



# Leaders BOOK SUMMARIES

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## The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace

Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People

### THE SUMMARY

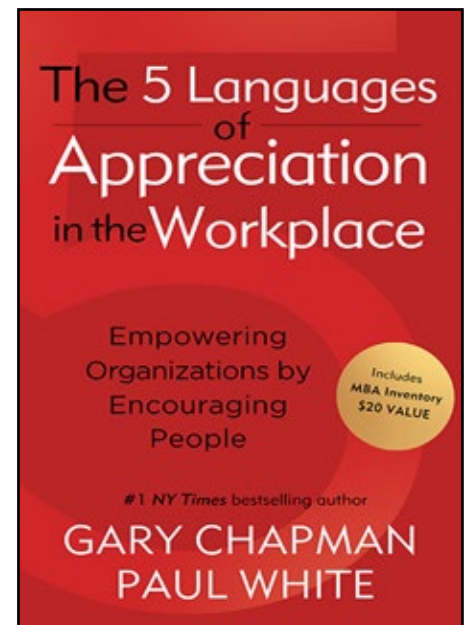
#### SECTION ONE: FOUNDATIONS

##### Chapter 1: The Concept:

Why is feeling appreciated so important in a work setting? Because each of us wants to know that what we are doing matters. Employees are more likely to “burn out” when they don’t feel appreciated or emotionally supported by their supervisors. When relationships are not nurtured by a sense of appreciation:

- Team members experience a lack of connectedness
- Workers become discouraged
- Employees complain
- Team members begin to think about leaving the organization

Just saying “thanks” doesn’t always work. For recognition



#### About the Authors

With over 40 years of counseling experience, **Dr. Chapman**, author of *The 5 Love Languages* has the uncanny ability to hold a mirror up to human behavior, showing people not just where they go wrong, but also how to grow and move forward. **Dr. Paul White** is a psychologist, author, speaker, and consultant who makes work relationships work. For the past 20 years he has assisted numerous agencies, schools, and organizations

and appreciation to be effective, they must be individualized and delivered personally. Trying a general “just say thanks” campaign across the company will not have much impact – workers will not view it as sincere.

One of the more frustrating things for a boss is to give appreciation and not have it appreciated. Sometimes appreciation misses the mark. We all tend to communicate to others in ways that are most meaningful to us – we “speak our own language”. However, if the message is not the appreciation language of the employee, it may not mean to them what it means to you. It may be considered a nice gesture, but one’s deeper need for appreciation remains unmet.

## **Chapter 2: Understanding the Return on Investment from Appreciation and Encouragement:**

Return on investment (ROI) is one of the measuring sticks by which executives and managers are monitored regarding their professional performance. If the Motivating by Appreciation (MBA) model doesn’t add to the health of the company, why would a manager want to use it? But studies show that giving Appreciation has a very real impact on the health and performance of a company.

When we started this project in 2006, many reports showed the concern of not being able to find quality employees. Some of the chief issues were a less-than-

adequately trained workforce, employees who did not have a good work ethic, and a shrinking labor pool. The bottom line result is that retaining quality employees is critically important today. Retaining good workers has a direct impact on any company’s effectiveness.

This raises the question of how to keep good employees at your company. Most managers (89%) believe employees leave for more money – while in reality only 12% of employees report leaving for more money, while 88% state they leave for reasons other than money. Gallup reports that almost 70 percent of the people in the United States say they receive no praise or recognition in the workplace, which certainly contributes to them moving on!

Managers know that one of the greatest costs to an organization occurs when an employee leaves and needs to be replaced. The process of hiring and training new employees is one of the most disliked tasks they have. Developing a culture of appreciation in the work place will have a direct effect on that. We believe that Motivating by Appreciation (MBA) can:

- Reduce employee turnover
- Improve productivity
- Create greater customer satisfaction

## SECTION TWO: THE 5 LANGUAGES OF APPRECIATION

### Chapter 3 – Words of Affirmation:

*Words of Affirmation* is the language that uses words to communicate a positive message to another person. Effective verbal praise is specific – it's well documented that global praise does very little to encourage the recipients. For praise to be effective, it must be specific.

#### **There are several areas we can look at when affirming people.**

*Character* looks beyond performance and focuses on the inner nature of a person. When we fail to focus on verbally affirming positive character traits, we are failing to recognize one of the company's greatest assets.

*Personality* is another area we can affirm people in. Personality is our normal way of approaching life. If we understand our own personality patterns, we can learn to "play to our strengths" and minimize our weaknesses. For some people, this is the primary way that they feel affirmed.

