

Appreciation Coupons

Purpose	Reveal the unique ways individual team members like to be appreciated and put that knowledge to action.
Pre-Work	None
Materials	Slides (Make A Copy) or Create your own version
Time	30 min - 2 hours
Facilitation Instructions	Step 1 (3-5 min): Introduce the exercise. Begin by introducing the framework: The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace (similar to the more popular 5 Love Languages). This approach to team engagement asserts that “at work, people express and receive appreciation in different ways. If you try to express appreciation in ways that aren’t meaningful to your co-workers, they may not feel valued at all.” Instead, teams that are working to build connection and belonging must consider how people like to be appreciated and cared for in ways that feel authentic and not one-size-fits-all.

The authors of The 5 Languages of Appreciation at Work, Dr. Gary Chapman and Dr. Paul White, have found the following to be the languages of appreciation:

- Feedback + Mentorship - uses words to communicate a positive message to another person
- Workplace Bonding - giving the other person your focus and attention
- Gifts + New Opportunities + Challenges - physical items or offerings that interest the receiver
- Support- providing assistance
- Encouraging Touchpoints - human to human contact and/or connection that promote belonging at work

Step 2- Group Reflection (5 min): Give participants 5 minutes to write or reflect on ways to actualize each language of appreciation. What are concrete ways a team member might show up for another whose language of appreciation is Workplace Bonding or Support? Please see the table below for some ideas. Add to this list as a team.

Feedback + Mentorship- Akin to Words of Affirmation	● Positive verbal acknowledgement of someone’s work and efforts during a meeting or on company website/social media ● Detailed feedback on a project or regular performance reviews ● A email from coworker or team leadership expressing gratitude
Workplace Bonding- Akin to Quality Time	● 1:1 lunches or coffee chats (non-work related) ● Taking time for work/life celebrations (workplace anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, etc.) ● Team building activities
Gifts + New	● Gifts of appreciation through the mail or digital gifts or the gift of time (a well-deserved day off)

Opportunities + Challenges- Akin to Tangible Gifts	• Sharing resources (books, media, etc) on a topic of interest • Professional / Skill development opportunities
Support- Akin to Acts of Service	• Email or Slack a helpful resource to streamline work or offer to pick up heavy workload (if capacity allows) • Check-in moments for coworkers who are struggling • Mental Health Days or Pauses (Moments of Stillness)
Encouraging Touchpoints- Akin to Appropriate Physical Touch	• Friendly gestures: Hi-Fives, Handshakes, Smiles • Morning Huddles or Icebreakers at the top of meetings • Celebrating the personal or professional milestone of a coworker • Regular conversations about advancement and/or growth • Feedback to leadership about key decisions

Step 3- Self-Reflection (5 min): After reflecting together, encourage participants to reflect on their own language of appreciation. They may take [this assessment](#) (20 simple questions) or write down the languages that most resonate with them. Once the team has determined their own individual languages either by assessment or personal reflection, ask them to write them down in preparation for the next step.

Step 4: (Flex to the time you have, but no less than 15 minutes) In order to put this newly acquired knowledge to use immediately, your team will complete the following activity:

Ask participants to visit the [slide presentation](#) and record their primary languages of appreciation (1-2) on a “sticky note” in the first slide. Then have participants navigate to the next slide where the facilitator will introduce the coupon activity and provide instructions.

Directions:

Each person has been gifted Co-worker Coupons! Everyone must locate the slide of their coworkers and create two coupons that reflect that coworker’s language(s) of appreciation (located on page one of the [slide presentation](#)).

Once everyone has provided coupons for their coworkers, you may navigate to your own board to see what coupons were gifted to you.

Ask participants to save the slide presentation and use their digital coupons with each other over the course of the next chapter (quarter or rest of the year).

Step 5- Group Reflection and Closing (5-10 min, as time permits): In the whole group, ask participants to reflect on the experience. *What did we learn about ourselves and our coworkers? What thoughts or emotions did the activity bubble up? How do we anticipate our team culture shifting after this activity?*

Reference Materials: The Leading Elephants Team completed this activity in February. See our [jamboard](#) here and use it as a reference tool if needed.

The Role of the Coupon Book: Sometimes it takes intentionality to turn appreciation into a living practice with an organization. The coupon book is a living document with a long shelf life that seeds future opportunities for connection and appreciation- allowing coworkers to give with care and vulnerability and to “cash in” offerings with flexibility and gratitude.

Other Notes In addition to providing time for learning about one another, this activity also provides an opportunity to continue to connect past the confines of one activity or one meeting in ways that allow for creativity, choice, and authentic relationship building.

By understanding how the members of our teams like to be appreciated, we invite more opportunity for positive interactions, celebrations, and pleasant working environments (virtual and in-person) in which people feel comfortable asking for what they need and feeling secure that their needs will be met. We hope this activity is just one tool you use in the pursuit of finding ways to appreciate your team at work.

Thank you to Dr. Gary Chapman and Dr. Paul White for their work, [The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace](#), and their dedication to creating healthy workplace cultures.