

Disrupt Yourself Podcast with Whitney Johnson

Episode 81: Dr. Bob Nelson

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things disruption. My guest is Bob Nelson, president of Nelson Motivation Inc, and considered to be one of the world's leading experts on employee motivation.

Whitney: Dr. Bob Nelson, it is such a pleasure to have you on the podcast today, thank you for joining us.

Bob: Thank you Whitney.

Whitney: So, I'd like to start off by asking you where you grew up, and what you thought you would be when you grew up?

Bob: (laughs) Well I, I'm a military brat, so we moved every three or four years, and um, was born in uh Southern California, and, and uh, at one point lived in Paris, France. Um, other than that uh, some exciting places like Sliney, Kansas, and Minot, North Dakota. (laughs), Warner Robins, Georgia. All military bases. So, I, I think um, my earliest recollection of what I wanted to be was um, a preacher.

I'm not sure why, I was in, went to some religious schools, that probably had an impact. And uh, I'd like to think maybe I've got a gospel source now. With my writing.

Whitney: That's so interesting, so when you were growing up you wanted to preach, be a preacher, and now you preach the gospel of, you have a brand new book that's out called [1,001 Ways to Engage Employees](#), and so you preach on employee engagement and employee recognition right?

Bob: Yes, yes actually this is my 30th book, so I've, I've done a number of 1,000 Ways books as well as [The Management Bible](#), um, many, I've done three Managing for Dummies books, or, or Dummies books, [Managing for Dummies](#), [Consulting for Dummies](#), and [Recognizing and Engaging Employees for Dummies](#). And then some others along the way as well.

Whitney: So in other words you're no dummy is what you're telling me.

Bob: Oh I don't know.

Whitney: (laughs).

Bob: I try.

Whitney: You know you've written like you said, 30 books, but you really, your focus has been on employee recognition. What led you to focus here? How did this come about?

Bob: Well it's interesting because I've had, um, I mentioned my father was in the military. I was actually born when he was flying. When he got back to uh, the base, they always had a ceremony, a little ceremony for, for um, life milestones like birth of a child. They uh, hand my dad a, a little, little silver cup and there's a visiting general, that was visiting the squadron. And he stopped the proceeding and said, that's not the way you do recognition.

And he did it over, and showed them how to do it, and he included a whole context, said Captain Nelson, the jobs we're doing defending our country, we, we can't be there during life's milestones. A birth is a major milestone, and we appreciate uh, this event for you and your family, and just made a proper presentation. So that's how you do a presentation, you give meaning to context.

So obviously I wasn't there, but I heard this story, and along my journey, I had the good fortune to work for 10 years for Ken Blanchard who wrote [*The One Minute Manager*](#) of which uh, the, the first secret of one minute managing was one minute praisings, I uh, I subsequently had, working on my doctorate, with um, Peter Drucker. Uh, got further entrenched in reinforcement theory, and, and it just always made sense to me that, uh treat people right, and do that well, and you know, make a difference.

And, subsequently have been able to find research that validates that common sense notion that thanking people is important, and, and the impact it can have.

If that happens, the benefits include um, employees will be five times more likely to feel valued, six times more likely to recommend the business as a great place to work, and seven times more likely to stay with the organization uh for the rest of their careers. So huge benefits from doing this simple common sense notion of thanking people.

Whitney: So when you went into your PhD program, was this the question that was on your mind, or did you have a different question?

Bob: It actually was, I, I knew that uh, reinforcement theory worked, we have hundreds, hundreds of studies that say you get - what you recognize, you'll get more of. Proof, proven, so I knew that was the case. What I, I didn't, didn't understand is, why is this so, so few people use it? Or use it well? And so my question was, and I think the best research is, is around simple questions. Was why is it some managers use recognition, even if they don't have tools or programs or budgets to do so, they still made it happen? And other managers you give them all those things, you tell them it's important, we want you to do it, here's a budget for doing it, here's some tools, here's program you can nominate people, and they still don't do it.

