



Appreciation During the Holidays – A “No Win” Situation?

By
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Psychologist & Co-author,
*The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the
Workplace*



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A bit about me

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- Co-author, 3 books
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 - *Sync or Swim*
 - *Rising Above a Toxic Workplace*



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- Researcher & Developer
 - *Motivating By Appreciation Inventory*
 - *Appreciation at Work* training



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Goals for Today

1. Understand the importance of our expectations, especially around the holiday season.

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2. Avoid the common mistakes in communicating appreciation during the holidays.

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1. Understand the importance of our expectations, especially around the holiday season.
2. Avoid the common mistakes in communicating appreciation during the holidays.
3. Learn some guiding principles for making decisions about holiday gifts and celebrations.

Logistics

- I will be citing results of a poll identifying what employees say they dislike the most about the holidays.
- We will supply you with the handout version of the PowerPoint slides if you request them.
- Email me at: yesdrpaul@gmail.com and put "ATD webinar" in the subject line.

One thing I hate about the holidays at work:

"Running a Secret Santa gift exchange with a group of people who dislike each other."

The Importance of Expectations

- What are they?
- Where do they come from?
- Why are they important?

Understanding Expectations

- What are they?
 - Most of life's choices and behaviors are driven by the expectations we have for the results of our actions.

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Understanding Expectations

- What are they?
 - Most of life's choices and behaviors are driven by the expectations we have for the results of our actions.
 - They are the "should's" and "shouldn'ts" we hold in our minds.

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Understanding Expectations

- Where do they come from?

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Understanding Expectations

- Where do they come from?
 - Early family life
 - Personal life history
 - Previous experiences
 - Values & beliefs about life
 - Important influences (people & information)
 - Personal preferences

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Understanding Expectations

- Why are they important?
- Expectations frame our daily life experiences.

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- When our expectations are met, we are pleased.

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Understanding Expectations

- Why are they important?
- Expectations frame our daily life experiences.
- When our expectations are met, we are pleased.
- When they are not met, we respond with:
 - Frustration ▪ Disappointment
 - Anger ▪ Discouragement
 - Hurt ▪ Sadness
 - Fear ▪ Anxiety

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ASIDE:

- When you truly understand the power of expectations, you can use them to create meetings and events people find valuable.

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One thing I hate about the holidays at work:

“Being instructed to handout out gift certificates to employees (redeemable only at our own retail stores). Based on the number of years worked for the company (\$5 for 1-5 years; \$10 for 6-10 years, and \$20 for 11+ years). Employees expressed disgust – that the low dollar amounts were like a slap in the face.”

Why Are the Expectations We Have About the Holidays Often So Intense?

- Because many times they:
 - Are tied to early life & family experiences
 - Have deep and strong feelings associated with them
 - Are multisensory in nature (food, smell, music, touch)
 - Are linked to values and religious beliefs
 - Based on repetitive experiences.

What I Hate About the Holidays (poll results)

What aspects of the holiday season do you **DISLIKE** the most?

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What I Hate About the Holidays (poll results)

What aspects of the holiday season do you **DISLIKE** the most?

1. 51% Fighting traffic.
2. 39% The extra expense of Christmas.

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What aspects of the holiday season do you **DISLIKE** the most?

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What I Hate About the Holidays (poll results)

What aspects of the holiday season do you **DISLIKE** the most?

1. 51% Fighting traffic.
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4. 34% Coming up with gift ideas for others.

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1. 51% Fighting traffic.
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3. 34% Gaining weight
4. 34% Coming up with gift ideas for others.
5. 31% Expectations to buy others gifts.

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What aspects of the holiday season do you **DISLIKE** the most?

1. 51% Fighting traffic.
2. 39% The extra expense of Christmas.
3. 34% Gaining weight
4. 34% Coming up with gift ideas for others.
5. 31% Expectations to buy others gifts.
6. 28% Coming up with gift ideas for myself.

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What I Hate About the Holidays (poll results)

What aspects of the holiday season do you **DISLIKE** the most?

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4. 34% Coming up with gift ideas for others.
5. 31% Expectations to buy others gifts.
6. 28% Coming up with gift ideas for myself.
7. 26% Busyness.

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What I Hate At Work About the Holidays

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1. 28% Pressure to get year-end tasks done.

What I Hate At Work About the Holidays

What don't you like that happens at the workplace during the holidays?

- 1. 28% Pressure to get year-end tasks done.
- 2. 23% "White elephant" gift exchanges.

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What I Hate At Work About the Holidays

What don't you like that happens at the workplace during the holidays?

- 1. 28% Pressure to get year-end tasks done.
- 2. 23% "White elephant" gift exchanges.
- 3. 22% Expected to buy gifts for colleagues or supervisor.

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What I Hate At Work About the Holidays

What don't you like that happens at the workplace during the holidays?

- 1. 28% Pressure to get year-end tasks done.
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- 3. 22% Expected to buy gifts for colleagues or supervisor.
- 4. 21% Required to participate in "Secret Santa" giving.

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6. 18% Having to work on holidays.

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5. 20% Having to attend after hours holiday celebration.
6. 18% Having to work on holidays.
7. 18% Being required to bring food for holiday luncheon.

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What I Hate At Work About the Holidays

Practical Tips from the Survey Results:

- **Leave ample time** for employees to work on the extra year end tasks and reports.
- **Don't force** your employees to participate in gift giving exchanges (explicitly or implicitly).
- **Be sensitive** to scheduling issues and time requirements during the holidays.
- If you are going to have a meal to celebrate, **provide the food**.

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The MOST IMPORTANT Practical Tip

Manage your employees' expectations.

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Understanding Expectations + the Poll Results →

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The MOST IMPORTANT Practical Tip

Manage your employees' expectations.

Understanding Expectations + the Poll Results →

- Their response is largely determined by their expectations.
- Avoid the negative experiences people report.
- Communicate (repeatedly) what is going to happen (and what isn't) – especially if this year will be different than past years.

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WARNING: You cannot shape all of their expectations.

*Not every person's.

*Not every expectation for each individual.

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Result:

Not everyone will be happy, no matter what you do.



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A few stories from our poll (on negative experiences people had)

*Having your boss sign you up to ring a bell at a nearby grocery store for 2 hour time slots in sub-zero weather.

*Attending a company holiday party where the electric company arrived to shut off the electricity for non-payment.

*Being told to wear an ugly sweater for the staff party, and being sent home to change – because my sweater was “too ugly”!

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Reminder:

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Conclusion

Remember that:

- *people have high emotional connection to the holidays
- *you have a wide range of people coming to the event
(with lots of different experiences & backgrounds)
- *it is impossible to meet all of the various expectations
- *you will probably receive a lot of complaints

So do the best you can and enjoy the time yourself!
