

CULTURE OF CELEBRATION

TOPICS

The Power of Celebration to Nurture Engagement

Challenges to Cultures of Celebration and How to Overcome Them

Strategies for Effective Celebration of Good Governance

Good governance is a continuous process of group decision-making. To motivate and inspire participants to continue their engagement in decision-making over the long term, it is essential to celebrate their work and contributions. This section describes ways to celebrate the time, talent, and results of good governance as a way to support continuous governance improvement.

THE CHALLENGE

As nurse leader recently promoted to chair the governing body of a health center in Upper Egypt, you would like to work with the managing director to establish a more positive culture among the employees and volunteers working in the health center. You do not have a lot of money for special pay. Most of the workers are in government posts with a weak performance management program, and the working conditions are not ideal. In such a setting, what are the advantages and disadvantages of creating a workplace that celebrates success compared to one that punishes failure? What are low-cost actions you could take to recognize, encourage, and reward positive behaviors and practices to improve worker morale and service quality?

THE POWER OF CELEBRATION TO NURTURE ENGAGEMENT

Your success as a governing body is linked to how well you invite—and listen to—the ideas of diverse stakeholder groups and welcome their insights into your decision-making processes. Their willingness to engage with you is a function of how efficiently and effectively you use their time and talents. It is also impacted by how well you show your appreciation for the time and ideas they share when engaged. Celebrating their time, talents, and contributions is a powerful way to encourage their ongoing participation over the long term.

Why is citizen engagement worthy of your celebration and appreciation?

Some policymakers observe that local governments, community organizations, and public agencies make better decisions and have a more positive impact on their communities when they increase the frequency, diversity, and level of engagement of community residents. But this engagement does not come easily; and it must be carefully managed by the leadership of the governing body and the health services organization. Leaders who govern wisely need to master the art of showing sincere appreciation for the work, investments, and ideas of the many people that volunteer or are employed by the organization.

Governing body leaders should thank others to acknowledge the value of what they have done and encourage them to help again in the future. It's this aspect of gratitude that Adam M. Grant and Francesca Gino examine in a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.¹ In fact, Grant and Gino found that people weren't providing more help because they felt better or it boosted their self-esteem, but because they appreciated being needed and felt more socially valued when they'd been thanked.²

This feeling of social worth helps people overcome the obstacles that prevent them from helping. We are often unsure whether our help is really wanted, and we know that accepting help from others can feel like a failure. The act of saying thank you reassures the helper that their help is valued and motivates them to provide more.

CHALLENGES TO CULTURES OF CELEBRATION AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

In health systems that face shortages of health workers and funding, creating a culture of appreciation or celebration is not easy. Governing bodies need to have candid conversations with their managers about how best to overcome challenges such as:

- The civil service system is not driven by modern performance management principles or practices.

1. Adam M. Grant and Francesca Gino, "A Little Thanks Goes a Long Way: Explaining Why Gratitude Expressions Motivate Prosocial Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2010; 98:946-55.
 2. Jeremy Dean, "Why 'Thank You' Is More Than Just Good Manners," PSYBLOG, Oct. 11, 2010. Available at: <http://www.spring.org.uk/2010/10/why-thank-you-is-more-than-just-good-manners.php>

- The working conditions of health workers and managers do not enable or encourage recruitment and retention of enough talented health workers and managers.
- Most governing body members are not experienced in leadership development for human resources.
- Local hiring practices favor people from certain political parties, ethnic groups, or families rather than people with the skills to do excellent work.
- Governing bodies avoid conversations about how to enhance the environment and conditions for their organization's managers and workers.

The negative impact of these challenges on an organization's drive for service excellence and vitality must be minimized before the governing body can establish a culture of celebration and appreciation. Consider the actions shown in Table 28.1 to minimize the challenges.

TABLE 28.1 Challenges to high-performance cultures

Challenges	Actions to minimize challenges
The civil service system is not driven by modern performance management principles or practices.	Zimbabwe made a bold policy move and moved all health sector workers out of the civil service system—which needed to accommodate librarians, sanitation workers, and police in addition to doctors and health workers—into a new organization. Shorter-term actions can be: invest in training for human resource managers as a profession in the Ministry of Health and at all levels of the public health system;* and advocate for more transparent reporting on hiring and organizational performance.
The working conditions of health workers and managers do not enable or encourage recruitment and retention of enough talented health workers and managers.	<p>Meet with health workers to document workplace conditions and how to improve them; then publish the findings in a manner that encourages political support for new investments and policy changes.</p> <p>Work with your managers and workers to develop and implement a series of small, quick improvements to show positive movement within your organization.</p> <p>Build more support into your budgets for improvements in local working conditions.</p>
Most governing body members are not experienced in leadership development for human resources.	<p>Have at least one meeting per year focused on the needs of health workers.</p> <p>Ask your managers to suggest easy reading on ways to strengthen human resources planning and management in your organization.†</p> <p>Invite speakers to at least one of your governing body meetings about practical ways to improve human resources management.</p>
Local hiring practices favor hiring people from certain political parties, ethnic groups, or families rather than people with the skills to do excellent work.	Establish and observe human resources hiring and performance management policies and practices that are competency-driven and focused on the best people to successfully accomplish your organization's mission and plans.‡