So I, I took a deep dive into trying to find, go into the, the minds of, of managers, say, what, what is it triggers people to actually take this seriously and make it happen? So I did a, a three year study um, where I looked at 47 national organizations, and in each of them I identified managers that were good at recognition, uh, and compared them in the same organization to managers that didn't do recognition. So that took me about a

year to set up the whole study, and then I looked at 169 variables to see what differentiated those two groups, the doers and the non-doers.

Um, and that, that was the study, and the results uh, I still use to this day, because they were, they were again rang true, and uh, I, I spend most of my career trying to help organizations with those variables to make it a reality of where they work today. So the, in a nutshell, my findings were that for managers that don't do recognition, there's a lot of reasons, starting with they, they don't know how to do it well, uh, they really don't believe it's that important. No one does it for them. Uh, they, they uh of course are busy and who has time to do things, uh that they don't believe are that important to begin with, right?

And then, and on and on, they're afraid of leaving someone out, they're, they're afraid that uh, you know, they felt HR should do it for them. A lot of reasons that that hold managers back, that make them feel that it's not important, it's not their job.

For the managers that use recognition, I found there was just one variable going on, which is kind of exciting, just one thing. And that is that they had all, almost to a person, had internalized the importance of the topic. They felt that as a manager, as a leader of their people, they're also in charge of the motivational environment, the, the tone of what it means to work for them. And, and they took that-

Whitney: All right, so here's the question. I'm a brand new manager, I'm a brand new leader, I've got people I've just hired them, um, and or I'm a brand new leader, I've got people you know, all along my learning curve at the low end, the middle, the high, and I'm saying to you okay Bob, what do I do to recognize my people? What are your three top tips?

Bob: The top tip, would, would be just start saying thank you in a sincere, specific manner when, when someone does a good job, they finish their, project, they volunteered for an assignment, whatever it might be, just to thank them and make that part of uh, your behavioral repertoire, systematically thanking people when you see good work, when you hear about it, when you read it in a report, when you hear it from a client. You mention it to the person, that would probably be number one.

Number two would be to uh talk with people about this to see how they like to be recognized. Because um, it varies, it varies widely. And, and you'll be more in the market if you do things that are important to someone. So a public phrase is generally important but it's, if someone's an introvert, or if they're from a different culture, often that's, that's not the valued, and so you got to find out what, what things do uh, does it for them, and then do those things when, when it's uh deserved.

Just doing that well, when you, when you, whatever you do to, to uh get feedback from them. In anything, in any skill you've got to constantly get feedback to, so you can do it better. You can't just try it once and say well that worked that didn't work, I'm not going to do it again, you got to say, you've got to learn from it. And if-

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bob: If you missed, if it didn't, if it didn't work say how could it, how could I have done that better? What would have been more special for you?

Whitney: I had just the other day someone say to me, you know, people have been saying thank you, you're awesome, and she said you know that's actually, you know I like hearing that I'm awesome, but it's not very helpful. And so you just said something I thought was really important is not only to say thank you and not only to say it publicly depending on the culture, you know whether a person's an extrovert or introvert, but also um, to uh be very specific. Any thoughts there on how to give specific recognition?

Bob: Absolutely, and that's part of the, the sincerity of it, that if, if you're just making generic comments, it doesn't ring true, and some managers say oh everyone's doing a great job, well probably everyone isn't you know, some people are doing a fantastic job, someone you probably is working there you should've fired, you know a month ago. So, um, part of the credibility of a good praising is specifics. So, giving them the evidence of why you feel they're doing a good job. What did you see in the work? Uh, what'd you hear from the client? What impact uh, uh did the, the, the job have?

So a good, a good praising is, is done soon, and timing's important. The closer to the activity that you're trying to reinforce the, the more it, it's going to likely happen again. Sometimes if you wait too long it's more of a disconnect you know, this person doesn't remember what you're talking about. What project? You know. Oh that one, oh yeah, okay. So timing's important, needs to be sincere, part of sincerity comes from specifics. That you're, you're, you're using the evidence of what specifically you saw that they did so well.

Whitney: Which, which takes a little bit more work, doesn't it?

Bob: Yeah it does.

