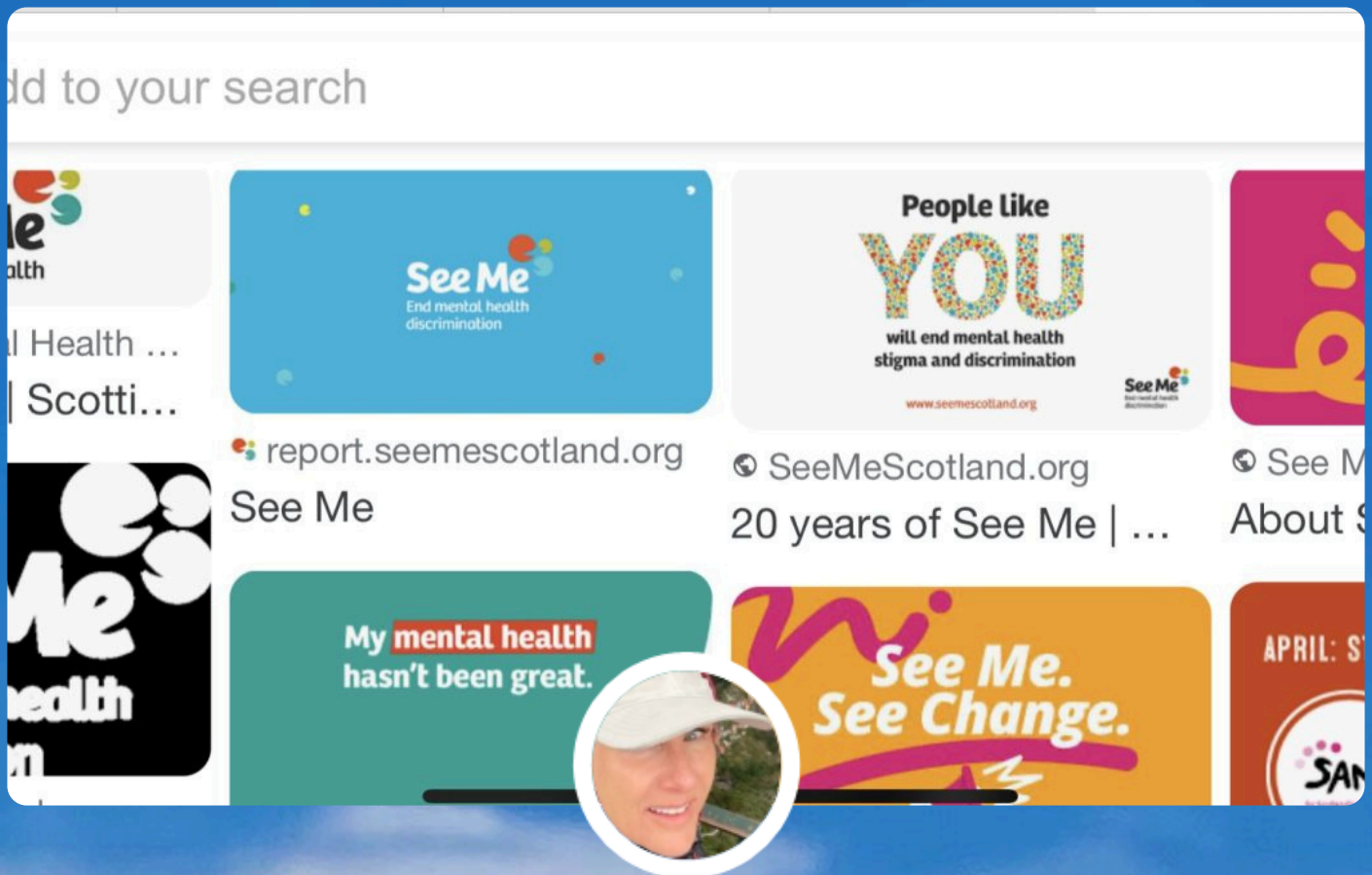


# See Me

Written by Caroline Holmyard



It is safe to say that we all like to be appreciated and we all want to be respected. We feel better about ourselves if we are recipients of behaviours that are hallmarked by respect and appreciation.

A cook will often state that they only want to cook for an empty plate. This is wholly understandable as it is a clear indication that the food prepared was well received and the food was worth preparing.



