



We made a club, packed it with cool stuff, and you're on the VIP list.

Issue Three: THE **ENCOURAGEMENT** ISSUE

Encouragement: Your Number One Leadership Tool

One thing I have believed for a long time is that our number one leadership tool is encouragement. Yup, good old-fashioned, heart-hitting, soul-lifting encouragement—the kind that puts courage in someone when they're running low.

Here's why: Everyone needs it, and everyone can do it. And it doesn't cost you anything except a little bit of time. Literally, in seven seconds, you can change a life. Sounds overblown? Hang on.

I have heard so many stories about how someone was having a bad day, a horrible season, and even contemplating ending their life, and then a word of encouragement came from an unexpected person or from some unexpected place, and it changed everything.

Encouragement is powerful because it's simple, accessible, and deeply human. It cuts through stress, doubt, and disconnection. It reminds people that they're not alone and that their efforts are worth something.

And here's the secret: when you offer genuine encouragement, it doesn't just strengthen others—it strengthens you too. Encouraging people fosters empathy,



**Big Leadership Energy.
Bite Size Stuff.
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Because you can't Google "How to Be a Great Leader" forever.

gratitude, and connection, which creates better teams, better conversations, and better outcomes.

And it's way more fun
this way anyway!

In a world full of productivity hacks, leadership seminars, tips and techniques, and motivational content, there's one human skill that quietly outperforms them all: encouragement.

It may not come with a certificate or get its own two-day seminar (although we're working on it), but encouragement is arguably the most effective tool you can use to build people up, strengthen relationships, and spark real growth—at work, at home, or anywhere you interact with other human beings.

Whether you're a manager, a parent, a friend, or a random human in a checkout line—you have the ability to shift someone's day (or life) with a few intentional words.

Encouragement builds connection. It grows trust. It sparks action. And best of all, again, it costs you nothing... but means everything to someone else.

Wait—Encouragement = Putting Courage In?

Exactly. It's not just a sweet comment or a fluffy feel-good phrase. True encouragement literally strengthens someone's spirit, making them braver, bolder, and more willing to take a step they might've been too afraid to before.

Say the word *encourage* out loud. You just said two words: IN and COURAGE. The word *encourage* literally means to "put courage into" someone. It's not just a kind word or a casual pat on the back. True encouragement gives people the emotional fuel they need to keep going, try something hard, or believe in themselves when they're tempted to give up. And, again, anyone can do it. No special training required (although, with some, it may take a little).

Encouragement is not fluffy. It's fuel.

Great leaders don't just lead with metrics and deadlines—they lead with belief in their people. One well-timed "I believe in you" or "That idea was brilliant" can energize someone for days. Encouragement is what transforms tasks into missions and coworkers into teams. People don't always remember what you said, but they always remember how you made them feel. And if you made them feel capable, seen, and trusted, you're already winning.

Tiny Words, Big Results

Encouragement doesn't mean fake praise or sugarcoating. It means:

- "I see how hard you're working."
- "That solution you came up with? Smart move."
- "You've got this—and I've got your back."
- "Your creativity blows me away sometimes."

These little phrases? They're like espresso shots for the soul.

Encouragement builds trust—fast.

Want loyalty? Growth? Engagement? Start encouraging more. It's free. It's contagious. And it works better than passive-aggressive emails or motivational posters from 2004.

When people feel encouraged, they stop asking "Am I doing this right?" and start saying "How can I do it better?"

Humans Are Wired for Encouragement

We're basically emotion-powered machines. One solid piece of encouragement can shift someone's whole mental state. It turns "I hope I'm doing okay" into "Wow—they noticed!" How do you know if someone needs encouragement? If they are breathing, they need it.

A Real Encouragement Formula: Make it personal + Show the value

Make it personal

If encouragement is the tool, personalization is the technique. Generic compliments are like fast food—easy, but not that nourishing.

Generic compliments might make someone smile, but personal encouragement sticks. It affirms something real about who they are or what they've done—and that's what gives it power.

For example, instead of saying, "You're doing great," say: "The way you handled that tough client call showed real patience and leadership. That's not easy to do."

This kind of encouragement tells the person, "I see you. You matter. What you do has value." It shows that you've noticed someone and that you value something unique about them. And that creates a ripple effect—boosting confidence, increasing motivation, and reinforcing trust.

Like this: "I noticed how you stayed late to finish that report. It shows real dedication and focus. You're growing into a leader who owns the process." That's making it personal and showing the value. That sticks and adds courage.

"The way you brought clarity to that confusing situation was seriously impressive. That's a gift."

"The way you asked questions in that meeting showed real leadership. You're helping the whole team think deeper."

"You always make new people feel included. That kindness creates culture."

Show the Value

People thrive when they know they're contributing in a meaningful way. So, when you encourage someone, don't just tell them they're doing well—show them why it matters. Want to multiply the power of your encouragement? Connect it to why it matters.

"You didn't just help with the project—you helped everyone feel calm and focused. That changed how the day went."

"Your attention to detail caught something the rest of us missed. You probably saved us hours of work."

Now you're not just complimenting a skill—you're reinforcing their value to the team. And you are tying it to the impact it made.

When people understand the impact of their actions, they don't just feel appreciated—they feel motivated, engaged and courageous. They understand their role in the bigger picture, and that gives purpose.

So, instead of...

"Hey, great job on that!" try this..."The way you used your creativity to solve problems in that project was fabulous. You are creative in ways not many of us are. One of the many reasons I am glad you're on this team."

Think of Encouragement Like a Gift

Now imagine two versions:

Gift A:

A generic “You got this!” mug from a clearance bin. Nice? Sure. Memorable? Not really.

