

The Importance of Professional Recognition



Many change agents perform their assigned duties in environments where they aren't viewed as highly valuable assets. They may be treated cordially by the executives they serve, but they aren't thought of as key resources who are vital to the leader's success or the organization's viability. Some of these practitioners are not only undervalued, they are "unrecognized."

One of the most powerful affirmations clients can bestow on you is the gift of *deep recognition*. They distinguish you from others by identifying something special in you (particularly when it can't be easily articulated). They grasp the real value you bring to situations, acknowledge your unique perspectives or insights, know when to appropriately leverage your distinctiveness, and openly express appreciation for the contribution you make.

There are two levels to this kind of recognition. All of the above (distinguishing, identifying, grasping, leveraging, and appreciating) can be applied to **what you do** as a professional change agent, or they can be directed toward **who you are** as you go about your work. Unfortunately, many practitioners operate without recognition at either level. It can feel awkward, if not humiliating, to go unrecognized for what you do, but it can be even more disheartening to feel those to whom you are in service hold little deep recognition of you as a person and disregard how you show up as a crucial part of the value you bring to the implementation process.

Most change professionals are aware of and intentionally seek out client relationships where they are endorsed for what they do. The currency for this kind of affirmation is called "expertise." When practitioners are respected for what they know or do, we say they have built a strong reputation based on their expertise.

Being designated an expert in the facilitation of organizational change is highly sought after. In fact, without it, securing meaningful job positions or assignments in our field is virtually impossible. Garnering admiration for the contributions you make by showing up in the way you do is a less common experience for most practitioners. Many have gone their entire careers without this kind of validation.

When there is little or no recognition for *who you are*, the negative repercussions spread in both directions—clients receive less value from the practitioner than they should and the practitioner becomes less invested in the client's situation than they could be. Over time, this cycle of less client value leading to less practitioner investment compounds on itself, resulting in a lose/lose situation for all concerned.