The effort was worth it.

The effort was rewarded.

The cook receives a dopamine hit because they have created a culinary achievement that is being recognised. Food left on a plate is frequently considered disrespectful and discourteous. It is also wasteful which adds further insult injury.

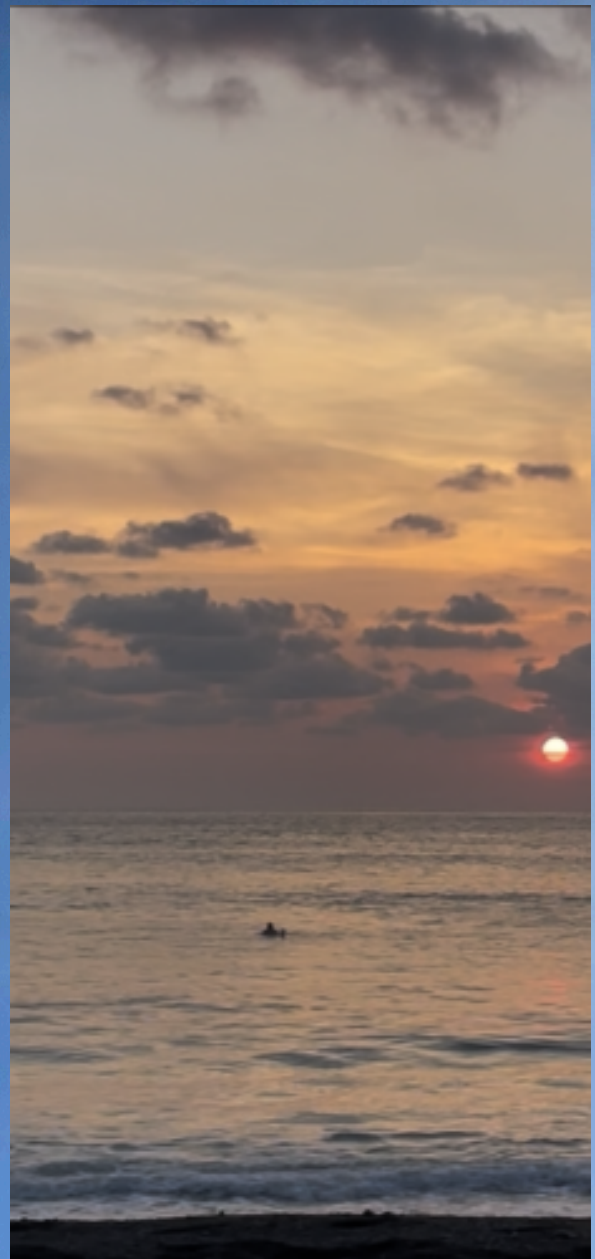
This rather innocent little introduction has a serious consequence and no more so than when encompassed in the workplace.



People are prepared to “go the extra mile” and put in extra time and effort to complete a project or reach a particular target. But, in return, they want the dopamine hit. The delivery vehicle for the dopamine hit is, broadly, speaking recognition. Recognition though, and the esteem that rides alongside it, is about more than it might seem.

To understand this, we can turn to Maslovian Theory and look at the Fourth Level in the Hierarchy of Needs Model. This is the model that explores and explains the **motivation** of individuals. It is a staple of Psychologists, Social Scientists and others. A well explored and bench tested theory that has remained credible where others have fallen by the wayside.

A quick revision on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This first appeared in 1943 in the Journal Psychological Review and was later refined for Maslow's own book “Motivation & Personality” in 1954. The Hierarchy of Needs model outlines the stages of human motivation, starting with basic physiological needs and progressing towards self-actualisation [the highest life satisfaction state]. Some refer to this as happiness.





In the introduction to this piece, we used the word *like*. Well, in the world of Maslow we should be using the word *need*. For an individual to reach the upper level of the hierarchy, there is a genuine need to be recognised, a need to be respected and esteemed – without this there is no ultimate fulfilment. The individual is motivated to be respected and to be esteemed. And the trouble or not, with dopamine is that it is addictive. Individuals need it, receive it and then want more and can become dependent upon it.

