

Don't be stingy with compliments

by Mark Pavilons

I just think it's silly to be stingy with compliments. If you see someone and they strike you as beautiful in any way, why not let them know?? ? Jill Scott

I'm with Jill on this one. We just missed 'World Compliment Day,' held March 1, but it's something that can be held every day!

The sentiment behind the day is to spread joy through simple verbal affirmations of appreciation. It costs absolutely nothing at all.

Giving a compliment is easy, whether it's telling someone you like their style, or letting them know they're doing a great job ? whatever it is, it can change someone's whole day around. So, this day is a reminder to vocalize your positive thoughts.

It's kind of a shame that we have to be reminded of something so simple.

But I laud the efforts of founder Hans Poortvliet from the Netherlands, who created the special occasion.

'Nothing stimulates more, gives more energy, makes people happier and, as far as business is concerned increases productivity and commitment faster than sincere appreciation. So why not use it a little bit more?' Hans says.

Compliments are one of the ways in which we show our humanity ??riendliness, and goodwill.

Unfortunately, in our uber politically correct society, paying someone a compliment is like navigating a mine field. But it shouldn't be.

Our society and business world is quick to reward people for their hard work and personal performance. We show them are valued members of the team.

Hans wants people to take it further, by sending out at least three compliments to people in your social network or circle of friends or business associates. I suppose he envisions a snowball effect.

And he's quite right in attesting that making people feel appreciated is not only important, but necessary these days.

Experts say receiving recognition feels amazing, and giving recognition is just as enjoyable ??atching someone's face light up after offering them a nice compliment.

On the flip side of the compliment coin is our conservative shyness. Many adults (managers) don't feel like they need to reward people with praise if they are simply doing what's expected of them. And there's the fatal flaw. By holding back on praise, employees often feel underappreciated and lacking as they pursue some sort of validation.

Time2play surveyed 1,000 Canadians to see how often they give and receive compliments from one another. They also looked at who they compliment the most and how it makes them feel.

The survey found that 82.4% find it easy to give compliments, while 54.2% find it easy to receive compliments.

Canadians hand out skills-based compliments the most (43.2%).

Partners get complimented the most often; yet, respondents desire the favour to be returned from their spouse.

And 42% would like to receive a compliment more often.

The majority, 85.7%, noticed that compliments have a positive effect on their self-image.

The survey asked respondents who they compliment most often. The top five categories that receive compliments are partners (31%), friends (27.6%), colleagues (18.8%), family members (18.2%), and strangers (2.8%).

When asked how often (on average) they receive compliments, 25.2% get them two to five times a week, while 20.4% only receive them two to three times a month. And 20.2% hear them once a week, while 20% receive them once a month. Only 9.4% get them on the daily and 4.9% never receive compliments.

Professionally, I think it all depends on what kind of work you do.

In my line of work, for instance, when I get feedback, it's typically about the mistakes I've made, the typos in articles, and the subject matter of some of the paper's articles.

Seldom does someone call or email to say "thanks for a job well done."

But it does happen.

It can be lonely in our newsroom, perched in front of a computer screen, trying to make magic each and every day. It's not always easy to provide a great variety of interesting articles that everyone, young and old alike, enjoy to read. It's hard to please everyone, all the time.

James Taylor once said he could accept criticisms, but not compliments.

And Mason Cooley observed that many of us are prepared for insults, but that compliments leave us baffled.

Again, this shows we've got it all wrong in our wonderfully weird world.

It should be the other way around.

Compliments should flow freely, and criticisms, insults and accusations should be reserved for when they're needed.

And yet, the evening news, even the pages of your community newspaper, often contain volleys, mudslinging and negative opinions.

Of course, a rose-coloured world is not possible, and one liberally blacked out with a marker is equally not realistic.

Compromise is key. But that's not to say we can't laud people "each and every day" on a job well done.

We assume a great deal as we pull on our boots and shovel the end of the driveway. Struggling with the thoughts in our own heads, we don't think about spreading joy and dishing out praise.

But we should. I hereby ask that anyone reading this pay someone a compliment today. It doesn't matter if it's the bank teller or cashier, the server or the mechanic.

Our pets get pats on the back every day for doing nothing. Why not be liberal with appreciation for our fellow human beings?