

Employee Recognition

Creating an effective program

AUTHOR SUZANNE SCHELL

To build and maintain an excellent business environment is a challenge. A critical component to overcoming that challenge is effective employee recognition. Great leaders and managers have learned that strategic, consistent recognition throughout an organization is instrumental in reducing turnover, increasing productivity, and creating an excellent work environment.

People continue to do what they are praised and rewarded for. Therefore it is important for an organization to identify the desired behaviours that directly align with corporate culture, values, and goals and convey these desired behaviours to their employees. For recognition to be effective, employees have to be able to connect the dots between the recognition received and the organization's desired behaviours.

Values, mission statements, and commitments generally appear as posters on office walls and remain as posters unless there are specific desired behaviours attached to them that employees could demonstrate on a daily basis. For example, "innovation"

may be something that appears on a values poster in an organization. What does that mean to an employee and how does it fit into his or her role? Without that connection, innovation is just a word, and possibly has different meanings to everyone. Behaviours that align with innovation in one organization are:

- Contributing to a new idea
- Helping others think outside the box
- Undertaking a task or challenge that has never been done before
- Experimenting with a new process even if the old one is not "broke"



2 In our November/December issue Suzanne Schell wrote about why incentives programs recognizing employees' contributions work and how to make them effective. In this issue she will discuss steps to creating a program for your organization.

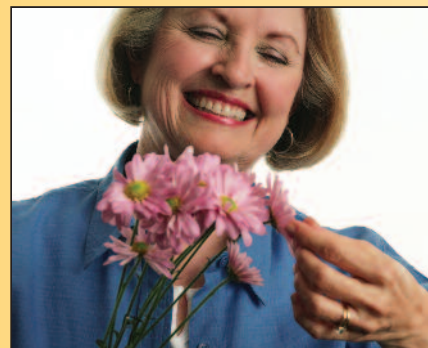
An unexpected vacation day can boost employee relations.

■ Questioning an existing process to keep it fresh and innovative

■ Demonstrating breakthrough thinking; developing and applying new ways of looking at a situation.

Identifying the behaviours that align with innovation give the organization's employees a connection to what is expected, and what innovation means to them. This process must be done for every value, goal, and/or commitment that is critical to the organization's success.

Sean Schooling, Career Development & Recognition Manager at TELUS, a recipient of Recognition Professionals International—Best Practice –Best in Class award agreed, "At TELUS, our recognition program aligns to our corporate strategy and values. Team members at all levels recognize behaviours aligned to our TELUS values and contribute in ways that enable us to achieve our strategy. Whether it's nominating a team



A proper gift given is always well-received.

member for an award, celebrating years of service, or sending someone a handwritten thank-you card, we show our appreciation for the contributions of our team members."

10 ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE RECOGNITION PROGRAM:

1. Higher Management Buy-in

This is required to demonstrate commitment and responsibility for developing a recognition culture. A successful recognition program has top management believing in it and "walking the talk."

Recognition is part of the corporate vision and is as important as any other business initiative. In addition, buy-in from higher management is evident when adequate resources are provided to manage the program.

2. Manager Responsibility

Everyone is involved, however it is the responsibility of all managers to support and lead recognition throughout the organization. Managers can be accountable for participating constructively in the recognition program through manager performance reviews.

3. Strategy

The organization has well-defined values derived from their mission and goals, which need to include desired employee behaviours. Establish and document processes that promote employee recognition at all levels, including continual (day-to-day), casual, and ceremonial recognition.

4. Consistent Training

Educate managers on what, when, why, and how to recognize employees to accelerate the recognition culture and maintain it at a high level. Professional development courses should be available for everyone who will be in charge of the program.

5. Measurement

Establish measurement indicators and tools to validate program participation, satisfaction, and effectiveness. Increasing employee retention levels as an objective can be quantified before implementing the program and then compared a year later. Another objective could be employee satisfaction and morale. These can be measured using an employee survey and running the survey again once the program has been used over a period time.

6. Communication

Communication is what recognition is all about so the recognition program should be communicated to the whole organization. Brand the recognition program allowing for all communication to be consistent. Communication can be accomplished throughout the organization

using internal newsletters, top management speaking on how important recognition is for the organization, and putting recognition on meeting agendas.

7. Celebrations

Celebrating progress towards milestones, achieving goals, and behaviour that significantly advances the organization is key to developing an excellent work environment. Put processes in place for organizing and documenting celebrations and provide the necessary resources. Recognition events require planning. Some actions to consider in planning the event: choose the right person to make the presentations; know exactly what is being recognized; script the presentation and have it include positive and upbeat comments.

8. Day-to-Day


This includes frequent and ongoing praise and recognition of behaviours that support organizational values. This can be thank-you cards, notes or other forms that employees can give to one another, or verbal praise. Without consistent day-to-day recognition, the larger celebrations or formal awards lose meaning. All employees participate in day-to-day recognition.

9. Flexibility

Recognition programs need to be flexible and easy to change. Measurement results and employee feedback will indicate changes and improvements required. Flexibility keeps the program fresh and alive.

Share the News

Keep everyone informed on what is happening with the recognition program. Good news stories that are shared are vital to the successful building of a culture of recognition. News can be shared in internal newsletters, celebrations and bulletin boards displaying recognition activities.

When fully implemented together, these 10 elements ensure a powerful and strategic recognition program for an organization. The ten elements were developed based on Recognition Professionals International Best Practices. 

Scotiabank

A recipient of Recognition Professionals International Best Practice–Best in Class-award has a recognition program called “Scotia Applause.” This program is a multi-dimensional program designed to help strengthen employees’ focus on Scotiabank’s corporate values, and on delivering exceptional customer service. Yvette Bryan of Scotiabank shared some of the benefits that Scotiabank is experiencing with their recognition program “Scotia Applause”:

- Enhances our customer-centric culture by focusing on actions which drive deeper customer relationships
- Reinforces sales and service objectives
- Creates a set of enabling tools that drives motivation and coaching for management
- Eliminates burdensome administrative paperwork through a well-administered program management platform
- Rewards and recognizes both leading and lagging performance indicators
- Provides real-time reporting for management and staff.



Suzanne Schell is Owner of Business Excellence, Certified Recognition Professional, Professional Speaker and consultant. Contact her at Suzanne@suzanneschell.com, www.suzanneschell.com