



Your Essential Guide to Building a Recognition Program

A step-by-step guide to achieving an engaging workplace culture through employee recognition.



Workplace cultures that help people thrive begin with employee recognition. When done right, recognition improves the quantity and quality of peak experiences at work—experiences that help people reach higher,

accomplish more, and want to stay. Use this guide as a framework for creating an employee recognition program that connects people to purpose, accomplishment, and one another.

1.

SET A PURPOSEFUL FOUNDATION.

Align employee recognition to what matters most—your organization’s purpose, values, and objectives. Connect your people’s work to something bigger, and show how it makes a difference in the world. Be sure to include recognition for a variety of accomplishments: personal victories, big wins, extra effort, career achievements, healthy habits, and company milestones. Reinforce the “why”: what are you trying to achieve through recognition, and why is recognition important?

2.

GIVE EVERYONE A CHANCE TO RECOGNIZE.

Ensure everyone has opportunity to give and receive recognition equally, no matter what level, function, area, or location they are in. Don’t forget remote employees, whose work may be less visible to those in the office. Build one central, global program that all employees can use to give and receive recognition. Ensure employees have a consistent experience, no matter where they are. Have both mobile and offline tools available, as not all employees have access to a computer or the internet or the opportunity to check their phone at work. Provide tools for people to recognize on the go, 24/7.

3.

INCORPORATE BOTH MANAGER AND PEER-TO-PEER RECOGNITION.

Recognition is meaningful when it comes from both your leader and your peers. Have both types of recognition available in your solutions. Let leaders create their own recognition

campaigns that are specific to their teams and objectives. Encourage managers to give recognition in their one-on-ones with employees. And give peers the opportunity to recognize one another when they see someone giving a helping hand or witness great work.



Employees are 5X more likely to stay at their organizations if their managers regularly acknowledge them for great work

There is a 26% increase in engagement scores when employees give recognition to each other

4.

PUT RECOGNITION IN THE FLOW OF WORK.

Enable employees to recognize from anywhere, without leaving their flow of work. Embed recognition tools in apps and tools they use everyday: Outlook, Salesforce, Slack, etc., or integrate your recognition data into existing tools like ADP and Workforce. Incorporating tools into the flow of work makes it easier for your people to give, and receive, recognition.

5.

MATCH AWARDS TO ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Ecards are great for saying thanks, and a cash bonus might be perfect for closing a multi-million dollar deal. A gift card might be good for working the weekend but fall short if you just successfully reinvented the company's business model. There is no one-size-fits-all award type. Even points delivered electronically may not always be the answer. Employees appreciate symbolic awards for key career milestones and once-in-a-lifetime accomplishments. Provide a variety of meaningful awards, appropriate for any level of accomplishment. Both your awards and recognition experiences should be culturally relevant in the global geographies where they are received.



See which types of awards are best for different accomplishments in our [Purposeful Appreciation Guide](#)

6.

CREATE PURPOSEFUL, MEANINGFUL, PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.

Recognition is not meant to be transactional. It is an emotional high point that helps employees connect with their leader, their team, and the organization. Recognition moments are the peak career experiences that help people see how they fit in, belong, and contribute to your success. They remind people of what they love about their work and fill them with the desire to stay. Encourage leaders and teams to present recognition both publicly and one-on-one, depending on circumstances. Teach them to recognize in a timely, specific way, that includes what the individual accomplished, and how their great work contributed to your organization's purpose.

Only 60% of recognition given is verbal in a meeting or gathering of colleagues

7.

GET BUY-IN FROM SENIOR LEADERS.

A commitment from senior leadership is crucial to any successful recognition initiative. Recognition should be seen as an essential workplace culture initiative that fuels business success and financial results—not just another HR program. The appropriate budget and resources need to be available. Executives need to set the example by role modeling and encouraging employees to give recognition. Presentations to executives about the ROI, why, and how of recognition can be effective in getting their buy-in. Take time to educate and create consensus on the importance of recognition.

Lack of senior leadership commitment is the top obstacle in sustaining a recognition program

Need to show your executives the ROI of employee recognition? Read our [Business Case for Recognition](#).

8.

LEVERAGE THE WHAT, WHY, AND HOW.

To truly change mindsets, make participation second nature, and cause recognition to become a defining characteristic of your corporate culture, you'll need to have a communication and training plan for your new solution. This is

about more than just bringing awareness to the availability of recognition solutions; it's about deepening your employees' understanding of the what, why, and how of recognition. Share recognition best practices on giving and presenting recognition. Highlight stories of great work being done and make career anniversaries an opportunity to celebrate and connect as a team. Keep recognition top of mind with employees via contests, email campaigns and talking points for team huddles. Remind employees to show appreciation frequently. Help managers understand why recognition matters—the real benefits to their teams and the organization—and how to master storytelling elements to connect people to your purpose.

- **66% of employees currently aren't able to access or use their company's recognition tools**
- **37% don't feel empowered to use the program**
- **31% of employees want monthly reminders and 29% want weekly reminders to recognize**

9.

CALCULATE YOUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI).

Measure more than just the usage of your recognition solutions to demonstrate success. Utilize the 3 levels of measurement: usage metrics (who and how often employees are giving and receiving recognition); culture measures (how recognition is impacting engagement, perceptions about leadership, and company culture); and business results (how recognition is improving retention, customer/patient satisfaction, sales, quality metrics, etc.). Remember to set solid baselines before you implement any new solutions, and keep yourself accountable for the program's success by re-assessing impact regularly.



10.

REFRESH OFTEN.

The key to a recognition solution people love, one that gets used and impacts workplace culture, is to refresh it often and keep it top of mind. Don't just turn it on and walk away. Don't let it get stale. Leverage recognition champions in different areas of your organization to remind people about the importance and impact of recognition. Reevaluate your tools and solutions to ensure people are still using and loving them. Share the ROI of recognition with your leaders to renew their commitment. Your ongoing efforts will ensure recognition becomes part of your company's DNA.

Choose the right partner to help you create the right recognition experience. You should have a formal program, but you don't need to do all the work yourself. 65% of companies who use an external vendor found excellent

value in their recognition programs, compared to only 37% of companies that create their own recognition solutions in-house.

Companies that have a formal recognition program have employees who feel 355% more appreciated. And, by extension, more likely to stay. By making recognition a priority, having a program with meaningful experiences and awards, and getting buy-in from the whole organization, you can build a recognition solution that increases the quality and quantity of peak employee experiences, builds connections and a sense of belonging, and acts as a primary catalyst for your workplace culture.

Learn more about Culture Cloud, our suite of [culture-building apps and recognition solutions](#) that help people thrive at work.

