

Using a Hire-to-Retire Recognition Strategy to Build Connections.

A hire-to-retain strategy in the context of recognition and rewards is the idea that celebrating employees isn't just a singular event; it's using your recognition strategy to formalize the connections you have with your employees throughout their entire journey with your company - from the time they are onboarded to the time they retire. It's consistent and robust, full of touchpoints to ensure the recognition experience makes your employees feel like there's no other company to whom they would like to be loyal and nowhere else they would rather be.

The Power of Recognition

Recognition is one of the powerful tools that connects employees to your organization, drives engagement and impacts your culture. It provides a meaningful way to reinforce your core values and behaviors, to recognize great work and outstanding performance, to reward results and celebrate success. It has the power to tell employees not only do we "value you and your work," but also reinforces "you are doing the right things."

Benefits of implementing a hire-to-retain strategy:

- 1 Elevate your culture
- 2 Strengthen employee morale
- 3 Boost team and individual performance

Foundational Service Milestone Program	Automated Recognitions	Discretionary Recognitions	Performance-Based Recognitions
Best practices incorporate a hire-to-retain approach	Create an environment of celebration and appreciation to encourage retention and team building	Tools for leaders and all employees to applaud and acknowledge behavioral reinforcement	Rewarding results aligned to your objectives

Formalizing connections with your employees through a hire-to-retain recognition strategy makes financial sense. It's a small investment that will drive bigger returns and is the best form of internal marketing you can do to elevate your employee experience.

Considerations to Begin Formalizing Connections

1) Think C2: Consistent & Complementary. Formalizing connections doesn't happen overnight. It's not about rewarding and recognizing a single performance. It's not a random shout out, or a one-off notecard. If you really want to formalize connections with employees you need to be consistent, regular and thoughtful about what you say, when you say it and how you say it. In addition, your recognition strategies should complement each other (i.e., performance recognition complements foundational service milestones; manager recognition complements peer-to-peer recognition). As Aristotle once said, "*the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*," so when you opt to use only a single recognition technique, there's a missed opportunity to optimize your efforts by having them all work together.

2) Start early and recognize employees often. Organizations have "recognized" that recognizing service anniversaries sooner produces greater engagement, so why wait around? One-year, three-year, and every-year recognition has become the norm, and is a part of high-performing companies who show their employees how much they value them. The frequency with which you recognize your employees' anniversaries has to match your culture, but more touchpoints can only increase your employees' level of engagement. Additionally, organizations are focusing on acknowledging new employees, with multiple recognition touchpoints throughout their first year.

3) Make it a big deal! A celebration means celebration! Milestones and automated recognitions are important to those experiencing them. So, make them BE important; not just to the employee experiencing a work anniversary, birthday, or community involvement award as an example, but to everyone who is in their circle. Create that positive energy by communicating, rewarding and using those key opportunities to hit the emotional and rational levers that help drive their brand engagement to you.

4) Make your employees feel like they belong. Create a sense of belonging with discretionary recognition from managers and peers. The 2021 Qualtrics survey on Employee Experience discovered that belonging was one of the strongest drivers of employee engagement. In their research they found that managers were a key influence on belonging. "Empowering managers can have a powerful knock-on effect to improve belonging and engagement."¹ They say that 20% of employees who feel they don't belong are engaged, vs. 91% of those who feel they do - that's 3.5x more. Discretionary recognition from managers and between peers is a great way to make those connections to your company stronger.

5) Personalize their performance. No one really likes an "empty compliment," or a generic thank you, so endeavor to personalize the recognition experience for your employees. And when the opportunity does present itself, make it relevant and tailored. Nothing says "I appreciate you" more than designing a reward and recognition strategy around the specific needs and wants of your employees. And personalizing the message about a very specific performance takes it to the next level. Did your teammate attend a lunch and learn about a new product? Did they submit a cost-saving idea for operations? Did your employee run a marathon as part of a wellness initiative? Make sure THEY know that you KNOW what they did.

¹ <https://www.qualtrics.com/lp/trends-report-ex-2021/>