Whitney: To, to take the time you think about, okay specifically um, what, what did this person do, and how can I give them concrete evidence of why I'm thanking and recognizing them? Takes more work, but probably valued much more.

Bob: So that's why you've got to constantly be in the back of your mind on the lookout for opportunities to acknowledge people. Um, and then, I'd say the other important part of a great praising is providing the context that I mentioned earlier, that of why what you did is important to our, our group's goals, the core values of the company, the, the commitment the person made. Uh, giving, giving that context makes it more powerful, more meaningful. Uh, taking the time to talk, to tell them.

Whitney: It's really valuable, so we just finished this big event. Um, in, in Boston um, where Marshall Goldsmith, who you coach, and I did um present, presented the information on [Build an A-Team](#) and on stakeholder centered leadership, and one of the people on my team, um, Melissa Ruddy, did such a good job in managing every single last detail and I've realized that I've said thank you. Um, but I probably haven't been so specific in saying thank you so that all of those details that were so important to having a person

actually having a great experience or not were all in place. And so I'm giving her a public shout out right now, but it's a reminder listening to you of like, I need to do the work of being, not only saying thank you, because I think I do that pretty well, but being more specific with the, with the praise um and, and concrete around it.

Bob: And if that was a uh, significant achievement, you can go beyond the thank you that, that you might you know in reflecting say, you know you really did go all out, I know you spent a lot of your personal time. I'd like to do something uh to pay you, pay you back for all that and uh what would be meaningful to you? Or take your spouse or significant other out for, for dinner and bring me the, the, the receipt or, the more you know about them the more you could pick something you know will be on the mark, but otherwise you can, you can try to, to suggest things that uh you'd like to do for them um so basically put back the goodwill that they, they shared in, in going out of their way to do a great job for you.

Whitney: Can you think of a moment in your life, in your career, where um, someone recognized you in a really meaningful, concrete, properly or contextually proper way where you're just like, yeah? Like, that person got it, and it really meant something to me. Can you think of one or, one example in your life?

Bob: I'm a writer by profession so when, when someone uh speaks out on and tells me how my book helped them, that always resonates with me. Uh I, I remember uh once being at a conference and, and someone walking by and you know, like 10 people deep and, and saw me and came over and said your book helped save my marriage. I'm like what? You know, it's I know it was meant for employees but it got me to see something I didn't see before about the importance of, of relationships, and, and uh, you know for, for most of us uh, often the people that are most important to us end up getting the, the dregs of, of what we have to offer because they see us when we're exhausted and burnt out.

And, so just, you made me realize I need to be treating um, you know my, my the people most important to me with that, that amount of respect as well.

Whitney: It's interesting as I think about um millennials and it's you know, anecdotally it's the everyone gets a trophy generation, do you feel that millennials did or have received more recognition growing up? And if so, are they making better managers, because they're more comfortable and more aware of what recognition looks like, or is the inverse true, or is it probably somewhere in between?

Bob: I would say yes that they, they were labeled the, the trophy generation and, and I think that there's a lot of truth to that. We want the best for our kids you know, but they, they are they are misunderstood because of that, there's a sense of that they have to be puffed up, and they've got a frail ego. You got to be careful how you deal with them, and, and uh, it is a fact that they expect recognition, and actually they expect it more frequently, even on a daily basis.

I was on um, 60 Minutes on this topic and, and when they called me I said you know I'm not a millennial, sure you got the right person? They said yeah we're absolutely sure because from their research, one of the defining characteristics of the generation, was that they expect recognition on a daily basis.

And uh, so that, that could amplify the fact that they're spoiled, and they need, have to be the center of attention, but what I've learned on the topic is that that's not what's going on at all. It's because they're, they're bright enough and resourceful enough to know that, that what you expect them to do tomorrow might be different than what you expected from them yesterday, that work is a dynamic function today. It's constantly changing, the speed is, is great.

That they're smart enough to realize that they've got to be on, on point to know if they did, did something right to do it again. And so it's, it's not just because they want to be puffed up, it's that they want the feedback.