Just as there are many ways to express words of affirmation, there are also numerous settings for these words to be spoken:

- Personal, one-on-one – a private word can be deeply encouraging.
- Praise in front of others – communicates value.
- Written affirmation – handwritten notes are valued because they seem more

personal and take time and effort to complete.

- Public Affirmation – some people like the spotlight and hoopla of these events.

Words of praise can be encouraging to your workers, but they must be sincere. Your tone of voice and your body language can also communicate. They can be perceived as "I'm saying these words but I don't really mean it." Make sure to give affirmation only when you are sincere.

The greatest tragedy we have observed is that while most managers, supervisors, and colleagues genuinely appreciate the people with whom they work, they often neglect to verbally express that appreciation. Make it your goal that none of your coworkers will ever be able to honestly say that no one has ever appreciated their work. Make it your ambition to look for opportunities to give words of affirmation.

### Chapter 4: Quality Time

Showing staff appreciation by speaking the language of quality time is a powerful yet largely misunderstood tool for managers. By *Quality Time*, we mean giving the person your undivided attention.

One of the most common dialects of this language is that of *quality conversation*.

This requires empathetic listening with a view to understand what is going on inside the other person. Since some managers have little training in listening - here are some practical tips:

- Maintain eye contact

- Don't do other things while you are listening
- Listen for feelings as well as thoughts
- Affirm their feelings even if you disagree with their conclusions
- Observe body language
- Refuse to interrupt

There are also many settings in which quality time can be expressed:

- Having lunch together (business or fun)
- Stopping in the office to see how things are going
- Walking together
- The "hang-out" with team at end of work day
- Off-site retreats
- Sporting events

Time invested in this language of appreciation may well mean the difference between a motivated employee and one who simply does what is necessary. Showing appreciation by spending time with others can take different forms, but the impact on your team member can be significant. For those whose primary language is quality time – it is the best investment you can make in the life of this individual.

## Chapter 5: Acts of Service

For some people, demonstrating appreciation through acts of service

communicates caring. These individuals have the perspective: "Don't tell me you care: show me". For them, actions speak louder than words. Therefore, giving them a gift or verbal praise can often be met with indifference.

Providing assistance to one's colleagues is a powerful expression of appreciation, especially to the individual whose primary appreciation language is Acts of Service. However, several strategies can make the process more effective:

- Make sure your own responsibilities are covered before volunteering to help others.
- Ask before you help– if they don't want help it will produce tension not appreciation.
- Serve voluntarily– if it is under the duress of a supervisor it ceases to be an expression of appreciation.
- Check your attitude– make sure you are cheerful and positive.
- If you are going to help, do it their way.
- Complete what you start.

Here are some suggestions for ways you can "speak this language:"

- Stay after hours to help complete a project
- Offer to do menial tasks so they can focus on higher priorities
- Volunteer to do work for them that they dislike doing
- Help them to get their computer working

more efficiently

- Assist with cleaning up
- Bring them or their team some food when working long hours to complete a project
- Provide extra time for support staff to help them get caught up with filing and paperwork.

- Tickets to cultural events
- Small vacations/retreats
- Certificates for spa, golf, or manicure
- Shopping “bucks” at local mall
- Gift cards to home a decorating store or athletic retailer

You can also check out the art of giving a gift with buying a thing at [www.appreciationatwork.com/resources](http://www.appreciationatwork.com/resources). Note: Generation X, Y and Millennial are more likely to want time off as a gift since this group places a high value on free time.

## Chapter 6: Tangible Gifts

Giving the right gift to a person who appreciates tangible rewards can send a powerful message of thanks, appreciation, and encouragement. Conversely, giving a gift to someone who doesn't appreciate gifts has little impact; and the wrong gift can actually create an offense. The challenge to give the correct gift to the right person is a primary reason why many employers no longer give gifts. Another challenge is that most organizations can't afford to reward good employee performance with financial rewards that add up over time.

If you decide to learn to speak this language, there are two key things to focus on. First, you need to give gifts primarily to those individuals who appreciate them. Secondly, you must give a gift the person values. Know something about them before you select a gift!

Some suggestions for gifts:

- Tickets to sporting events
- Gift Cards to restaurants

## Chapter 7: Physical Touch

Physical touch as a language of appreciation is somewhat unique. When we first started investigating how best to apply the love languages to work-oriented relationships, we knew it would be a challenge to translate the language of touch appropriately. Field-testing of the inventory revealed that not one person was found to have Physical Touch as their primary language of appreciation in the workplace.

