

Appreciation **5** at Work Languages

"Making Work Relationships Work"

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Are there really any differences between ***The 5 Love Languages***[®] and the ***The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace***?

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Those familiar with ***The 5 Love Languages*** and who have found them helpful in their personal relationships may wonder if there is really any difference between ***The 5 Love Languages*** and ***The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace***. While the languages discussed in both books are the same, the application and expression of the languages in the work environment is often quite different than in personal relationships.

You shouldn't assume that your primary love language in personal relationships is the same as your most important language of appreciation in the workplace. We have found that *sometimes* individuals' primary languages are the same in both contexts. *More often*, people's primary language in one relational context (personal or work) is one of their top two languages in the other relational setting. For example, someone who has quality time as their preferred love language has a good chance of quality time being one of their top two languages of appreciation (about 65% of the time). However, depending on some of the issues we address in the book, a person's primary language can be quite different, depending on the relational context.

Additionally, there are some specific differences between ***The 5 Love Languages*** and ***The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace*** as they are applied to different types of relationships:

*There is often a "position dynamic" associated with work-based relationships that doesn't exist in personal relationships. A relationship between a supervisor/supervisee, employer/employee, or between two team members at different responsibility levels within the organization clearly has different relational dynamics than a personal relationship between spouses, family members or friends. These position-related dynamics impact the whole context in which communication occurs.

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*Overall, there is a different set of expectations and boundaries that exist in work-oriented relationships. Work-based relationships usually are more formal than personal relationships. There are different social boundaries about appropriate topics of discussion, styles of communication, social settings and physical proximity than in relationships with family and friends.

*The language of physical touch is less important in the workplace than in personal relationships. Physical touch is the lowest language of appreciation for most people in the workplace. This makes sense – there are more boundaries in the workplace and even appropriate physical touch is not desired by many in the workplace. But spontaneous, celebratory displays (high five's, fist bumps, a pat on the back) are quite common between coworkers and are an important part of positive work-based relationships.

*Different types of quality time are valued in the workplace. While quality time in personal relationships is primarily expressed through *focused attention*, other types of time are also important in work-based relationships. These may include "hanging out" together with colleagues, working on tasks together collegially, and having different types of experiences together to deepen team relationships.

*When demonstrating appreciation through acts of service in the workplace, there are important conditions to meet for the act to be valued by the recipient. Asking if the other person wants assistance, doing the service in the way the recipient wants it done, not repeatedly "rescuing" a colleague who is underperforming, and defining how much time you have to help – all are conditions that need to be met for the service offered to be viewed positively.

*Verbal praise in front of others is utilized more in workplace settings. As a love language, words of affirmation tend to be communicated more personally between two individuals. In work-based relationships, words of affirmation are often communicated in group contexts – in a team meeting, in front of customers, or at an award ceremony. Additionally, written communication through email and texting is used significantly more in work-based relationships.

*The types of tangible gifts given differ in personal relationships and work-oriented relationships. In personal relationships, tangible gifts tend to be things – actual objects. And they are often given in celebration of a special

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occasion – birthday, anniversary, and Christmas. For people for whom tangible gifts is an important love language, the characteristics of the gift itself can be quite important. The gift should be special or unique, possibly symbolic of an event or related to a prior gift. And for many people, the amount spent on the gift is a significant factor.

Tangible gifts in the workplace are less about the “thing” and more about the thought behind it – that the giver actually knows what is important or valued by the recipient, what hobbies or interests they have—and the gift reflects this knowledge. Secondly, in workplace gifts they are more commonly related to experiences – movie tickets, gift certificates to go out to dinner, or gift cards for shopping. Finally, one of the most common items given in the workplace is *food* – bringing bagels or donuts to share, buying pizza for lunch, bringing in a homemade dessert, or buying someone their favorite cup of coffee.

Just as *The 5 Love Languages* have been found to dramatically improve marriages and friendships, so *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace* are showing themselves to significantly improve relationships among coworkers and to make workplace environments more positive for all who work there. But their application is different, and there are additional unique issues that need to be addressed that don't exist in personal relationships (for example, the question of the authenticity of the appreciation, or the issue of “fairness” between coworkers receiving appreciation in different ways.)

If you benefited from *The 5 Love Languages*, try applying the same concepts to your workplace relationships. With the help of this new book, we believe you will be able to significantly influence your workplace and make it a more enjoyable environment for everyone.

*For more information, buy our new book, **The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People**, and visit our website, www.appreciationatwork.com .*