

## **TRANSFORMING YOUR WORKPLACE WITH AFFIRMATION**

Creating a culture of authentic affirmation is possible in any environment. When employees feel genuinely valued, the atmosphere changes. Productivity, creativity and morale increase. Whether it is a small business, non-profit or a large organization, the transformation begins with a commitment by those in leadership to becoming intentional about consistently practicing the art of affirmation.

Following are some fundamentals for creating a culture of affirmation:

**1. Train leadership on the importance and practice of healthy affirmation.** Many don't know how! Organizational training is available from Leave Nothing Unsaid. Email [jody@leavenothingunsaid.com](mailto:jody@leavenothingunsaid.com) for more information.

**2. Make it standard practice throughout all levels of the organization to affirm, in writing, character qualities as part of an employee's annual review.** Don't just focus on quantifiable performance.

**3. When organizational awards or recognition are given to employees, be sure to highlight their best character qualities.** Explain to your team the "whys" behind a person's performance and what differentiates the individual. (i.e. dedication, discipline, creativity, selflessness). Everyone benefits from good role models and what you affirm and recognize in your team members will be emulated by others in your organization.

**4. One of the best ways to weave affirmation throughout an organization's culture is to really LISTEN to team members.** Understand what is important to each employee. Ask what their long term goals are for their career. When possible, look for practical ways to enhance experiences and skills to help them move toward those goals. Reinforce the character qualities and abilities that could become scaffolding for achieving those goals.

At times, you might have an employee whose skills and aptitudes don't align with their assigned role, much like a round peg in a square hole. Perhaps they would thrive in another role that better utilized their greatest strengths. Making a change like this isn't always possible based on the size and needs of the organization, but if possible, try it! You might be amazed at the result.

**5. Recognize the support staff members** who are integral to the accomplishment of larger organizational goals. Truly honor and reward those who reflect the organization's values, no matter how seemingly "small" their role.

**6. Go the extra mile. Be creative.** Send Thanksgiving cards to employees, clients and trusted partners expressing your gratitude for them. Look for fresh and unique ways throughout the year to show how much you value people and trusted relationships.

7. **Create meaningful awards to honor “Difference Makers.”** Celebrate and honor those who improve the atmosphere of your organization. Make the award winners visible. The awards don’t need to be large in size. For example, a gift certificate for a nice dinner out, or some special item that can be worn/used as an elite member of this group who is recognized.

8. **Learn and use people’s names throughout the organization.** As Dale Carnegie said: *“Remember that a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”* Addressing a person by their name says “I see you and I value you.”

9. **Smile.** They are contagious. How many of us walk around preoccupied, looking at our phones or with an expression that looks like we’ve just bitten into a lemon? The simple act of making eye contact with a team mate and smiling at them makes a person feel seen and valued.

10. **Live by example.** Treat the entry level employee with the same respect and honor as you do the CEO. Encourage others in leadership to do the same. Employees are always watching and the old saying that “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” is very true. Word spreads like wildfire, both positively and negatively.

In a time when finding and retaining great employees is more challenging than ever, creating a culture of sincere affirmation will make your workplace one where everyone thrives and people actually enjoy coming to work.