We believe there is a place for physical touch in the workplace, when done wisely. Physical touch is a way of acknowledging another person's value and can be deeply encouraging. We must learn from the person whom we are touching what he or she perceives as an affirming touch. Pats on the back, a quick handshake, or a high five are examples of implicit touches and are common expressions of physical touch in some work settings.

Almost instinctively in a time of crisis we

hug one another because physical touch is a powerful communicator of love and concern. However, recent attention to sexual harassment in Western culture has highlighted the danger of touching a worker in a way that is considered sexually inappropriate.

Guidelines created by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission indicate that sexual harassment takes place when one or more of the following conditions exist:

1. An employee submits to sexual advances as a necessary condition of getting or keeping a job.
2. The supervisor makes personnel decisions based on employee's submission to or rejection of sexual advances.
3. Sexual conduct becomes unreasonable and interferes with work performance; or creates a work environment that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive.

So, while we do not believe communicating encouragement and appreciation through physical touch is foundational in most work-based relationships, neither do we believe the workplace should become a completely "touch-less" environment. Appropriate acts of physical expression are valued by many and can add a depth of warmth to a work-based relationship.

## **SECTION THREE: APPLYING THE CONCEPTS TO DAILY LIFE**

### **Chapter 8: The MBA Inventory**

One of the things that sets mankind apart from animals is the ability to communicate via words. Language can be extremely diverse though, and if you do not understand the language, you will not receive any meaning behind the words.

The same is true when we talk about the languages of appreciation. Out of the four fundamental languages, each of us has a primary appreciation language. It is the one that speaks most deeply to us emotionally.

#### ***The MBA is based upon these core principles:***

1. There are different ways to communicate appreciation to others
2. Individuals have a preferred way of being shown appreciation
3. The most effective communication of appreciation is when it is in the receiver's preferred language of appreciation
4. Messages of appreciation in languages not valued by the recipient will miss the mark.

There is nothing to be lost and much to be gained in trying to lead your coworkers into being more effective communicators of appreciation. Here are three informal ways of discovering the primary appreciation language of your colleagues:

1. Observe their behavior – how do you see them regularly encouraging other workers? The majority of people typically



Speak appreciation in the language we most desire to receive it.

2. Observe what they request of others. The things we ask for tend to indicate our primary appreciation language.
3. Listen to their complaints. The things about which an individual complains may well reveal their primary appreciation language.

## Chapter 9: Your Potential Blind Spot:

By nature, we all tend to speak our own language of appreciation. Conversely, if I do what comes naturally, the language of appreciation that is least valued by me will seldom be spoken. This becomes a blind spot for me. I assume that since it has little value to me, it will be of little value to others.

The first step in getting past your blind spot as a manager or a colleague is to become aware of it. It is also likely that you really don't understand this least favorite language of appreciation. Asking a team member why this language of appreciation means so much to them can help you understand this language better. Communication will help it become easier for you to give that language of appreciation to those to whom it is extremely important.

You don't need to wait until you completely understand to act. It's commonly known that successful managers seek to understand the other person's point of view. If a manager is unable to see another person's perspective, he will make

numerous wrong assumptions. If you wait until you fully understand why something is important to them, you may lose a lot of time and opportunities to communicate appreciation – and may lose a team member in the process.

Communicating in our least important language takes more effort; it doesn't come naturally. We must think about it more intentionally and try to look for opportunities to speak their language. It may help to actually put it in our schedule. What we schedule, we normally do. To be successful may require planning how you will show appreciation to team members who have a language that is opposite of your own. Taking steps to do this can be critical in making sure that all team members feel valued by their supervisor and coworkers.

## Chapter 10: The Difference between Recognition and Appreciation

We believe that there is a *distinct* difference between recognition and appreciation. The narrow recognition-and-award approach has a number of limitations. Among them:

1. **Emphasis on Performance:** recognition focuses primarily on performance while appreciation focuses on the value of the individual employee.
2. **Missing Half the Team:** Most rewards offered in programs of employee recognition include only two of the languages of appreciation, *words of affirmation* and *tangible gifts*.

3. "Top-Down" Recognition: Too often employee recognition is implemented in an impersonal corporate approach, giving an aura of insincere appreciation.
4. Significant Financial Cost: In today's financial climate, many organizations do not have the funds available to pay bonuses, raises, or gifts that typically come with recognition/reward approach.

The concepts shared in *Motivating by Appreciation* can be put to work in any financial climate and with any size organization.