Gift B:

A handwritten note tucked into their favorite coffee mug that says:

“You always bring calm to chaotic days. I saw how you handled that meeting—steady, thoughtful, and kind. That’s your superpower.” Boom. That’s real encouragement. It’s personal and shows the value.

One More Thing...

Discouragement shows people where to stop and takes courage out.
Encouragement shows people where to grow and puts courage in.

When people feel encouraged, they take risks, solve problems, and bring their full selves to the table. It’s the difference between surviving a job and thriving in one.

That’s the kind of fuel that keeps people moving when things get messy (and let’s be honest—things always get messy).

When you do it, others will do it as well because encouragement creates culture.

When leaders model encouragement, others follow. Before you know it, your team’s culture shifts from “don’t mess up” to “let’s grow together.” That’s how loyalty, innovation, and magic happen.

Level Up as a Leader

Start giving out more high-fives (real or virtual). Point out progress, not just perfection. Let people know they’re on the right track, even if it’s a bumpy one.

Because at the end of the day, leadership isn’t just about showing up and getting crap done—it’s about lifting others while you climb. And encouragement is your best climbing gear. So, whether you’re leading a team, teaching a class, raising a family, or just chatting with a friend, encouragement is always within reach—and it’s almost always exactly what someone needs.

The next time you notice something good, say it. Make it personal. Show the value. It might seem small to you, but to someone else, it could be the words that gave them courage when they needed it most—and could change a life.

[Click here for a simple 6-week challenge and guide to use this stuff.](#)

Keep on Scoochin’!
Steve Thomas

"I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among men the greatest asset I possess. The way to develop the best that is in a man is by appreciation and encouragement."

Charles M. Schwab

[Click here](#) for a cool looking graphic of this quote!

STUFF TO READ

short stuff

Read these articles and think about the questions. Then, send the article links to the leaders around you. Once they have read it, create some discussion around the included questions.

[How Leaders Can Effectively Show Appreciation For Their Teams](#)

Expert Panel | Forbes Business Council

1. Which of the 20 approaches to showing appreciation feels most natural for you to practice as a leader, and why?
2. What are some ways you could tailor appreciation to the individual needs and preferences of your team members?
3. How does "recognizing employees in the moment" differ from more structured recognition programs, and which might work better in your workplace?
4. What role does peer-to-peer recognition play in creating a culture of appreciation, and how could your team encourage more of it?
5. Looking at your current workplace practices, what is one new appreciation habit or system you could begin implementing this month?

[Click here to read](#)

Understanding the 5 Languages of Appreciation and Putting Them Into Practice

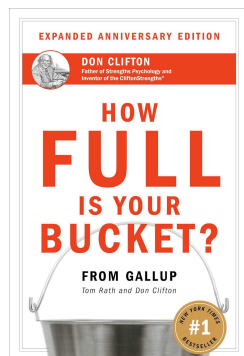
Great Place to Work

1. How well do we currently understand each team member's preferred "language of appreciation," and what steps can we take to learn these preferences?
2. In the past month, how often have we given appreciation that was specific, personalized, and timely rather than generic or delayed?
3. How can we integrate appreciation into our regular team rhythms (meetings, emails, Slack, etc.) so it becomes part of our culture rather than a one-off gesture?
4. What barriers might be preventing us from showing authentic appreciation (e.g., time constraints, lack of awareness, discomfort), and how can we remove them?
5. What barriers might be preventing us from showing authentic appreciation (e.g., time constraints, lack of awareness, discomfort), and how can we remove them?
6. In what ways can we encourage peer-to-peer appreciation so it's not just coming from managers but is woven into everyday team interactions?

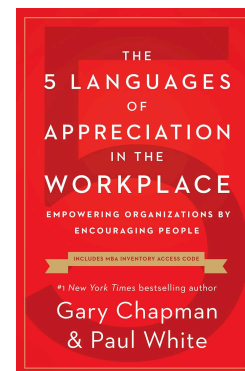
[Click here to read](#)

long stuff

Book Recommendations



How Full is Your Bucket?
Tom Rath & Don Clifton



The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace
Gary Chapman & Paul White

"Employees are a company's greatest asset - they're your competitive advantage. You want to attract and retain the best; provide them with encouragement, stimulus, and make them feel that they are an integral part of the company's mission."

Anne M. Mulcahy

[Click here](#) for a cool looking graphic of this quote!

STUFF TO WATCH

Watch these by yourself or with your team. Take time to time to journal thoughts or create conversations.



An Experiment in Gratitude

Soul Pancake (Watch time: 7:09)



Why We Need Appreciation (Not Just Recognition) at Work

Greater Good Science Center (Watch time: 16:41)

"If you are a leader, you should never forget that everyone needs encouragement. And everyone who receives it - young or old, successful or less-than-successful, unknown or famous - is changed by it."

John C. Maxwell

[Click here](#) for a cool looking graphic of this quote!

STUFF TO LISTEN TO

Budge

Just Plain Talk and Thoughts About Leadership!

BUDGE PODCAST

STUFF TO GO TO

Check out these Scooch Leadership Labs: a two-day power-up for your leadership *and* personal development! Think of it as a creative workshop meets team huddle — where bold ideas, real talk, and hands-on challenges collide. You'll leave energized and ready to lead with purpose (and maybe have a little fun, too)."

Upcoming Events:

October 7-8 | Wichita, KS - [more info](#)

The Winning Mindset! Getting to the Roots of Effectiveness

We would love to hear your questions or comments. Please let us know [here](#).

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