

# ELEVATE 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



April 6-9, 2025  
Monterey, CA

## **Speaking Their Language: Using the 5 Languages of Appreciation to Motivate Boards and Teams**

Presented by David Ackert, MA  
Author, Speaker, CEO of PipelinePlus

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### Agenda

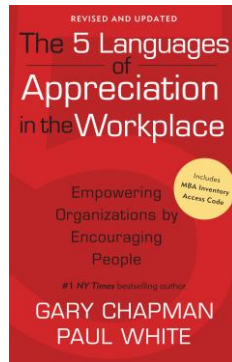
- Who is on your professional Short List – the people who matter most?
- How to understand the internal motivators that influence your most important team members and clients
- How to manage more effectively across different generations and personality types
- Simple techniques that improve motivation and bolster loyalty
- Strategies that minimize turnover and miscommunication
- Q&A

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## Source Material



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## Who is on Your Short List?



Our research shows that for every major goal or endeavor, professionals have a Short List of between 9-35 key stakeholders who can influence the outcome.

Draw 3 columns. In the first, note the names on your Short List who are instrumental to your success.

- Colleagues
- Direct reports
- Board members
- Clients
- Connectors
- Industry leaders
- Mentors
- Targets

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## Communication and Retention

- According to Gallup's 2024 State of the Global Workplace report, only 23% of employees worldwide are engaged in their work, meaning they are highly involved and enthusiastic about their roles. Conversely, 62% are "not engaged," and approximately one in six are "actively disengaged," indicating a significant portion of the workforce lacks motivation.
- McKinsey study shows money only motivates 18% of workers. That figure is even lower among millennials and Gen Z. Most people are motivated by feeling valued, being given projects that interest them, and the relationships they have developed at work. Compensation is only a part of that equation. Job satisfaction is also influenced by advancement opportunities and experiential acts of appreciation.
- Glassdoor survey shows 81% of employees are motivated to work harder when their boss shows appreciation for their work.
- Gallup study - 75% of employees who leave their jobs state that feeling undervalued was the primary reason for their departure.
- Gallup study - Companies in the top 25% of employee engagement average 18% more productivity and are 22% more profitable than companies in the bottom 25% of engagement.

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## The Mental Health Angle

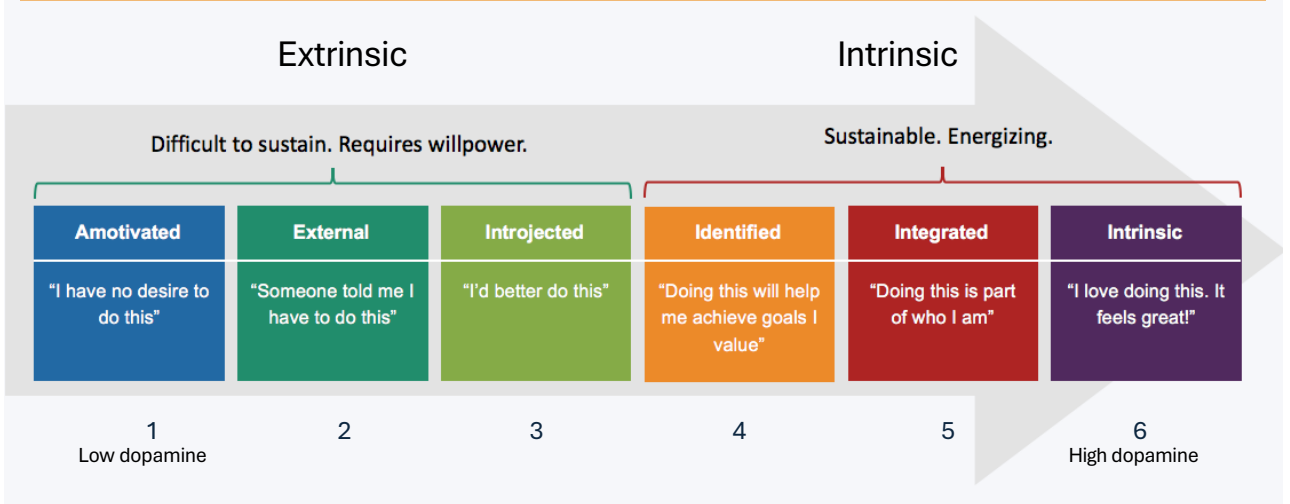
Dopamine is the chemical in our brain that creates feelings of pleasure.

Dopamine deficiency leads to lack of motivation, removes a key buffer to stress, decreases optimism and decreases our ability to persist.

\* University of Maryland School of Medicine

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# Understanding Motivation



Note the approximate percentage of your work that is extrinsically motivated.

Note your approximate percentage of your team's work that is extrinsically motivated.

