

Stories about **LEADERSHIP**

A STORY ABOUT APPRECIATION



I almost missed it.
Because it was so quiet.

Many things are happening simultaneously during the Q2 rollout. Region 3 is stabilizing, Region 4 is launching, and the support model is being set up. Our calendars are full, and so are our minds. We're in that typical situation where performance means high speed – and humanity often comes second.

Tuesday's management update focuses on the numbers: stability, customer feedback, and cost curves. The CEO nods, the CFO wants details, we decide on two things, and schedule a new meeting. All good.

As the call ends, I catch a glimpse of Priya's face in the last second. She smiles briefly, but her eyes look tired. It's not a big deal, but it's a sign.

I call her after the meeting. "Do you have five minutes?" "Sure," she says. Her voice sounds alert, but I know it well enough to hear: she's holding back.

"How are you really doing right now?" I ask.

One breath. "Hm. I'm okay. It's just... it's a lot." "Yes," I say. "I can see that."

Silence. I sense she's waiting for something. Perhaps a counter-demand, a "but we have to." I myself have the tendency to immediately optimize in such moments.

But this time I don't want to optimize. I want to appreciate.

"Priya," I say calmly, "Region 3 wouldn't have become so stable without you. You won people in the local rounds where I wouldn't have stood a chance. And you did that during a period when you yourself were at your limit. I want to tell you that today."

She says nothing for a moment. Then she laughs softly. "Thank you. I don't hear that very often these days."

"That's my mistake," I say honestly. "We're so in the race that I don't say it often enough."

She lowers her voice again. "I enjoy doing it. But sometimes you do wonder if anyone sees it."

This sentence resonates with me because it perfectly describes what often prevents appreciation: Performance is seen, but not acknowledged. And that's how invisibility arises.

I hang up and sit for a moment.

I don't want people working invisibly for us.

In the afternoon, I write a short message in the lead chat. Nothing long-winded, nothing flowery. Just to the point: "Team, I'd like to thank you briefly:

- Jonas for the standard core work that makes Region 4 possible for us in the first place.
- Priya for the local ownership that brought about the breakthrough in Region 3.
- HR lead for the training, which is currently being scaled in record time.

I know you're all running on fumes. Your work has been seen.

I read the message twice before sending it, for fear it might seem "too soft". Then I send it anyway.

Feedback will be received in the next half hour. No drama, just a few brief statements:

Jonas: "Thank you. It's good to hear that." Priya: "Being seen really does help." HR Lead: "The timing was perfect."

I'm noticing a change in the team conversation. Not in the workload, but in the tone. Appreciation isn't a bonus. It's fuel.

The next day I'm in a workshop with Region 4 leads. A pilot project manager, Roberto, presents a plan. It's good, but not fully thought through. In the past, I would have immediately jumped at the opportunity.

Today I'll start by saying: "Roberto, I see how clearly you've identified the local risks. That's exactly what we need. Let's now work on solving the last two issues based on that."

He looks briefly surprised – and visibly becomes bolder in the conversation. A brief moment, but I see him straighten up.

Later, during a break, he comes up to me. "Thank you for saying that," he says. "I was unsure whether the plan would even work."

"He's wearing it because you were honest," I say.

In the evening, I reflect on why appreciation so often falls by the wayside. Perhaps because we misunderstand it as simply "nice." Yet it is highly functional: it makes people visible, and visibility creates connection.

I long believed that appreciation had to be great, solemn, perhaps even rare. Today I see: It is strongest when it is concrete, situational, and authentic.

And if I'm honest, it changes me too. Less driven. More connected.



Takeaway inspiration

Appreciation

Appreciation in leadership means seeing and acknowledging performance and attitude concretely, so that people feel their effectiveness is recognized. It strengthens relationships and courage because it prevents invisibility.

Take five minutes today and tell someone specifically what impact their work has had – not generally ("well done"), but specifically ("because of this, we were able to achieve X"). Appreciation works when it becomes tangible.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ABOUT APPRECIATION

1. Who do I see, but say too rarely?
2. What performance or attitude is currently being silently maintained within our society?
3. How can I express appreciation in a concrete way, without making it look glamorous?



Feel free to contact me anytime::

Victoria Beckers

E-Mail: beckers@energie-durch-entwicklung.com

phone: +49 172 90 69 280

Energie durch Entwicklung GmbH

Hufeisen 13 | D-41352 Korschenbroich

www.energie-durch-entwicklung.com