

## Guidelines for Leaders – Actively Attending to Appreciation in the Workplace

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### MAEA Applied Inquiry Project

Area of Practice: Corporate Retail Management

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Leaders need to be both supportive and involved in using appreciation in the workplace. Roth (2010), in the article *Lead Employee Engagement* states, “You cannot have engaged employees without engaged leaders who understand what it takes for employees to choose to be engaged” (p.12). The following guidelines have been created to assist leaders in actively using appreciation in the workplace and building an Appreciation Space.

1. **Be an authentic leader;** think how appreciation contributes to your personal leadership practices. Recognize your role as leader and how you will use appreciation in your organization.
2. **Make a plan** on how you will use appreciation in the workplace and decide how you will communicate the use of appreciation in your organization. Be open and make your decision process transparent – allow for employees to contribute.
3. **Define appreciation** for your organization, explain the four contributing factors and communicate to your leadership team your expectations. When you see your managers using appreciation make sure to praise their behavior. If you do not see the expected behavior from managers, be tough-minded and/or tender-hearted, to require their active participation in using appreciation.

4. **Clearly state the organizational values** or develop a set of core-values. Pay particular attention how employees' personal standards match up with organizational standards. As a leader how can you guarantee standards are used effectively? Where possible allow employees to align personal and organizational values. When employees understand the values of the organization and know every day how to put them to use, it will empower them to make the right decisions and take the right steps to grow the organization.
5. **Train employees** on appreciation, organizational values and the Appreciation Space Method. Allow for employees to contribute to the development of the Appreciation Space. Remember be a leader of your Appreciation Space not just a manager of it.
6. **Encourage appreciation within your organizational culture.** Consider the definition of appreciation in the workplace, remembering to recognize employees' basic humanity and that productivity goes further than just your product or service; it is what is created when employees use their head, hearts and hands. Decide how you will root your culture in this definition and how to pull the elements of connectedness, collaboration, personalized recognition, and fun into your organizational culture.
7. **Be on the ground;** at minimum direct supervisors should touch-base with employees every six weeks and organizational leaders once a quarter. Leaders can be just as effective by making virtual appearances through web-chats or town hall meetings. Being on the ground gives leaders the ability to be mindful, recognize emotion, and collect information for personalized recognition. Take a meeting while walking with an associate, grab lunch with an employee, or take part in a celebration with a team. Carving out 15 minutes of your time on a regular basis can lead to a lifetime of organizational loyalty from employees.
8. **Develop new leaders;** root them in appreciation to keep the Appreciation Space growing and engaging for the whole organization. When recruiting new members

discuss your expectations for actively using appreciation. Furthermore, teaching others to lead will expand their personal and professional skills.

9. **YOU** ...**keep learning!** An engaged leader is engaged themselves in how to keep growing and influence change.

References:

Roth, T. (July/August 2010). Lead employee engagement. *Training*, 12.