Source: Self-Determination Theory, Ryan & Deci (2000)

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## The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace



TANGIBLE GIFTS



QUALITY TIME



WORDS OF AFFIRMATION



ACTS OF SERVICE



PHYSICAL TOUCH

- |   |  |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raises</li> <li>• Bonuses</li> <li>• Benefits</li> <li>• Incentive programs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentorship</li> <li>• Inclusion in high-level discussions</li> <li>• Being a part of exciting projects</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal praise</li> <li>• Acknowledgment on specific projects/outcomes</li> <li>• Public acknowledgment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance on projects</li> <li>• Thoughtful acts</li> <li>• Anticipated needs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity</li> <li>• High-fives</li> <li>• Fist bumps</li> <li>• Pats on the back</li> <li>• Appropriate hugs</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|--|---|

**What is your primary language of appreciation?**

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**What is your secondary language of appreciation?**

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## How to Identify a Person's Primary Language (Observing)

### Observe what they request.

- Money = Tangible Gifts
- Time off or lunches with colleagues = Quality Time
- Feedback = Words of Affirmation
- Help = Acts of Service
- Initiating contact = Touch

### Notice how they show appreciation to others. People often "speak" their own primary language naturally.

- If they often praise others = Words of Affirmation
- If they always offer help = Acts of Service
- If they plan lunch outings or coffee breaks = Quality Time
- If they give small gifts = Tangible Gifts

### Listen to What They Complain About. Complaints often hint at unmet appreciation needs.

- "Nobody ever says thank you" = craving Words of Affirmation
- "No one ever checks in with me" = craving Quality Time
- "I have too much on my plate" = might want Acts of Service

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## How to Identify a Person's Primary Language (Interacting)

### **Direct Conversation. Ask casually or as part of team-building:**

- "When you feel really valued at work, what's usually happening?"
- "What's something a colleague or boss has done that made you feel appreciated in the past?"

### **Conduct assessments**

- Purchase a code for the MBA Inventory <https://mbainventory.com/> (\$25/pp)
- Buy a copy of The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace and receive a discount code for the assessment.

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## Missing the Mark

Appreciation lands flatly when you assume others have the same language you do.

Your least favored language is your blind spot.



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**What is your least favored language of appreciation?**

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## Speaking the Same Language



John is a board member. His affable, charismatic nature often attracts compliments, but he is embarrassed by verbal recognition. He much prefers low-key gestures of thoughtfulness and acts of service.



Jordan is a growth manager. He is motivated by money. Because he's a producer, he's often asked to mentor other team members and lead internal initiatives. But in his view, these internal duties detract from projects that enable him to drive revenue and earn promotions.



Sarah is a project manager motivated by verbal recognition. During "conference season," her manager expects her to be available after hours, with no formal acknowledgment of her extra effort or dedication. His philosophy is, "That's just part of the job — and besides, we just gave her a raise." Sarah is actively talking to a recruiter.



Lilly's mantra is "talk is cheap." She is a single mother with two young children but is often expected to put in extra time. She is quick to remind her manager of the company's mission statement, which touts work/life balance.

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## Putting the Pieces Together

**Review your Short List. In the second and third columns, note:**

2. What do you think their primary language of appreciation is?
3. What do you think their least favored language of appreciation is?

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## Adapting Appreciation



**Words of Affirmation** - Use multiple means to express words of appreciation, such as email, text, in-person, verbal, and even written notes. Notice what works best.



**Quality time** - Don't multitask. Put away your phone. Ask about non-work-related topics. Check in spontaneously. Don't rush them when they are "overtalking."



**Acts of service** - Schedule a call/meeting when it is convenient for the other person. If a colleague uses emoji's and you don't, consider that they are signaling their preferred language. Adapting to their modality is an act of service.



**Tangible gifts** – Reward good work with a gift card to UberEats for their favorite restaurant. Remember their birthdays. Look for opportunities to give them thoughtful, tangible gifts.



**Touch** – When in person, have interactions in the same room. Express warmth during your virtual interactions. Practice Zoom eye contact, virtual high-fives or emojis.

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## Stay Interviews

- If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- What makes for a great day at your job?
- What might tempt you to leave your job?
- Compared to other firms, how does our company stack up?
- What motivates (or demotivates) you?
- Do you feel valued?
- What can I do to best support you?
- What do you look forward to when you come to work?
- Do you think the feedback you are receiving is helpful?

"Oh, Won't You Stay? Using Stay Interviews as a Retention Tool" by Molly Peckman

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## Putting Today's Learning into Action



### Discussion:

1. What is something you appreciate about one of the people on your Short List that you have not effectively communicated?
2. Given what you have observed about their likely language of appreciation, how might you communicate your appreciation to them?

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