Whitney: Fascinating. So it's not a neediness. I mean it could be a neediness, but what you're saying is they're saying they're used to instant feedback, and they know that there's a dynamic or a dynamism to the workplace. So, they want the feedback so that they can improve more quickly is what I'm hearing you say.

Bob: Exactly, and, and so uh to be in a job where, where your boss goes where here's your job description, I'll check back with you in 12 months and we'll go over it, see how you did. It doesn't make sense to them, it doesn't make sense to anyone I know. I got to have constant feedback, otherwise they're not, they're not good at operating in a vacuum. And I'm not, I'm not sure anyone is good at operating in a vacuum, that they need that feedback, they, and not just praise but uh, feedback on ... And they need it uh, instantaneously.

Whitney: So have you ever seen the, uh the TV show The Office?

Bob: Yes.

Whitney: Okay, so they frequently in, um, engage in activities that would fit into your low cost recognition ideas for his employees. What would, advice would you give Michael Scott and Dunder Mifflin to help them become better managers, both in terms of recognition and, and the topic of your new book, [1,001 Ways to Help Engage Your Employees](#), what advice would you give Michael Scott and Dunder Mifflin?

Bob: Well of course it's all facetious, but you know, in, in the show they're, they're all trying too hard. Every little thing is a major thing and, and it's a, much ado about nothing. So it's uh, you got to give people space. No one, no one likes to be micro managed, and so if you have a little bit more trust, and um, then follow up on reinforcing the positive, you can end up with more people doing more things better.

And actually you know of course that show's a, a spoof but there are a lot of managers that, that um, I, I feel that you know you get a job as a manager, initially you want to

prove yourself. Well for a lot of, a lot of people, uh, the way they prove themselves is - I got to show I'm the smartest person in the room, and so they're constantly on the hunt for mistakes, and problems. And, and they're fixing to take work assignments back and do it themselves, stuff like that, and micro manage.

That of course drives everyone away from them, and undermines any authority they might have had. You got to give people their space and uh, and encouragement uh, let them have their own uh, input and on the assignment, and then reinforce what they did well. And guide them from a distance.

Whitney: That's really interesting Bob. So that to me um is okay, so that's your advice to Dunder Mifflin, and I think one thing that you just said is really to me is the money shot around this, and the rub, and, and in Dunder Mifflin or just in life generally is that if I were to guess the number one reason people don't give recognition, um not even I don't know how, but it's the - I don't know that I am myself doing a good job, and in order for me to somehow believe that I'm doing a good job, I can't give away any power by telling other people that they're doing a good, and so the very act of not doing that erodes that power. Is that, is that right? I mean, that, is that in your research the number one reason?

Bob: Well you hit, you hit it on the head that the whole, uh concept of power it's all a power balance, and if I, if I tell you you're doing good at something, I gave up some of my power, because I got to control you and control the situation, be the person in charge. All, all that doesn't work today.

Whitney: Did it ever work?

Bob: I think uh, it did to, to accomplish the goals in terms of a very hierarchical or you know, in, in the Army you want uh, commands flow down from the top, and you want everyone doing what they're told, and you want a, sense of a clear uh, plan for victory, and as an organization used to be more from that structure. In fact the original corporation model, the US Army type thing, and so uh, that, that made sense in, in staid, predictable times. Which we're not in now.

So in more fluid times of, of constant change, and speed, um, there's got to be a lot more trust in relationships not in, in power. Uh, and that, and that's been the big, a big shift. So instead of being a power broker you've got to be a relationship broker, and you got to show, employees that you're on their side, you've got their best interest at heart, and the job of managing is, is less controlling as much as it is coaching. Maybe counseling. Peter Drucker defined management as getting the work done through others. That's not doing for them, it's not forcing them to do it, it's getting it done through them, so helping them doing as best you can.

Whitney: You've pivoted a little bit, and written this new book on um, [1,001 Ways to Engage Employees](#). Tell us why that book, and what are some things that we might want to know?

