

Hi Michelle,

*Is it a big deal if I'm not considered a "praise person?"
My co-worker recently made this comment in passing
and I have to admit, it stung a little bit.*

Hello and thanks for writing. You pose an important question and with impressive brevity, from a business writing point of view!

Apparently, you also keep your comments about others brief, especially when it comes to compliments. Is it a big deal? It depends upon how you define "big." It's not a huge problem, but your co-worker's feedback is worth examining.

You know how you felt when you heard this comment? A strange, empty feeling, maybe? That's how your friends, family, co-workers, and customers may feel when they put forth substantial effort and it goes unnoticed. We're likely to assume you don't care or don't see us if you don't state what you notice and appreciate as it unfolds around you.

I'm a fan of sincere praise only. I coach people to develop their praise muscles. I do several reps myself on most days, and intend to keep increasing the weight.

Consider the benefits of genuine praise:

it's free - costing you nothing more than other-awareness and a little time

it feels good to sender and receiver - it aids mental, spiritual, physical (and probably financial) health

it builds stronger relationships and teaches you about skills you wish you had

it has ripple effects to improve organizational culture and harmony at home

Here's a quick exercise to fortify praise muscles:

Jot a few co-workers' names in a row. Next to each name, list something - anything - you admire.

A skill (calm with upset customers?) A personality trait (dependability, humor, patience?) A goal achieved or in progress (getting off the couch to walk more often this month?) Note: the longer it takes to assemble the list, the less your brain is noticing good stuff going on around you. It might be time to forge some new neural pathways.

Finally, choose a medium by which you'll let them know what you've noticed - that's the last list.

Your options: text, phone call, e-mail, in-person chat, handwritten note, sign language, Facebook post, skywriting, etc. Get creative. A good compliment, as Mark Twain observed, can provide months of sustenance for the recipient. It makes YOU memorable. Be careful what you choose to praise because, through positive reinforcement, you get more of that behavior. It works with pets, it works with humans, it's simple psychology. In this way, you can shape even your boss' behavior and do so ethically.

I'll close with a recipe we enjoy teaching in GC seminars. Please try it and report back.

Step 1: Use the person's name: "Hey Jon..."

Step 2: State what you appreciate or admire: "Thanks for taking time to submit your question."

Step 3: State how it's helpful to you or the team: "Without questions like yours, there is no column."

Step 4: Say thank you in your own way: "You rock! Keep 'em coming."

Are you dealing with a communication challenge?

If you've got a question, write to Michelle@GladieuxConsulting.com for consideration.

Questions remain confidential and anonymous.

COACH'S CORNER

