

A Kiss on the Cheek

Recently I was enjoying a conversation with Tim Hull, one of our Business Development Advisors at Violand Management Associates. He was relating a story about a hunting experience he had when he was sixteen years old. Tim is a hunting zealot, which I am not, but it was impossible to overlook the deeper significance in the story he was telling.

Tim's story revolved around an early hunting experience he had with his Uncle Billy who was showing Tim some of the finer points of deer hunting during a hunting trip. On this particular day Tim had been successful in harvesting a good sized buck that his Uncle Billy had an encounter with the previous day. Rather than being put off by Tim's bagging of "his" buck, his uncle reached over and gave Tim a congratulatory kiss on the cheek as an expression of his approval of Tim's success.

This experience had such a profound emotional effect, and left such a positive impression on Tim that he was relating it to me nearly two decades later.

The warm relationship that existed between an uncle and nephew was never in question in Tim's story, but his uncle's unexpected expression of congratulations is what left an indelible impression.

Every day as business owners and managers we have the same opportunity to have a similar effect on the people we work with in our companies. Although there are employment laws and social protocols that might prohibit us from giving people a literal kiss on the cheek at work, there are lots of other ways we can achieve the same result.

A kiss on the cheek in business can take a lot of different forms. It doesn't have to be lavish or expensive. It can be something as

fundamental as saying “thank you” to someone for doing a good job. It can be recognition in front of the group for a completed project. So why do so many of us fail to give people a kiss on the cheek when it can have such a positive effect on them, and what can we do to change that?

One of the reasons I feel is because of the strings we’re afraid will accompany it. We’re afraid that if we let people know how well we think they’re doing they’ll automatically come to us asking for a raise or for special favors.

Sometimes we fear that if we tell people how well we think they’re doing they’ll mysteriously decide to stop trying so hard. How crazy is that? Study after study has shown that being recognized is a key factor in employee motivation. What better way to recognize someone that with an emotional kiss on the cheek.

Our egos can get in the way too. When we’ve built our businesses based on our own ideas and our own hard work it’s sometime hard to recognize other people’s contributions to our success. It’s hard to let go of the thought that we have all the answers, much less recognize that someone else might have better ideas than our own.

Some people fear that expressing strong emotions leaves them feeling vulnerable to the very people they’re leading. It’s as if kissing them on the cheek means they can’t kick them in the pants when that’s what’s needed. Being vulnerable makes us human and allows people to relate to us. Being human is one of the things that make us stronger leaders of our people.

Is it time to let someone in your organization know how much you appreciate them, and how pleased you are with the contributions they’re making to your company by giving them a kiss on the cheek? Who knows, maybe twenty years from now they’ll be telling their friends

about the positive impact you had on them?