## Chapter 11: Motivating by Appreciation in Various Industry Sectors

*Nonprofit Organizations* face the constant need to make the community aware of their presence and mission, and have an ongoing need to raise funds. Staff members within these groups need continual encouragement and appreciation.

This can be challenging. While those who work for nonprofits often have a sense of calling and are motivated by a sincere desire to serve others, they still need to feel appreciated. Many nonprofits are underfunded and the demands on the staff are often overwhelming. As a result, the burnout rate for staff (and volunteers) is high. The *Motivating by Appreciation* model works extremely well in these nonprofit settings.

*Financial Services.* Many think individuals that work in this arena are primarily motivated by financial reward. While this might be true for the professional advisors themselves, their support team members need consistent encouragement as they work in a demanding, often high-pressure work environment.

*Family-owned businesses have their own unique challenges.* Over 85 percent of all businesses in the United States are family-owned. One thing that family-owned businesses have in common is the fact that the relationships in the work environment are complex. Family members are often the ones who feel the least appreciated of all employees. It is also our experience that business owners are one of the loneliest groups in the workforce.

*Schools* at every level of education are experiencing tremendous pressures. In fact, we believe that schools are one of the most difficult environments in which to work in today's society. Teachers and educational professionals face demands on all sides—meeting testing standards, dealing with increasing learning difficulties and behavioral problems, and a myriad of other issues combined with the factors of declining funds available for resources has created a cauldron for burnout and discouragement.

Employees of *churches and other ministries* often have a unique relationship with their vocation. In addition to their job being a source of income, they work also with a sense of spiritual calling and a desire to serve others. In our work with church staff members, we consistently find a deep hunger for appreciation.

We were told that the *Motivating by Appreciation* model would not work in the *manufacturing* sector. "This appreciation



stuff is too touchy-feely,” said one business consultant. “Line workers don’t care about feelings; they just want to get the job done and get a paycheck.” However, we found that there are owners of firms who understand the need to show appreciation and who are actively looking for a model that works within their organization. When you communicate appreciation it creates a sense of loyalty.

We have just begun to scratch the surface of utilizing the appreciation model in all varieties of work settings. Other groups that would benefit include law enforcement, government agencies, hotel and restaurant management, accountants, and more.

## Chapter 12: The Unique Characteristics of Volunteer Settings

Over 50 percent of the adult population reports that they are involved in some volunteer activity over the course of a year. This is a huge workforce to be managed! Understanding who these volunteers are, what they do, and how often they are engaged in serving is helpful information to those who are seeking to recruit and manage volunteers.

The retention of volunteers is one of the key challenges for nonprofit organizations.

- Low job satisfaction increases job turnover
- Turnover affects the quality of services delivered

- Volunteers are more likely to quit because their efforts go unrecognized
- One of the “best practices” nonprofits can follow includes volunteer recognition and appreciation
- Many volunteers report the main reason they quit is a sense of isolation and lack of support from others.

“Recognition” is not among the reasons people volunteer but it becomes a reason to *keep* volunteering. If you analyze the reasons that most people continue to volunteer it falls into two categories: social connectedness and perceived impact. Volunteers need input and perspective from their supervisors in order to understand the impact they are truly having.

Effectively conveying your appreciation for the work they are doing in ways that are meaningful to the volunteer can significantly boost volunteer retention. One of the most common complaints by volunteers about attempted displays of appreciation is that it feels like “one size fits all”. We believe that when administrators understand the languages of appreciation, they will be able to be far more effective in their efforts to express appreciation to their volunteers.

## SECTION FOUR: OVERCOMING COMMON OBSTACLES

### **Chapter 13: Does a Person's Language of Appreciation Change over Time?**

We are often asked if a person's primary language of appreciation changes. If the answer to that question is yes, then how do we know if a person's primary language has changed?

We feel that one's primary appreciation language tends to stay the same throughout a lifetime, as do many other personality traits. However, there are certain factors and seasons of life when one's secondary language may increase causing the primary language to shift in importance.

Personal crisis can have a huge impact on us. Emotional support and encouragement are critical during these times and our language of appreciation may shift. Another situation that might influence a change is if someone continues to be rewarded for their performance to a point that receiving an award is no longer exciting for them. Or, someone that appreciated gift cards earlier in life when finances were strained now is able to go out anytime they want. Their new financial situation changes the dynamics of their language of appreciation.

When a person receives an adequate supply of their primary language of appreciation, their secondary language may then become more important.

