

Praise in Front of Others

My father, Waymon Hunter, was a barber who built and operated his own shop on Sixth Street in Cookeville, Tennessee. He was proud of his chosen career, primarily with the relationships he had established with his customers.

But one of the most memorable moments of his life had nothing to do with his profession, as much as he loved what he did.

One year, his church, Westview Baptist, was raising money for a mission effort overseas. My Dad didn't have enough disposable income to give a significant amount, but he hit upon an idea. As a farmer early in his life who continued to plant and grow a huge garden after moving into the city, he decided to dedicate the garden that year to the mission effort.



He worked hard at planting and raising a variety of crops, and God must have approved because the mix of rain and sunshine – and my father's dedication – resulted in a remarkable harvest. He sold the produce and gave the money to the church. The next Sunday after the donation, the pastor – knowing what my Dad had committed to – brought him to the front of the congregation to explain and thank him for the gift. It caught my father off guard, but he was deeply appreciative.

The following week, a photo of him and the pastor, along with a story of his harvest for Jesus, appeared on the front page of the local newspaper. As nice as the coverage was, for him it didn't equal the effect of the compliment by the pastor in front of the assembled church. And I can't really describe how proud of him that I was.

That story illustrates an important principle: The most fundamental and straightforward way of winning with people is to give them a compliment. If you want to make others feel like a million bucks, you've got to master this elementary skill. And it's essential that you learn to give your compliments in front of others as well as one-on-one.

Why? Because that private compliment-turned-public instantly and dramatically increases in value.

As commander of a \$1 billion ship, the *USS Benfold*, Navy Commander Mike Abrashoff took the ship from being the Navy's near-worst-performing ship to the best ship in the fleet in just 12 months – and using the same crew of 310 men and women.

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How did he do it? Among other things, he placed supreme importance on public compliments. Nearly every time a sailor left his ship for another assignment, Abrashoff gave him or her a medal. “Even if they hadn’t been star players, they got medals in a public ceremony as long as they had done their best every day. I delivered a short speech describing how much we cherished the recipient’s friendship, camaraderie and hard work.”

Abrashoff wanted them to feel good by complimenting them in front of others.

Whenever you have the opportunity to publicly praise another person, don’t let it slip by. You can find countless opportunities if you look for them.

– Beecher Hunter