



Back to the Basics:

Recognition, Appreciation, and Employee Engagement

Recognition and appreciation should be the foundation of your employee engagement strategy and at this moment in time, it should be at the top of every CEO's priority list. According to Gallup's most recent survey published in January of 2023, "employee engagement in the U.S. saw its first annual decline in a decade -- dropping from 36% engaged employees in 2020 to 34% in 2021. This pattern continued into 2022, as only 32% of full- and part-time employees working for organizations are now engaged, while 18% are actively disengaged." What does this tell us? It tells us it's time for change and time to step up your recognition efforts...so your company doesn't become a statistic.

**So how do you start? What do you need to be successful?
Let's get back to basics with five easy steps.**

1 A winning strategy starts with foundational service awards, celebrating the tenure of your valued employees.

"Years of Service" or "Service Awards" look a lot different today than even just a couple of years ago. Traditionally these awards were given in 5-year intervals to recognize milestones. Today's strategies do so much more!

- Connect new hires to your culture on day one and incorporate multiple recognition touchpoints throughout year one
- Acknowledge every year anniversary with a low-cost/no-cost moment of appreciation
- Don't wait until year 5 to call it a milestone – let's celebrate 1-year and 3-years as well
- Maximize traditional milestones by incorporating social recognition, personalization, and affirmation. Best practice investment in these milestones now ranges from \$20-\$30 per year of service

2 Best in class programs use a strategic recognition framework that incorporate appreciation, recognition and reward.

With easy-to-launch technology, proven strategies, and measures, you can easily and effectively create a culture of recognition to engage, grow, and retain your employees. Appreciation, recognition, and rewards work harmoniously to create a more meaningful and impactful experience for employees.



3

Authentic and specific recognition will have a greater impact.

One of the tenets of the Montessori teaching approach focuses on authentic and specific praise – how that validates a person’s hard work, but also acknowledges the reasons for the action. This is the same concept that effective recognition strategies use. “Appreciation that is specific is far more powerful than a general ‘good job’ comment. Describe a specific event or action and the impact it had on you, the team, the organization, or your customers. This drives home the importance of what the person has done.”²

Further, authentic and specific recognition drives a sense of psychological safety. The benefits of this safety are connected to creating a greater sense of belonging; something closely tied to employee engagement. “Organizations with high levels of belonging also have higher employee net promoter scores (eNPS), which measure employee satisfaction and ambassadorship and are known to correlate with employee engagement.”³

4

The generational differences in the workforce present opportunities for a diverse approach.

Remember your audience and consider what’s important to them and their unique recognition preferences. While there is a universal desire for recognition, there is nuance in the rich diversity of your workforce. Ensure you execute your strategies by engaging your colleagues in the way that they will feel most appreciated, the way they will respond most appropriately, and with a relevant approach.

5

Invest for long-term success.

In McKinsey’s podcast Workplace Rituals: Recapturing the power of what we’ve lost, they talk about how the right rituals can revitalize an employee’s meaning at work—and help them move beyond “me” to “we.”⁴ Investing in a foundation of recognition isn’t a short-term strategy – it’s time, money, and emotional connections that are built across all levels of teammates. Investment practices have shown that on average it only takes about \$150 per employee to make a difference. And with the tools and insights easily accessible today, your ROI is easy to calculate to prove the value, shape the culture, and engage your employees for the long haul.

Tips on Giving Recognition

- Give recognition in a timely manner
- Be specific by including detailed actions and behaviors
- Connect the dots by sharing how these specific actions and behaviors link to your values, goals, and outcomes
- Make it frequent
- Be personal, be yourself, and be sincere



¹ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/468233/employee-engagement-needs-rebound-2023.aspx>

² <https://hbr.org/2022/09/do-you-tell-your-employees-you-appreciate-them>

³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2021/12/22/belonging-the-intersection-of-dei-and-engagement/?sh=323b46f113e9>

⁴ <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/workplace-rituals-recapturing-the-power-of-what-weve-lost>

