

## TO EXPRESS “THANKS” OR NOT TO EXPRESS “THANKS”?

*That is the leadership question*

By Carol Bergeron



A couple of weeks ago on a gorgeous Saturday afternoon I attended a jazz festival. It was sunny, humidity low with a cool breeze. We scoped out a spot on the plush green lawn and set up camp complete with lawn chairs and picnic blankets.

Accompanying me, among others, was my littlest niece. She is just over 2 years old and 2 feet tall - the world is her oyster. At that age there are many first time experiences. So seeing the world through her peepers is refreshing and good for the soul.

As the concert got into full swing I glanced over at my niece and noticed the look of confusion on her face. She was perplexed by the crowd clapping after each song and set (there were 4-5 bands). Like any good aunt, I moseyed on over and explained to her why we clap. We clap as a way to say “thanks for playing such a great song” and “we really liked it”. Shortly thereafter she was the most enthusiastic fan of us all. She wore out her dancing shoes and was single handedly (well maybe double handedly) responsible for at least one band’s encore performance.

That same afternoon I thought about an executive whom I had worked with years ago. His motto was not to thank employees for doing their jobs. Why? He thought doing so encouraged mediocrity. I can still hear him saying “thanks should be reserved strictly for achievements that go above and beyond the call of duty”. The rare times when he expressed appreciation in his mild mannered way, employees either missed it or received it with much skepticism because bestowing accolades was so out of character for him.

This was a highly educated, intelligent and accomplished man working in the fiercely competitive high-tech industry. His approach to appreciating employees and providing them valuable timely feedback was just plain wrong. The void, sustained over a long period time, prompted A players to second guess their value to and impact on the organization resulting in departures for greener pastures. Meanwhile B players stopped aspiring to become A players. As one employee put it “what’s the point?”

**Routing List**

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Fast forward to today. It is mid September and we are entering the most trying time of the year, the final 4 months. This is a time when you want all employees performing at the top of their game. Employees need to execute with precision, complete high priority assignments, pull together the game plan for next year and prepare the 2009 budget. And if money is tight then you expect employees to do more with less. On the home front things are busier too – back to school, sports, the impending holidays, etc. Collectively, those are a lot of demands made on employees.

As a leader, what kind of work climate have you created? Do employees know that you appreciate their contributions? Are you building momentum for continued success through positive timely feedback? Do employees wonder where they stand? Or worse, do they feel unappreciated? If you aren’t sure then ask and let the feedback guide your next steps.

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## Rock Trivia Czar & Twist Revealed

Last month I asked: Can you name which 2 songs of those bolded in my August newsletter are not Bruce Springsteen hits? I declare Joe Zarrett, founder of Verndale Corp, our Rock Trivia Czar. Honorable mention goes to Glenn Horner who responded 20 minutes later.

Joe and Glenn both identified “**Who'll Stop the Rain?**” (written by John Fogerty, originally recorded by Creedence Clearwater Revival for their 1970 album *Cosmo's Factory*) and “**Dancing in the Street**” (a Motown signature song first recorded by Martha and the Vandellas in 1964 and later by others including Mick Jagger and David Bowie as a duo. It also inspired Springsteen’s “Racing in the Street”).

Here’s the twist. There was a 3<sup>rd</sup> song. I could tell you that I deliberately planted it but frankly I blew it. One of the 2 listed above I overlooked. “**On the Dark Side**” is not a Springsteen hit. It was originally released by John Cafferty. The Beaver Brown Band performed the hit as a fictional rock band featured in the 1983 movie *Eddie and the Cruisers*.

Congrats to Joe and Glenn who will both enjoy a free lifetime subscription to my newsletter!

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## Upcoming Events

**Leadership Summit, Friday, October 24, 8am to noon.** An interactive leadership showcase featuring the 7<sup>th</sup> Wave Solutions Collaborative which consists of New England based organizational effectiveness thought leaders. Please call to learn more: 781-376-4071

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