Challenges	Actions to minimize challenges
Governing bodies avoid conversations about how to enhance the environment and conditions for their organization's managers and workers.	Have the chairperson and managing director ask people at each governing body and sub-group meeting to look at the calendar and invite any edits.

* The WHO's Global Health Work Force Alliance (GHWA) calls for this in recent reports; see, for example: Report of the 17th Board Meeting (Geneva: WHO, July 17-18, 2014). Available at: http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/about/ghwa_report_17th_bm2014.pdf

† For many good strategies, see the materials published by the USAID-supported CapacityPlus Project. Home page available at: <http://www.capacityplus.org/>

‡ Paul Marsden, "No More Business as Usual: Strengthening Health Sector Human Resources Management," CapacityPlus website, August 2010. Available at: <http://www.capacityplus.org/no-more-business-usual-strengthening-health-sector-human-resources-management>

How can your governing body best minimize these challenges? What are more important challenges in your unique situation?

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CELEBRATION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

You can draw on the five Canadian principles to earn citizen engagement in defining and developing strategies for celebration. See Table 28.2.

TABLE 28.2 Principles of citizen engagement

Principle	Rationale
Working with citizens will add value to the program or project.	Soliciting citizen input should be done with purpose—not just for consultation's sake.
Mutual learning and understanding will build trust and credibility.	The organization can learn from citizens in the same way that they can learn from us—and from each other. Understanding and valuing the views, concerns, and experiences of citizens will build trust and credibility on all sides.
Openness will enhance transparency and accountability.	Sharing information about the organization's core business and decision-making processes will enable it to demonstrate the value (and impact) of the taxpayer dollars that support our mission.
The organization will be inclusive in its approach to citizen engagement.	Barriers that prohibit or diminish engagement with a wide range of groups do exist; recognizing and addressing them will improve the diversity of citizen representation and will enhance the quality of the feedback received.
Citizens will be supported to ensure their full participation.	Orientation tools and sufficient support are needed to help citizens contribute fully to the discussions and decisions being considered.

Source: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), "CIHR's Framework for Citizen Engagement: Section Three: The CIHR Citizen Engagement Framework" (Ottawa, ON: CIHR, May 21, 2013). Available at: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/41289.html>

How Can Engagement Best Be Celebrated?

Organizations can foster citizen engagement in many ways—and many of them have little financial cost.³ Studies done at the [University of California at Berkeley](#) suggest five ways to show your appreciation:⁴

1. Use a website to post a public expression of appreciation.
2. Make appreciations a regular ritual in meetings. Go around the room and have each person appreciate the person on their left. In just 5 to 10 minutes, you will have improved the effectiveness of your meetings.
3. Give formal recognition. Nominate individual staff members or teams for recognition awards, such as “Spot an Achievement Awards,” or other types of departmental rewards.
4. Give a thank-you card. Use thank-you cards to express your thanks in a format that becomes a keepsake.
5. Invite a colleague to have coffee or tea. Spend a few minutes with a colleague to share your gratitude for their contributions.

It is common in American culture to say thank you to acknowledge good things received from other people, especially when they give unselfishly out of kindness. See Box 28.1.

BOX 28.1 Ways to cultivate gratitude at work

People say thanks at home and in school, in stores, and at church. But not at work. According to a survey of 2,000 Americans released by the John Templeton Foundation, people are less likely to feel or express gratitude at work than anywhere else.* And they’re not thankful for their current jobs, which they rank last in a list of things they’re grateful for.

It’s not that people don’t want to both give and receive gratitude at work: 93% agreed that grateful supervisors are more likely to succeed, and only 18% thought that gratitude made bosses “weak.” Most reported that hearing “thank you” at work made them feel good and motivated.

Source: Jeremy Adam Smith, “Five Ways to Cultivate Gratitude at Work,” May 16, 2013 Available at: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_cultivate_gratitude_at_work

* Emiliana R. Simon-Thomas and Jeremy Adam Smith, “How Grateful Are Americans?” Jan. 10, 2013. Available at: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_grateful_are_americans

Given the value of appreciation in the workplace to foster better performance, how can governing bodies work with their managers to establish a “culture of celebration?”

