



Book Review - The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace

Reviewer

Emily Haire, *EdD*

Book Details:

Title of the book: The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People.

Author(s): Chapman, G. & White, P.

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Synopsis and Evaluation

The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace offers an eye-opening leadership approach to understanding methods of understanding and empowerment within organizations. The authors, Gary Chapman and Paul White, began researching how the five love languages apply to work-based relationships, leading to their publication in 2011. The book connects Chapman's 5 Love Languages, a published framework for effective relationships, to White's workplace research. As workplace environments change over time, research also evolves. The authors updated and revised their resources in 2019. Together Chapman and White created a workplace appreciation inventory aligned to the book that allows participants to better understand their preferred language of appreciation. Sales of the book grow each year, as the resources included are proven to provide an understanding of how to communicate appreciation to team members and ensure success effectively. This book guides how to make staff members feel valued, decrease staff turnover, and create an overall more positive work environment.

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Overview of Book

Chapter 1 introduces the importance of communicating appreciation to employees and colleagues while acknowledging that “just saying thanks” does not work. Appreciation must be authentic to be effective. Additionally, Chapman and White remind leaders that recognition is based on behavior, while appreciation acknowledges performance and the employee as a person. Understanding how employees feel encouraged and appreciated can significantly improve the workplace environment and relationships.

Chapter 2 highlights the benefits of appreciation - increased employee engagement, decreased turnover, positive outcomes, and improved organizational functioning. In regard to effectively encouraging employees, the “Return on Investment” impacts an organization significantly.

Chapter 3 provides research regarding the importance of appreciation being shown by both managers and peers. While employees report wanting appreciation from their supervisors, positive encouragement from peers is reported to be equally important. This chapter emphasizes individuals of all ranks have the power to show appreciation and boost morale within the workplace.

Chapman and White’s five languages of appreciation are defined in chapters 4-8. Chapter 4 introduces appreciation language #1 - words of affirmation. Words of affirmation are written in spoken words that give praise to an employee for their accomplishments or character. While not everyone appreciates public words of affirmation, this appreciation language is found to be the most popular. Quality time, appreciation language # 2, refers to undivided time, experiences, and quality conversation. Chapter 5 describes how quality time can vary largely from employee to employee. Appreciation language #3 - acts of service - occurs when an employee is offered support in completing a task. Chapter 6 acknowledges that many employees will reject help when offered, so supervisors and peers must effectively offer support to be beneficial. Tangible gifts, appreciation language #4, refers to being shown appreciation by given gifts. Logo items and leftover items from an event are not sufficient. The gifts must be personal to be effective. Chapter 7 indicates that most supervisors believe this is the best way to show appreciation but is often the least preferred method. Finally, chapter 8 described appreciation language #5 - physical touch. Appropriate workplace physical touch as a recognition of success to show appreciation is proven to be the least commonly chosen as primary languages of appreciation. This form of appreciation is difficult in a virtual environment, as often occurs as a firm handshake, pat on the back, or high five.

The MBA Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace Inventory is described in chapter 9. The chapter defines how supervisors can implement the inventory in the workplace to better understand methods of encouragement best suited to their employees. Chapter 10 furthers the importance for supervisors to reconsider their current methods of recognition. The chapter

notes the limitations of recognition programs to include emphasis on performance, missing half the team, not perceived as genuine, and significant financial cost.

Chapman and White introduce the potential blind spot that supervisors should consider. Chapter 11 emphasizes the importance of discovering your own preferred languages, so that you can acknowledge your least valued language. A person's least valued language is the hardest for them to reciprocate, thus being their blind spot.

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 explore varied populations and tips for effectively showing appreciation. Languages of appreciation must be considered in a remote work environment and across all generations. Supervisors are guided to remember relationships are built upon relating to and with one another, to truly appreciate someone a relationship must exist, and appreciation flows from valuing another person. Chapter 14 provides tips for showing appreciation in manufacturing firms, family-owned businesses, schools, non-profit organizations, financial services, medical/dental offices, ministries and churches, law enforcement, government, and global applications.

A person's preferred language of appreciation can change. This concept is addressed in chapter 15. With different stages of life, life circumstances and life changes, and influence of interpersonal dynamics people change and thus their appreciation language may change. Supervisors should actively check in with their employees.

The authors acknowledge the perceived challenges with showing appreciation in the workplace in chapter 16 and 17. These challenges often include busyness, the belief that communicating appreciation is not important for your organization, feeling overwhelmed with existing responsibilities, structural and logistical issues, personal discomfort is communicating appreciation, the "weirdness factor," and not actually feeling appreciation for your employees. Support for overcoming these challenges is offered in these chapters.

The book concludes in chapter 18 with application tools for how to make the workplace a more positive environment. This chapter includes an example that reiterates the importance of workplace appreciation, while reviewing key ideas taught throughout the book.

Implications for Leaders

Overall, this is a meaningful and impactful text regarding effectively showing appreciation in the workplace. Strategies for showing genuine appreciation are discussed to help leaders implement change. The text provides clear definitions of the different languages of appreciation and tools for using those languages. Chapman and White's MBA Inventory provided within the book offers direct access to the assessment which identifies the primary language of appreciation of an individual. *The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace* is accessible and is an easy read for individuals desiring to enhance both leadership and empathy to become transformational leaders. This text would be beneficial to

all organizational leaders and to implement in college course focused on leadership and organizational management.

Reviewer's Details

Emily Haire, EdD, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, emily.haire@uncp.edu

Emily Haire is the Clinical Practice Coordinator and Adjunct Professor at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke School of Education. Her area of expertise is in elementary education and educational leadership. Her research interests include teacher licensure, mentorship relationships, and transformational leadership.