Bob: The book is a research based book that has at the top 10 categories that most impact en- engaged employees. And of those number one is recognition, which accounts for 56% of ones feeling of being engaged at work, is makes sense, I'm valued by my, my boss, and others for the job I do. If you do that well, you're, you're more than halfway there to having the highly-engaged employee.

It's been a hot topic in American business, for the, the ability to uh have people do um, uh, more than you're paying them for essentially if they're truly motivated and engaged. And, the opposite is true in the American work force right now, in fact for the last 20 years uh, there's been on average about less than a third of employees that are deemed engaged according to the Gallup Organization. So two thirds of employees are either not, not engaged, or actively disengaged, they really do not care you know. Where's my paycheck? kind of thing.

So it's a big problem, has a huge cost to the American economy, and so uh, I wanted to weigh in to say hey, here's from what I have to offer, uh here's a clear research foundation, and then, and then as is common for, um, most of my books, I, I paint the picture with real examples from actual companies as to what it looks like to do those different variables. One's immediate manager, tied to the strategy admission, the job itself, the content, the tools to do the job. Relationship with senior management, open and effective communication, one's co-workers, and the ability of resources, and ultimately the uh, organizational culture, and that you're a part of that's been created. So those are all kind of different variables. Together they tie to form a, like a tight-fitting glove, uh if you're, if you're firing on all those cylinders, you're going to have people that are more like the uh, going to be highly engaged in the job they're doing.

Whitney: So you said that um, 50, recognition was 56% of, of the, the variable that contributed 56% to the satisfaction on the job is that what I heard you say?

Bob: To the engagement of any worker yes.

Whitney: Engagement on the job, okay. Got it, and then what was, what was second after recognition?

Bob: Career, career development actually in, and, everything that wraps around that.

Whitney: Ah. The learning curve.

Bob: It's sort of like, uh, for, for example in, in a study I looked at of recent uh graduates, 100,000 recent graduates from over 1,000 institutions the career development, the chance to learn new skills um, the career path, actually ranked higher than what the salary was for the job for um, for the current generation.

And, and other things that, in having a mentor, uh, being able to learn new skills, and in many ways, you, you offer those then, they're again smart enough to know that if I have the skills, have the opportunity if, if there's a future here, then I'll be paid accordingly as I advance in the organization. So there's a little less focus on I've got to get it right now,

than if I'm in an environment that supports who I am, if I'm learning from my manager, if other people are, are interested in my future, that's going to be uh, even more important.

Whitney: Right.

Bob: So career development is, has been uh-A big one, and I, I've find that uh, you know again, that old line company, they, they yeah, have them do that in their own time you know, or maybe they will, uh, okay, we do a tuition reimbursement program, well that's, that's like uh, a toe in the water. There's so much that you can do to help people learn and grow, and that can start with the, the first conversation you have with a new hire. This is, you're here for a job, but uh, let me tell you, you do a good job and that's job number one, doing good work, but here's where you can go in our organization, and, and by the way my job is to help you get there. So, uh wow, you can. That can be the first conversation.

Whitney: Right.

Bob: Then all of a sudden you, in a very different place and just getting a paycheck-

Whitney: Right. Yeah absolutely. I asked you this question earlier about recognition. Um, if I were to say okay you know, lightning round, give me one or two tips to engage my employees, like really concrete tips. Um, one of them is probably be, going to be to recognize them, what would be the second tip be?

Bob: I would say listen more than you talk. Uh, that in itself shows support. Trust, respect, those are all big variables in, in having someone feel valued. Steven Covey, used to say uh focus more on understanding before you focus on being understood. I, I think that goes a long way in any relationship of, of showing that um the person's important to you all, through all your behaviors, each behavior you do, it shows uh, trust and respect, and value, or it shows disregard. You know, so if you're, how do you treat people when you're upset, when you're angry?

Well, if you vent and you, you swear, and embarrass them in front of their peers, you, that, you just dumped the trust bucket you know. If you showed your stripes that uh, uh you feeling good for a minute is, is worth more than, than respect for their relationship. And, and uh, there, there's a less tolerance in that in the workplace today. And if you're doing that to a millennial, yeah, don't be surprised if they quit ... Because they've got enough respect for themselves that that's, if that's uh, the value you have for them, then they're in, definitely in the wrong place, could go find a better job.