### **Back to the workplace.**

A quick check, using Google, reveals that companies offering consultancy and training on showing respect in the workplace and how to create an environment where everyone is esteemed, run to hundreds in the UK alone. How effectively you can teach this is open to debate and such teaching might be cynically regarded as box ticking by an HR Department.

The likely answer will lie within the individual.

People will join a company to work, usually as a part of a team, enjoy camaraderie and be in a role they can enjoy, make a difference and where they are rewarded. Rewards are obviously not merely about money. We know this to be true as so many – and we're talking hundreds of thousands in the UK and millions across the world – decided to take a cut in income and not to return to work after the pandemic.



Britain's Office for National Statistics in 2022, showed that 17% of the over 50's did not go back because they felt unsupported and undervalued in their jobs. The figures vary by gender and by age group but the total loss of experience and talent post pandemic was seismic. Some of those workers have returned to work but the primary driver for returning was not economic rather a vocation.

Such numbers really shine a light on the value of esteem and the need to be respected as a working person.

OK, we've hopefully established in a few short paragraphs the esteem, respect and appreciation are key elements in the emoluments that are

accrued in the workplace. They are very tough to value in economic terms and where they are put in monetary terms, further substantial problems arise.



Top performers get the bigger bonuses. These people who have completed projects, or sold a big deal, are rewarded accordingly. Keep the key word *accordingly* in mind – we'll revisit that.

At the company Annual Dinner – an often uniquely tiresome event for people who work in functions which do not always attract awards and bonuses – the CEO or similar gets up and trumpets the achievements of Frank or Sue or whoever and slaps them on the back whilst giving them an award.

Just a moment. Step forward one Alfie Kohn – author of the masterpiece “Punishment by Reward”. Kohn posits that the excessive and overblown awards-based culture actually does nothing other than punish everyone else for relative failure. Wow! Strong stuff.

But it's true.

Kohn was right and proved conclusively that “Gold Stars” pervert performance in a company. It was true in the heady days of the 1980s – when awards and bonuses took on a whole new meaning and magnitude – and it's still true today. And more to the point, Millennials and Gen Z no longer buy into it. People who have worked tirelessly, individually or within a team, that miss out on the big award look on forlornly thinking that their own effort fell short or wasn't worth any commentary. Privately, they may also want the floor beneath the winner or winners to suddenly develop a wide and bottomless chasm down which they winners may descend. On the face of it – funny. But actually, it is sad.



More to the point it is demotivating. The mentality of why bother putting in the effort emerges and stays emerged. I'm not recognised, and I'm not respected, and no one can see me because I'm just another seemingly bland unnoticed face in a room.

No paradigm shift needed here. No mass reorganisation or redefinition of strategy required. We just need workplaces to have a more widely distributed recognition model. Yes, we're back now to the word accordingly we touched upon earlier. No one is saying that we ring the bell or bang the drum every time someone does something good. Just recognise the piece of work accordingly. A nod of respect or a congratulatory smile is enough. A very small change in approach but enough to say "I see you and I saw, we all saw, what you did".



Conducted all across an organisation, a shift will occur. Slowly and progressively the culture dial will move, and the endless small acts of recognition will enable all of the actors in the theatre that is most companies to be seen and enjoy being seen. Company success is a team game, and the team is only as strong as the weakest or least motivated link. So, when successful the company's leadership team need to spread recognition accordingly.



Let's drill into this a little bit more. *Are we saying that it's really easy to recognise the work of others without detracting from your own efforts? Do we believe that all it takes to improve the workplace is to give and receive respect, esteem and recognition?*

Well...yes. It might not solve everything, but it is a really great place to start. You don't need an expensive outside consultant to show you all this. Just make a small proactive change in how you engage with co-workers.

There are huge national culture variations in the demonstration of esteem and recognition.





You could start by always being on time – this is a show of respect and that you see your colleagues' time to be as important as your own. Offer help as appropriate. Be polite and demonstrate tolerance. Demonstrate active listening rather than just passive listening. Respect personal space and also respect different personal belief systems. There is plenty you can do to help yourself and through helping yourself you will help others.

If you act in the way that you would have others act, and interact, and work, with you then they will mirror that behaviour back to you.

**It comes from within.**

**Small steps and small changes. But they will be sustainable  
& will enable you to see others & others to see you.**





Learn more at [www.NoWorriesApp.com](http://www.NoWorriesApp.com).

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