

# When an envelope full of cash is the last thing you want to see

**Q:** “Our CEO has always distributed employee bonuses in group meetings. He gives the top performers an envelope containing a thank-you letter and a check. We have sixteen employees, but usually only one or two get an envelope.

“Most of those who are eligible for bonuses report to me, and the recipients have told me that being rewarded in front of their peers makes them uncomfortable. My personal opinion is that publicly handing out checks seems rather juvenile, so I believe these bonuses should be given in private. What do you think?” *Middle Manager*

**A:** When debating public versus private recognition, reasonable arguments can be made on both sides. Some people enjoy being praised in front of their co-workers, while others find it awkward and embarrassing. Public acclaim can highlight outstanding role models, but it may also create hard feelings.

In this situation, I tend to share your opinion. Although many tributes are appropriately awarded in public, envelopes of money probably belong in the “private” category, especially if only a few people receive them.

As a compromise, your CEO might distribute the checks privately, but recognize top performers in a newsletter or email announcement. That way, the others will know about these accomplishments, but will not have to display fake enthusiasm while watching their colleagues collect extra cash.

*Everyone appreciates cash, but communication can also be motivating. Here are some questions that may stimulate conversation: [Ten Helpful Questions to Ask Your Employees](#).*