

Build a Recognition Culture

Employee Recognition That Produces Real Results for Your People & Your Organization



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Recognition Drives Retention & Engagement

Employee retention remains one of the biggest challenges for today's organizations. As the talent market continues to shift, leaders and HR teams must find ways to keep their best people engaged and connected to the company's mission. One of the most effective—and often underestimated—strategies is building a strong culture of recognition.

When employees feel valued, they stay longer and perform better. Research from the American Psychological Association found that 93% of employees who feel valued are motivated to do their best work, and 88% report feeling more engaged. Recognition doesn't just boost morale—it directly impacts performance, retention, and culture.

The frequency of recognition matters, too. According to Aon Hewitt, employees recognized daily experience a 35% higher engagement rate compared to those recognized only monthly. This underscores an important truth: annual awards or sporadic shoutouts aren't enough. Recognition must be consistent, authentic, and woven into the fabric of everyday work life.

Building a Recognition Strategy

Creating a culture of recognition starts with a clear strategy that aligns with your organization's overall goals. Ask:

What behaviors, contributions, and results most support our mission?

How can we recognize and reinforce those actions consistently?

Leadership support is essential. When managers actively give recognition, employees feel it across the organization. Yet not all leaders are naturally comfortable with recognition—thankfully, it's a skill that can be taught. Many organizations now train managers to recognize effectively, ensuring everyone contributes to a culture of appreciation.

A well-rounded recognition program should include three levels of recognition—think of them as the three legs of a stool: day-to-day, informal, and formal. Each plays a unique role in sustaining engagement and motivation.

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The Three Levels of Recognition

1 DAY-TO-DAY RECOGNITION

This is the foundation of a recognition culture. It's frequent, personal, and non-monetary—simple gestures that make a big impact. Examples include:

- Thanking an employee in person for excellent work
- Sharing positive customer feedback
- Sending a quick e-card or shoutout on an online recognition wall

Time is often the biggest barrier, but a little structure helps. Some organizations provide managers with recognition toolkits (containing thank-you cards or small tokens), while others run initiatives like “Thank You Thursdays” to encourage weekly appreciation moments. Small, intentional acts create lasting engagement.

2 INFORMAL RECOGNITION

Informal recognition is slightly more structured but still personal and flexible. It often includes peer-to-peer programs where employees nominate colleagues for exceptional contributions or points-based reward systems tied to specific goals or wellness achievements. These programs celebrate everyday excellence and help reinforce teamwork and accountability.

3 FORMAL RECOGNITION

Formal recognition marks major milestones and significant achievements—the “Super Bowl ring” moments of an employee’s career. Examples include service awards, performance-based honors, or annual excellence awards. These are the cornerstone celebrations that publicly acknowledge commitment and achievement, helping build long-term loyalty.

The most effective recognition cultures strike a balance between all three levels—ensuring appreciation happens every day, not just on special occasions.

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Choosing the Right Awards

The award itself carries meaning—it's a tangible symbol of the organization's appreciation. Effective awards share four key traits:

PERSONALIZED

Meaningful and relevant to the individual. Giving employees a choice in their awards can increase impact and satisfaction.

SYMBOLIC

The award should connect to the company or achievement, such as by engraving the accomplishment or featuring the organization's logo.

LASTING

Physical awards or lasting tokens serve as reminders of success and appreciation.

TIERED

Different achievements warrant different levels of recognition—from a simple thank-you note to a high-value milestone award.

This thoughtful approach ensures that every form of recognition—big or small—feels sincere and significant.

How to Present Recognition

The way recognition is delivered matters as much as the award itself.

- Be timely: Recognition has the most impact when it's close to the accomplishment. Even for annual ceremonies, send a quick message or acknowledgment on the day of the achievement.

- Be specific: Clearly describe what the employee did and how it contributed to the organization's goals.
- Be positive: Focus entirely on the achievement—this is not the time for constructive feedback.

A meaningful presentation shows authenticity and reinforces the values the company stands for.

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Leveraging Technology for Recognition

Technology makes it easier than ever to deliver recognition consistently and meaningfully. According to Bersin & Associates, organizations that effectively use technology in recognition programs are three times more likely to rank in the top quartile of business performance.

Platforms like Terryberry's Be Recognized make appreciation part of daily culture. The platform's recognition wall lets employees publicly celebrate each other, creating a peer-

driven network of positivity. Leaders can view analytics and insights from a centralized dashboard, helping track recognition trends, identify high performers, and measure ROI.

When used strategically, recognition technology transforms appreciation from a sporadic gesture into a continuous driver of engagement, retention, and organizational success.

