

rites & REWARD

CELEBRATE AND SPUR ON SUCCESS THROUGH HEALTHY WORKPLACE RITUALS

by Craig Harrison

As a director, manager or team leader, your understanding and utilization of ritual can help employees feel appreciated and valued, while simultaneously improving morale and even productivity. Did you know the group that plays together, stays together?

What is a Ritual?

A ritual is any practice or pattern of behavior regularly performed in a set manner. Rituals are common in every society. They have many benefits, among them:

- Satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners.
- Strengthening of social bonds.
- Demonstration of respect (or submission).
- Statement of one's affiliation.
- Obtaining of social acceptance or approval.
- Pleasure of the ritual itself.

Rituals We Know

We all engage in rituals in our family, as part of organized religion, in team sports, as a nation and as human beings. Examples include:

- Birthday celebrations — song, cakes and toasts.
- Anniversaries — cakes, cards, commemorative events.
- New Year: annual dropping of the ball in New York City's Times Square, champagne, noisemakers, confetti.
- Holidays — parades, ceremonies, etc.
- Awarding of the team ball to an athlete for an outstanding performance.

While some rituals are designed to be one-time events, such as a Baptism, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Quinceañera or Wedding, each has value and significance in a person's life.

Rituals at Work

Rituals at work have the potential to build team cohesion, help employees feel valued and provide visibility, stature, fun



and satisfaction for all. And especially when an organization sees fit to combine ritual with reward, certain values are inculcated.

According to Dr. Doreen Hamilton PhD, a Clinical Psychologist in Berkeley CA (BerkeleySolanoTherapists.com): "Leaders who create celebratory rituals that honor and reward individuals and teams will generate a more positive working environment. People perform and produce more effectively when motivated to achieve the special attention that rituals can bring.

Consider these examples of ritual and reward in the workplace:

- The "Employee of month" gets the a preferential parking space.
- The "ear of corn" trophy for the salesperson who sold the most each week.
- The ringing of bell to acknowledge each sale in a telesales department's boiler room.
- The ceremonial giant aspirin awarded to the service rep who closed the call of most problematic customer that week at their call center.
- The sales contests which culminate in winter trips to Hawaii.

Rx for R&R

Rituals and rewards can celebrate milestones and various achievements of success.

Performance

Consider the opera singer who receive a bouquet from an adoring audience member at the end of a stellar performance.

Homecomings

The firing combat boots from an aircraft carrier's catapult as it returns to port after last plane has launched. (Returning to Davy Jones' locker... the bottom of the sea.)

The Milestone

Awards for longevity, endurance or a body of work. Consider the sales rep who has returned from selling in his or her 50th state.

The Frivolous

One department created decreed Thursdays to be effective whining days and self-policed the rest of the week to maintain a positive attitude. (Even adjacent departments began to get with their program!)

Create your Own Ritual!

It's time you create your own group, department or company ritual, event or holiday. Depending on your line of work you may want to celebrate:

- Completion of arduous tour of duty
- Honoring the road warriors of your firm .
- Winning a fierce court case (for law firms).
- Surviving the proverbial "Project from Hell."

Now, pick a time and date for this repeating event. And consider location for this celebration. Designate a special office location where ceremonial birthdays, anniversaries and farewells are celebrated (break room, "Banana Bread" table or other location). Get others on the bandwagon and trumpet your newly minted ritual. The rewards will delight you...Let the celebration begin! ■

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