That's one of the cautions, to you, you can uh, on the spur of the moment do something that, that makes you feel good and, and vali- validated as a leader. Uh you were right, there's another one you know. When someone makes a mistake, how do you handle that? You can prove yourself right well bravo you know. Or you can, you can say take a breath and say you know, I'm not sure we've handled it the same way, but uh what'd

you learn from that? That can be the best training we gave you all year, I'm glad you made that mistake.

Bill Gates at Microsoft used to say you can tell a lot about the long-term viability of any organization simply by looking at how they handle mistakes. So it's uh, it's the simple insights that you hold, hold the, those dear uh, you can remember to respect the other person, especially uh in tough circumstances, especially when you're in front of someone else. And again, that's going to serve you the best in the long, long term of the, that relationship.

Whitney: You have worked with 80% of the um-Fortune 500 companies. Is there an assignment or some work that you've done that you can disclose that's been an assignment work that you were just like wow, that was so satisfying to see how that went down in the workplace in the work that I did with this organization.

Bob: Oh I, I love uh, thank you for that question, and I, I love them. I'm working with some great companies right now, and I, I find that um, because I do this so much, I, I can see very clearly where they're, where they're missing the, the best intent. And I can help them um guide them, uh, it's one of the, one of the values when you become entrenched in the topic that you can, you can see with clarity where other people are too close to, to see.

And, and in general, without calling out any specific companies, I say in general, uh the whole industry of, of uh recognition rewards, which is a \$90 billion industry in America has been uh, it's been the, the tail wagging the dog, that um, in, in the whole history of, of incentive industry, we've had uh, vendors that uh, an army of salespeople that are pushing merchandise, and, and trips, and uh, things that cost money on, on companies, and convincing them that this is what will tell your employees that you value them, you know. Give them, give them points so they can get a, a plasma TV, now they'll really work hard for you.

And, and uh, I, I see corporations spending millions and millions of dollars on this is, this is probably the most common thing that I see. Millions of dollars in programs and tools, and point systems, and gift cards and then on their employee surveys, employees report they don't feel valued for working there. And, and, and management goes well what the heck? The ingrates, we're doing all these great things for them, and they, they don't, they don't uh count those things, it's like well, they don't count those things because it's not, those don't touch them, those are the ones that aren't important to them.

What's, what's more important are, believe it or not, the things that don't cost a lot of money. The things that are behavioral that could, be done by their immediate manager or upper management, uh things that, as you mentioned take a little thought, maybe a little preparation, capturing the moment in the moment. Uh, you don't have to give someone a plasma TV, and if you're, you're paying them well and that was important to one, to them, they, they probably have that one already, so uh but uh, having the respect of your, your manager, having that future in the company, being listened to when you have an idea, being encouraged to pursue that idea and supported with resources and authority to make it happen.

Wow, that's, those are some big, big things that uh, send a big message to someone that not only are, are you important, but your ideas are important, and having you on it uh, for us, uh is invaluable, and, and, and thank you so much for doing that.

Whitney: Have you had something recently where you saw that place? So, play out as you've worked with a company? I know you're not at liberty or, prefer not to name, name names, but can you think of one thing where you went in, you did the work, and then something magical happened?

Bob: Yeah, I, I had a, a recent a, company had 1,600 stores, uh, about \$6 billion company, and The, first day, uh, they hired me, they asked me we're thinking of doing this, what do you think? I said, I would not do that. The first sentence out of my, my mouth I saved them \$400,000, because what they were doing was a mistake you know. They, they wanted to do, they were doing a years of service thing, and they were going to shift to giving them Expedia cards so people can travel to destinations.

I said you know, I looked over all your survey information, uh, I didn't see anyone saying they, they want the company to pay for more vacation travel for us. Don't be giving them things that they don't want. Stop and see what they, what they value, and then start giving them those things. And, and so they, they held off on that, and then the whole thing was displaced.