Key Takeaway

Recognition isn't just a "nice-to-have"—it's a business imperative. When appreciation becomes part of your organization's DNA, employees feel connected, motivated, and committed for the long haul. The result? Higher retention, stronger engagement, and a thriving workplace culture.

Build a Recognition Culture

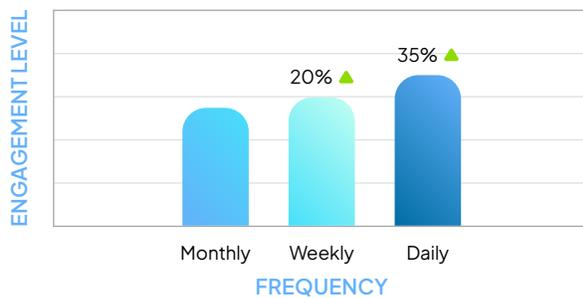


People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing... that's why we recommend it daily.

Zig Ziglar

Recognition Drives Engagement

The more frequent, the better



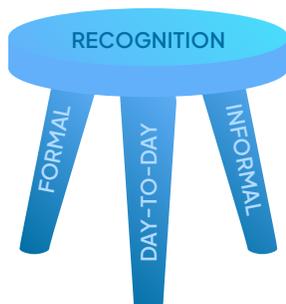
Recognition is the best way to reinforce the **Attitudes, Behaviors & Contributions** your organization values most

List 3 of each that are important to your organization

A ATTITUDES	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____
B BEHAVIORS	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____
C CONTRIBUTIONS	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____

How can each of these A,B,C's be reinforced through recognition?

The 3-Leg Stool Approach to Recognition



Formal: Awards for major achievements
Informal: Casual structure, defined criteria
Day-to-Day: Non-monetary appreciation

SELF CHECK

Is your recognition program aligned with the Mission, Vision, & Values of your organization?

Idea Center

Real-life recognition ideas from other business & HR leaders

1 BRIGHT IDEAS

Encourage continuous improvement by rewarding employee suggestions that improve workflow processes.

2 PASS THE BALL

Encourage peer-to-peer recognition. Once an employee has been recognized for going above and beyond, he or she must “pass the ball” by recognizing a peer.

3 PRESIDENT’S CLUB

Induct employees who surpass a goal-post objective into an exclusive President’s Club with honors.

4 WELCOME ABOARD AWARD

Recognize new employees upon completion of orientation training.

5 MAKE A NOTE OF IT

Give each manager a sticky note pad with instructions to write a “Thank-You” note per day until they’re gone. You’ll be surprised by the results.

6 YOUR SERVICE MATTERS

Multiply the impact of service awards by making presentations to tie the milestone recognition to specific contributions made throughout the recipients’ year and career.

7 SNAPS FOR PEER RECOGNITION

Place a “snap cup” for employees to put in notes of recognition for coworkers. Then read them aloud during weekly staff meetings and afterwards give each other “snaps” (snapping your fingers) for a good job.

8 SHOUT OUT BOARD

When external and internal clients compliment an employee, the praise is printed and stuck on the outside of their cube. Then, when coworkers walk by and see the compliment, they shout-out a great job or well done!

9 ROOT FOR YOUR HOME TEAM

By winning the Taking the Team to the Top Award, each team member receives an engraved key chain, thank you card signed by all of the administration team and the team gets to have the suite at the local baseball stadium for an upcoming game.

10 LOOKING FOR MORE IDEAS? VISIT WWW.TERRYBERRY.COM/BLOG

ADD YOUR OWN IDEAS

Award Presentation Cheatsheet

USE THIS WORKSHEET TO PREPARE YOUR COMMENTS FOR EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PRESENTATIONS

RECIPIENT NOTES

Our Mission, Vision, & Values: _____

Award _____ Award Presentation Date _____

Recipient's Name _____ (Phonetic Pronunciation) _____

Exact Date of Hire _____ Original Job Title _____

Current Job Title and Responsibilities _____

Specific Contributions to the Organization _____

Humorous Stories _____

Spouse's Name _____ Children _____

Activities Away from Work _____

PRESENTATION REMARKS

About the Award _____

About the Recipient _____

Specific contributions & how they support the organization's Mission, Vision & Values _____

Sample Presentation Remarks "Sally is celebrating three years of service with ABC Company. In that short time, she has made a big impact on the purchasing team. I won't forget, within the first 6 months of her hire, she took the initiative to revise the department training manual. She didn't just stick in the new procedures, she discovered and corrected outdated processes, and added screenshots to improve the usability. It's a document that still makes an impact when we bring new people on board. Over the last several months, she has worked diligently to develop a partnership with an important vendor, and we feel that this new relationship is going to help put us in a better position to serve our west coast customers. I've been really impressed with the way that Sally proactively handled this project. Thank you and congratulations Sally."