A group of health services leaders from over 20 countries at the [International Health Leadership Program \(IHLP\)](#) at the Judge School of Business at the University of Cambridge⁵ identified 30 possible ways to reward people, even in governmental civil service systems. Which of these strategies should you try in your unique situation?

3. See, for example, the work of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, a legislative agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, “Developing Effective Citizen Engagement: A How-To Guide for Community Leaders,” April 2008.
4. University of California at Berkeley, “The Value of Saying Thank You” (Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, 2013). Available at: <http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/files/attachments/Top-5-Ways-to-Say-Thank-You.pdf>
5. These items were generated in a course offered by James Rice in the IHLP during 2006. See: <http://www.health.jbs.cam.ac.uk/people/fellows.html>

Delegates to the International Health Leaders Programme (IHLP) at Judge Business School of the University of Cambridge were invited to share practical ideas about how best to encourage and facilitate civil service employees to be more receptive to and effective at innovation and process or performance improvement. Some public sector leaders are frustrated by the constraints of civil service structures and rules. They believe such constraints keep senior and middle managers from hiring or firing employees or motivating them to pursue excellence. Perhaps these ideas will encourage creativity and persistence in efforts to harness fresh thinking about how to motivate and mobilize staff and colleagues for health gain.

The ideas generated by these groups appear below for your discussion and refinement:

- Provide additional pay and remuneration for individuals and teams or departments that exceed performance goals.
- Provide promotion options for great accomplishments and progress.
- Praise as close to the time and place of the good work as possible. Praise in public. Punish in private.
- Provide incentives for peak performance within civil service structures, for example: better parking; office accommodations; better clerical support staff; access to special training programs; and educational travel.
- Conduct award and recognition programs for staff that include inviting their families to see and hear praise from supervisors and colleagues.
- Provide additional days off.
- Offer inclusion in or leadership of special projects or studies seen as important to the overall goals of the organization (e.g., the prestige of being selected to make a difference).
- Offer access to job rotation as way to enhance potential for future promotions and advancements.
- Provide invitations to social opportunities, such as dinners with respected leaders.
- Have managers show sincere interest in the person's personal life and career.
- Nominate the person for local, regional, national, or international awards.
- Take affirmative action to show that talent is recognized and rewarded.
- Offer financial rewards, no matter how small.
- Pool gifts from suppliers so that high performers can earn points for them or compete to receive them in a very open and transparent process.
- Negotiate with the national civil service to offer special leave packages that can be used for teams that go above and beyond the call of duty for patients or communities.
- On a quarterly basis, post a photo album of high performers on the organization's website. Create, too, an attractive book or a newspaper insert so

their colleagues, families and neighbors can see their accomplishments and recognitions.

- Seek permission to install a new incentive compensation or merit pay system that provides money for high performance results.
- Negotiate contract provisions that allow 1%-15% of high performers' time to be sold for special outsourced services to other agencies for additional pay.
- Provide better equipment, office furniture, education programs, or cash bonuses for departments that exceed targets.
- Offer flextime or other work prerogatives for high achievers.
- Praise high performers in front of their colleagues.
- Issue plaques for great work, ideas, or process improvements.
- Offer vouchers for dinners, entertainment, travel, food packages, sports equipment, books, publications, etc.
- Provide opportunities for working in another job for cross-education and training, change of pace, or even fun.
- Post photos of high performers in public areas to celebrate their superior work and positive attitudes.
- Provide a month of afternoon neck massages for staff of departments that do well.
- Allow an executive to help in a community service program for a short time and be mentioned in local newspaper as an award winner.
- Provide special tours and dinners for the families of award winners, so they see their loved one receiving positive recognition.
- Have in place basic tools for doing good work. For example: have clear job descriptions; fair quarterly and annual performance reviews; a safe workplace; decent tools and equipment; clear timelines for work to be done; and clear explanations of why the work or project is important.
- Provide mentoring for younger workers from respected retired workers.
- Provide employee lounges with some refreshments and music.
- Increase shared decision-making. Allow more employees to have a share in and stake in their own destiny.
- Move or remove bad managers if they are not performing well or serving as good role models.
- Ask employees for more of these ideas for recognition and rewards.
- Listen to workers about how their work and work processes could be improved, including asking them how you can be more effective as a leader!

How might you devote one of your governing body meetings to a conversation with your managers and health workers about such ideas? Which would you define as the five most valuable to try next year?