

## **Looking for a Great Place to Work?**

By Christi Gibson

The National Association For Employee Recognition (NAER) is the only association solely dedicated to the enhancement of workplace performance through recognition. NAER is an international non-profit association of employers dedicated to developing and promoting recognition programs that engage employees, improve performance and increase return on objectives. Research findings show that formal, informal and day-to-day recognition programs, when linked to the organizations values and goals, can create a culture of recognition that enhances employee engagement, performance and retention.

Employee performance is the key to success for any organization. We know, based on extensive academic, scientific and business research, that employee performance is enhanced by systematic Employee Recognition, defined as: An after-the-fact display of appreciation or acknowledgment of an individual's or team's desired behavior, effort or business result that supports the organization's goals and values.

### Strategic implications of recognition:

- Reduces Turnover
- Increases productivity and profitability
- Creates a positive work environment
- Elevates customer service, sales and satisfaction
- Attracts a better recruiting pool
- Improves retention of top performers

A successful recognition program includes verbal and/or written praise in acknowledgement of individual or team achievement, Awards (cash or tangible items for individual or team achievement), and Celebrations (planned or spontaneous events in recognition of individual or team achievement). These categories are not mutually exclusive. Recognition may involve a certificate or other token of appreciation. Celebrations may consist of an informal team lunch or an organization-wide event. Successful recognition programs use a variety of motivational tools and communication methods to maximize every opportunity to positively reinforce behavior that is consistent with the organization's goals and values.

NAER established 7 Best Practices Standards by which to evaluate employee recognition programs. The NAER Best Practices program recognizes organizations that successfully implement recognition programs and shares this information through case studies, available at [www.recognition.org](http://www.recognition.org). When an employer puts these 7 Standards in place, they find they've created a great place to work.

### The 7 Best Practices Standards:

- Standard 1. Recognition Strategy
- Standard 2. Management Responsibility
- Standard 3. Recognition Program Measurement
- Standard 4. Communication Plan
- Standard 5. Recognition Training
- Standard 6. Recognition Events and Celebrations
- Standard 7. Program Change and Flexibility

2006 NAER Best Practices Best Overall Recipient—Westfield Group:

“The truth is people are always looking for a great place to work,” explains Westfield Group CEO, Bob Joyce. “Our number one goal is to attract, develop, empower and retain quality people. If you create a positive work environment, people want to come to work everyday and do a good job, but they also want to enjoy what it is they do and they want to be appreciated. At the end of the day recognition is huge for us. Recognition puts people in a position where they enjoy what they do, they feel appreciated for what they do, and they will stay a career with us.”

The 2006 NAER Best Practices judging panel found the Westfield Group to have excellent involvement from all levels of management beginning with Bob Joyce, their CEO. By engaging all levels of management Westfield Group consistently retains excellent employee satisfaction metrics. Their recognition training programs were found to be outstanding. By connecting their program with the corporate bottom line, they have seen a direct correlation between the company’s focus on recognition and a decrease in turnover.

One of the key findings from a recent study conducted by Northwestern University entitled, *Linking Organizational Characteristics to Employee Attitudes and Behavior\** found *there is a direct link between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, and between customer satisfaction and improved financial performance.* Successful employers know this to be true; it’s common sense. When employees are recognized for accomplishments that promote the company’s goals and they are engaged, customer satisfaction increases and profits rise.

Meaningful employee recognition programs are vital to organizations striving for success, however many organizations don’t know where or how to begin. Responding to employer’s needs and industry trends, NAER has developed the Certified Recognition Professional™, CRP curriculum in which candidates will complete four facilitator-led courses. This certification program sets the standard for assessment of abilities and provides a means for individuals to acquire the needed skills and knowledge in order to excel. A CRP designation offers enterprises a means to identify Recognition Professionals equipped with the expertise required to outlive their competition.

Yes, everyone is looking for a great place to work. When an employer links his recognition programs to the organizations values and goals, he has created a culture of recognition that enhances employee engagement, performance and retention. In other words, that employer has created a great place to work.

**About NAER**

Christi L. Gibson, the Executive Director of the National Association for Employee Recognition (NAER) has had articles published in numerous periodicals and newspapers. \*The complete survey, “Linking Organizational Characteristics to Employee Attitudes and Behavior – A look at the Downstream Effects on Marketing Response and Financial Performance” can be accessed on the NAER website. Visit [www.recognition.org](http://www.recognition.org) for more information.