your practice - you live it. Because of this high level of interaction, it's easy to forget that you are not only part of the team, but also the CEO of the company. As the CEO of your practice, it's your job to create a strong bond between your team members. The best way to create a [high-performance team](#) is by acknowledging your team members' unique contributions and letting them know how much you appreciate them for the work they do.

Acknowledge and Appreciate

We all long to hear that we're doing a good job... a pat on the back, an encouraging word and recognition for our efforts. However, what we really crave is more than a simple "Thank you" or "Good job." We want to hear specifics, something heartfelt and authentic, without any ulterior motive behind it. Unfortunately, this type of acknowledgment can be a rarity.

Most people spend a major part of their life working - it can take up more time than anything else we do. Many people spend as much time with their co-workers as they do with their family members. For something we spend most of our time doing, you would think that the acknowledgments for a job well done would be plentiful; but quite often, they are not.

Honestly, if you took a good look at things, would your practice be where it is today if you didn't have a team willing to get it there? If you're not already doing so, you should take every opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of your team.

Gotcha!

More often than not, people base the measurement of their success at their job not on the size of their paycheck, but on the feedback they receive. No feedback at all can begin to wear on us and make us wonder if we are doing anything right at all - even if we're doing just fine.

Leadership guru and author Ken Blanchard has written several books on praising people. He describes a technique of acknowledgement as "gotcha" in his book *Whale Done! The Power of Positive Relationships*. Normally, we associate the word *gotcha* with catching people making a mistake. Blanchard identifies it with exactly the opposite sentiment - catching people doing

something right. The concept works well if you know what to do once you catch someone doing right.

Many of us fail to say the right thing when we acknowledge someone doing something right. We end up giving very general praise, with comments like "Hey that was great!" or "Nice job!" When praised in this manner, people tend to brush the compliment aside, considering it opportunistic or phony.

Effective Praise: Three Steps

Begin with the feeling you get when the "gotcha" opportunity occurs. How do you feel about the behavior you just observed? Do you feel excited, happy, encouraged, relieved? Express this feeling to the person you are praising. Say something like: "I saw what you did for our patient, Mrs. Smith, and it makes me feel fantastic that you care so much!"

The second step of effective praise is to point out the behavior that made you feel great to the person you are praising. Say something like: "I overheard Mrs. Smith blaming us for her poor insurance coverage. You helped diffuse what could have been a difficult situation and kept a patient who needs us from dropping out of care. We'll be able to learn from this experience to make sure that this doesn't happen to other patients in the future."

Having expressed your feeling and described the behavior, it is now time to offer praise and thanks. Say something like: "Your ability to take charge of a difficult situation is an important part of what makes our practice successful. I'm proud to have you as a part of our team. Thank you!"

Be Authentic

The difficult part in giving effective praise is to express your feelings. Sometimes, that can be difficult, but it's a step that cannot be skipped. It's easy to do the second and the third part when you have taken the trouble to do the first part authentically.

Here's an exercise that can help you master the art of praise. This exercise makes a great topic for a team meeting. When you include your entire practice team in the exercise, you can quickly transform your practice working environment into a culture of acknowledgement. The exercise takes about 15 minutes and involves the creation of two lists: a list of positive, praiseworthy behaviors and a list of positive feelings.

Divide a sheet of paper lengthwise into two columns. Label the left-hand column "Positive Behaviors." In this column, develop a list of traits that embody excellent performance. Some examples are: taking initiative, problem solving, troubleshooting, patient interaction, great attitude, innovation, and punctuality. In the right-hand column, refer to the positive behaviors listed in the first column and create a list of "Positive Feelings" that these praiseworthy behaviors engender; feelings like excitement, satisfaction, relief, encouragement, happiness, joy, charged, respected, and awed.

Your lists can now be used as a guide that you and your team can refer to as a basis for genuinely praising each other. Initially, you'll tend to use the lists a bit mechanically. With a little practice, praise will start to become specific and authentic.

Make Giving Praise a Habit

[Set a goal](#) for the next week to acknowledge someone on your practice team at least once every morning and once every afternoon. Do the same to someone in your circle of family and friends.

Take care to be sincere and follow the effective praise model. Make a short note to yourself each time you acknowledge someone, and review your notes at the end of the week. Repeat the process for another week but, this time, double your efforts. Go for at least two acts of appreciation and acknowledgement each morning and two each afternoon.

The Law of Attraction teaches us that what we focus our attention on is naturally drawn to us. When you begin looking for opportunities to catch people doing something right, an interesting thing happens. You'll notice that you and your practice team begin to find more opportunities to praise each other than ever before - and it feels great!

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