Recognition Check-up

RATE THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

1 STRONGLY DISAGREE

2 DISAGREE

3 NEUTRAL

4 AGREE

5 STRONGLY AGREE

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

- I feel that my organization's mission, vision & values are clearly communicated to employees.
- Employees in my organization are motivated to perform at their best.
- Employees in my organization understand what is expected and how to achieve excellence in their work.
- Employee morale is good in my organization.
- There is open communication between management and employees in my organization.
- Employees in my organization feel respected and valued.
- Employees in our organization respect and trust the management team.
- Our employees understand the opportunities they have to be recognized.
- My organization acknowledges and appreciates employee dedication and contributions.
- When employees go above and beyond, I feel their actions are recognized in a timely and specific manner.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

- Structure: Formal, Informal and Day-to-Day recognition methods are used to reinforce contributions at different levels.
- Administration: Our organization has a system in place to effectively manage the administration details of our recognition program.
- Participation: Both employees and managers participate in the recognition process at a satisfactory level.
- Communication: Employees understand how the recognition program works and how they can earn recognition.
- Awards: Recipients value the awards that are given. They aspire to achieve them and are proud to receive them.
- Data: Leadership has access to recognition data to inform decisions on usage, engagement, and performance.
- Evaluation: We consistently review our recognition program to ensure it is meeting objectives.

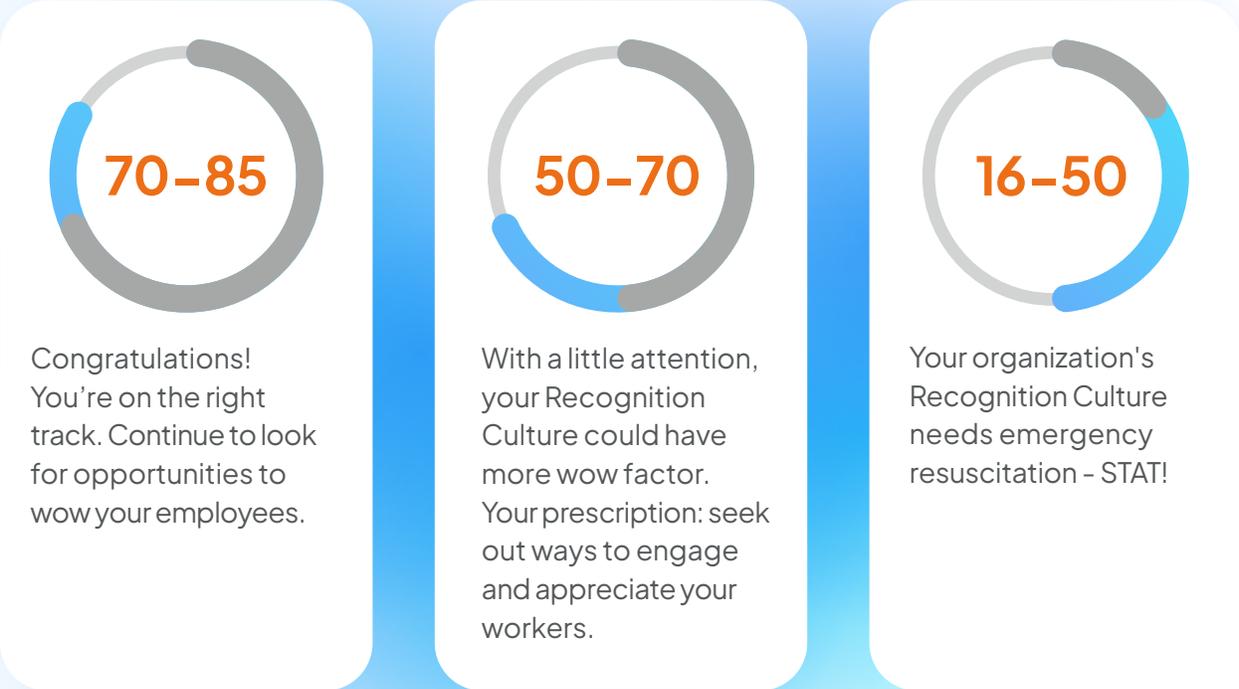
TOTAL

Do you have a Recognition Culture?
Add up your points, then turn the page for your results.

Recognition Check-up

How Did You Do?

Add up your points from the Recognition Check-up. Do you have a Recognition Culture?



Bonus: Find out how your recognition program compares with other businesses. Take the survey at www.terryberry.com/survey.

Get free online recognition tools – including printable certificates, new-hire questionnaires, event checklists, and more – [here](#).

Want more? Get a demo of Terryberry's platform [here!](#)

Interested in HRCI-approved recognition training for your organization? Check out our upcoming webinars [here](#).

