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## New Year Provides Opportunities for Major Shift in Employee and Customer Appreciation Practices

- Business Book Author Noelle Nelson

The new year means a fresh start for many businesses – introduction of new ideas, new sales goals and a new energy that usually comes only once a year. Dr Noelle Nelson, author of *The Power of Appreciation in Business: How an Obsession with Value Increases Performance, Productivity and Profits*, says the start of the new year is an excellent opportunity for businesses to implement changes that will have a positive impact for the rest of the year and beyond. Many of the changes cost little or nothing to implement, she says.

Recent US Department of Labor data shows that the number one reason people in the US leave their job is that they do not feel appreciated. Not low pay, not lack of benefits, but lack of appreciation. According to a Gallup poll, 65% of workers in the US say they didn't receive a single word of praise or recognition in the past year.

"How can employers expect employees to work at their best when they receive no positive feedback from management?" asks Dr Nelson. She suggests that management recognise employees who are doing well throughout the year.

"Don't wait until an annual employee recognition dinner where only a few may be signalled out for good work," she explains. "Applaud the little things that employees do right throughout the year. It may be as simple as a pat on the back or recognition at a staff meeting. These actions show that management values its employees, not one day a year at a dinner, but every day."

Without management consistently valuing and appreciating its employees, even the most energetic employees will burn out, says Dr Nelson. "Being ignored or given tasks without proper guidance or training takes its toll. We've all been there and know how it feels. Usually, we can't wait to quit. Companies pay the price for this turnover in high training costs and lost productivity."

Another way to improve employee loyalty, says Dr Nelson, is to ask employees to become part of the decision-making process on issues that affect them directly. "Workers often know more about their jobs and what it



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would take for them to work better than the higher ups," she says. "When you are truly interested in what your workers think, you accord them a place of respect in the company; you appreciate them. Like attracts like. Appreciating and respecting your workers generates appreciation and respect from them, which in turn, improves company performance."

Dr Nelson also cautions that workers can't perform when they don't know what to do or how to do it. "This may seem like common sense," she says, "yet too often managers unwittingly fail to let their workers know what they expect, or change what is expected without sufficient explanation. The upshot is, workers are being set up for failure when they want to succeed. Take the time to answer employee questions and explain tasks and new procedures. Otherwise, you're guaranteed to meet resistance."

Another area where businesses flounder is failing to empower employees with the tools to satisfy customers. "Nothing is worse than customer service employees unable to solve customer complaints or problems because they are not given real authority to do so," says Dr Nelson. "Customers have more shopping choices than ever before. If you don't give your employees the authority to satisfy a frustrated or disgruntled customer (i.e., offer free shipping, discounts, free upgrades), that customer will go elsewhere. You've lost your chance to build customer loyalty. Give employees the power to help unhappy customers and employees will see themselves as problem solvers who have a vested interest in ensuring customers have a satisfying experience with the company."

Dr Nelson believes the new year is a window of opportunity for companies to make a paradigm shift toward valuing their employees and customers. "A worker's desire to do a good job is priceless," she says. "It is one of the core components of a successful business. A company's steadfast willingness to value and appreciate (employees) will pay dividends by creating an upbeat workplace, better two-way communication, higher productivity, better customer service and loyalty and ultimately, a flourishing business."

To find out more about *The Power of Appreciation in Business* or to order a copy, please visit [www.PowerOfAppreciationInBusiness.com](http://www.PowerOfAppreciationInBusiness.com)

## Call for Entries: Work-Life Excellence Award

The search is on for the best places to work in Singapore. In 2006, Singapore's Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy will recognise and honour companies that are successfully striving to create exceptional workplaces and businesses by effectively addressing employee work-life needs. These winning companies will range in size and industry, but they will have one thing in common - they will have figured out what their

employees need, what they need from their employees, what their business needs and how to align those needs to create successful, sustainable work-life strategies.

Whether the company is small or large, has vast resources available or relies on a few dedicated employees to get the job done, this award will honour the workplaces that listen to employees, that support a majority of the workforce and that strive to have a culture of equity and opportunity for all employees. These organisations' work-life efforts have bottom line results, measurable in reduced turnover, absenteeism and training costs and improved recruitment, retention, productivity and morale.

The Award, formerly known as the Singapore Family Friendly Employer Award, has been renamed to better reflect the wide range of work-life practices that employers implement to create a win-win situation for their employees and their business. The new assessment criteria go beyond programmes and policies to focus on workplace culture, as well as the outcomes and achievements that organisations with excellent work-life strategies could attain.

The closing date for submission of entries is 24 February 2006. For further details and to download application forms, please visit [www.wleaward.com.sg](http://www.wleaward.com.sg)



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