### **Chapter 14: Overcoming Your Challenges**

The question is not if you appreciate your

coworkers, but "do they feel appreciated?" Managing by Appreciation takes work if we are going to do it in a way that actually impacts the people around us, and it means overcoming some of the common challenges that can hinder us:

- 1. Busyness:* Most people do not allow a margin in their day for interruptions, problems, or challenges. They also face high and often unrealistic expectations along with financial pressures. The most important way to overcome busyness is to prioritize.
- 2. The belief that communicating appreciation is not important for your organization:* The type of organization really is not the important factor— it is the mind-set of the owner or supervisor that matters. However, creating higher loyalty, lowering turnover rates, and having a higher rate of job satisfaction can benefit any company.
- 3. Feeling overwhelmed with existing responsibilities:* This exceeds busyness by including the sense of weighty responsibility. The first way to treat this is to acknowledge and validate their perspective.
- 4. Structural and Procedural Issues that Inhibit effective Patterns of Communication:* Sometimes logistical issues interfere with sharing appreciation. Varying schedules and structural challenges can be difficult to overcome. The question is how can we best ensure a worker is consistently encouraged and shown appreciation?
- 5. Personal Discomfort with Communicating Appreciation:* Two trains of thought: "Why should I thank them for doing their job? I pay them" and "I always do my best and am self-motivated; they should

do the same.” Some people have their mind set and are not open to explore new ideas. They need to see the benefits of expressing appreciation.

6. *The “Weirdness Factor”*: Starting to put the principles of appreciation into effect can feel sort of fake. First, you need to acknowledge that this feeling exists. Secondly, relate the experience to previous life experiences— there’s an inherent weirdness to trying anything new.

Challenges often require some creative thinking and problem solving, but the problems are not insurmountable.

## **Chapter 15: What to Do When You Don’t Appreciate Your Team Members**

One of the most common reasons that we lack appreciation for those with whom we work is that we have unrealistic expectations of them.

The reality is people are different. In the work setting, the question is, “Are they performing their job in a satisfactory manner?” But what if they aren’t? Some individuals are not doing their jobs at an acceptable quality level. Three of the most common reasons are: personal problems at home; physical problems; or a low work ethic. (Clarifying the source of the problem will help identify how to deal with it effectively). Many managers do not like confrontation and will go for months avoiding the issue of a low-performing employee. Supervisors need regular times to communicate what is going

well and what can be improved.

Note: We openly encourage supervisors not to attempt communicating appreciation if they truly do not appreciate the team member. Insincere appreciation helps no one and often makes things worse.

### **Conclusion: Now It’s Your Turn**

We are well aware that the ability and willingness to show appreciation is not a magic bullet that will solve all of the challenges in a workplace. We also know that no organization is perfect. But we have found that when members of an organization engage in communicating appreciation in ways that are most meaningful to their team members, good things happen.

It is our desire that, regardless of your position within your organization, you take this information and apply it to your daily relationships. We have seen individual employees make a real difference in their workplace by showing appreciation to their colleagues.

By effectively communicating appreciation and encouragement to others, you can be the impetus that creates a more positive work environment for yourself and those around you.

### **The Pastor’s Perspective**

As a pastor, I am well aware of the power of appreciation. In a church, or any organization that depends on volunteer labor (and has limited funds), you learn quickly

how important it is to express appreciation to your workers—if you want to keep them. people don't *feel* appreciated.

The most helpful part of the book, for me, was the list of obstacles—the things that stand in the way of expressing appreciation. Ironically, most of them were not things I have to deal with in the church. But it did cause me to stop and take inventory—how much am I really expressing appreciation? I find it is easy to give myself credit for good intentions, even when I am not actually acting on them. That was my experience reading this book. When I sat down and made a specific list of who I had expressed appreciation to recently, and in what way, I found that I wasn't doing it anywhere near as often as I thought. That was eye-opening to me.

Additionally, I found that I was consistently giving appreciation in one way—words of affirmation. Would you be surprised to hear that that is my primary language? Occasionally I will use other languages—I could find times when I had used all of them—but by far the one I used most was words of affirmation.

I think that is natural in a church setting, but I come away from the book with two things in mind. First, I need to be more intentional about expressing my appreciation to those around me. I probably need to put it in my schedule in order to make sure it really happens. Second, I need to pay better attention to what the languages of those around me actually are, and work at customizing my appreciation. I don't see any downside to that. I *want* a church that encourages and affirms each other, and I recognize that I will set the pace in that regard. With that in mind, I want to make sure that my affirmations have the biggest possible effect. There's not much point in doing it if the goal isn't accomplished—if