In most corporations I find there's a huge disconnect. They say one thing's important, here's our strategic plans, here's the, the numbers we're trying to reach, and then they end up recognize something that's unrelated to that. Years of service, birthdays, uh, holidays, who cares? Recognition's the most powerful driver of human performance, use that to drive the things that are most important to your mission, and your business, and people will, will uh respond.

You know, I mentioned Ken Blanchard, uh that I worked with for, for uh, 10 years. I helped him with uh, do seven of his books. I remember once I, we were driving together and, and in [One Minute Manager](#) had these little, little plaques, these little sayings, and one of them was that people that feel good about themselves perform better. And he told me Bob, we got it wrong on that one. It's not people that feel good about themselves perform better, it's that people that perform well feel great about themselves. We have to, our job as leaders, as managers is to help people be performers. You do that, and they're going to love working for you, you got to show them how they can be better for you and for them. It's going to impact their future.

Whitney: Who is someone that you need to or would like to recognize right now while we're talking in a very concrete, contextual sort of way as we start to wrap up?

Bob: Well the person that you already mentioned that is important to both of us, Marshall Goldsmith, has, has been a uh, a true visionary, and uh, uh um, and I've, I, I've told him this by the way too that I'm, I'm drawn to him for his simplicity of, of concepts, of proven concepts in his diligence in, in pushing the agenda to help people. And we both, uh, are part of the benefit of that, and the whole idea of bolstering people and helping

link them to each other, such as we're doing right now is, is really uh, goes well beyond um, being a uh servant leader. It's, it's truly being a force uh out there for, for good.

So that, that's a, that's a, that's a big one. And, and I, I, I cherish Marshall for, for the things that he does, and for who he is, and for his insights, and for his constant striving to spread the word, and, and build a bigger legacy.

Whitney: Hmm, such a great example of, of you just recognized him, and, and you've coached him, but he's also coached you. And I think that's probably the best coaching relationships are like that, that, that both parties really benefit. Um, Dr. Bob I'm going to call you Dr. Bob instead of just Bob, um, thank you so much today for joining us, I think that our listeners are really going to benefit from hearing you talk about how we can recognize. And I will try to wrap things up by being um, contextually specific in my recognition of you.

I, I appreciate um, actually probably six months ago now we had a very long and in-depth conversation about, about books. And how to um, put books into the hands of people, and how to in an, in a um setting where people don't necessarily have the budget to pay you to be able to have a conversation where there are ways for them to buy books, and then pay you by buying the books. And I have been able to implement that to very good effect in um one event in particular that I can think of, and so I wanted to thank you for that advice um, um, and in giving that and sharing that with me, so thank you again and thank you for being on the podcast.

Bob: Thank you Whitney, and anytime I can help you, you know the door's always open.

Whitney: Thank you.

It never ceases to amaze me that something so simple - expressing sincere gratitude - makes such a huge difference in your success when it comes to leading a team. Such a small thing, but small things yield big results when practiced consistently.

Another common sense takeaway - give concrete reasons for your appreciation. ALSO ask your employee how they would like to be recognized; we can't expect that we will know our employees well enough to read their minds anymore than we can expect that we can read the minds of our loved ones. And, asking (perhaps by leading with a couple of thought-out, if generic suggestions) how our employees want to be rewarded helps them be seen. Like with the story I told about Melissa going above and beyond to craft a lovely experience for my workshop attendees. I've said thank you, but I know now I can take it a step further.

Practical tip:

Take a few minutes and brainstorm, list three things that have been done for you in the last day or two. Send an e-mail expressing gratitude specifically for what that person did and how they helped you. If appropriate, ask how they would like to be recognized for their help.

On that note, I want to say thank you to JKarhh and S-Cleffa (I know these are abbreviations of your names!) for your recent iTunes reviews. Our team, led by our production manager, Macy Robison, works very hard every week to produce an interview that will both instruct and inspire. That you would take the time to leave a review when you have a million things to do --- we are all very grateful.

Thank you again to Bob Nelson for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Whitney Jobe, manager / editor Macy Robison, content contributors Emilie Davis and Libby Newman, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson
And this is Disrupt Yourself.