RECOGNITION/REWARD

Employees not only want good pay and benefits, they also want to be valued and appreciated for their work, treated fairly, do work that is important, have advancement opportunities, and opportunities to be involved in the agency. Recognition and rewards play an important role in work unit and agency programs to attract and retain their employees. It is the day-to-day interactions that make employees feel that their contributions are appreciated and that they are recognized for their own unique qualities.

This type of recognition may contribute to high morale in the work environment. So, it’s extremely important that managers, who communicate the agency goals to employees, are included in the development of recognition programs.

WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT IN A RECOGNITION PROGRAM?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>To Senior Management</th>
<th>To Employees</th>
<th>To Managers of Program</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Increases productivity</td>
<td>• Satisfies recognition needs</td>
<td>• Includes efficient administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Produces Return On Investment (ROI)</td>
<td>• Creates positive recognition experience</td>
<td>• Excites employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improves attitudes</td>
<td>• Provides a wide selection of attractive, personalized awards</td>
<td>• Creates pride</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Builds loyalty and commitment</td>
<td>• Provides timeliness of recognition</td>
<td>• Pleases management</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Generates positive feedback</td>
<td>• Guarantees quality of award</td>
<td>• Involves all employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Empowers the workforce</td>
<td>• Fosters open communication of appreciation</td>
<td>• Develops a partnership with the workforce</td>
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Source: O.C. Tanner, 2000

The organization that can differentiate between, and effectively fulfill, all three levels of concerns (senior management, employees, and managers of the program) may achieve levels of performance they may never have thought possible. In addition, an effective recognition program should meet several essential criteria:

(a) The recognition program does not exclude any employee
(b) The employees know exactly what should be accomplished in order to earn recognition and rewards
(c) The manager's success is tied to the employees' success
Recognition is a leadership tool that sends a message to employees about what is important to the leaders and the behaviors that are valued. Managers can use this tool to help employees understand how their jobs contribute to the agency’s overall goals and how their performance affects the achievement of those goals. Often people have come to accept the notion that an employee is paid to do their job. So why should they be praised for doing what they’re paid to do? Praise of an employee reinforces, recognizes and motivates behaviors that you, as the manager, want to see.

Recognition can be delivered in a number of ways. Think about just saying “Thanks.” What does praise cost? Praise is inexpensive. If it only takes a few minutes to reap days’ worth of increased productivity and morale, isn’t it worth it? This doesn’t mean that meaningless “warm fuzzies” are going to work, however. Use Jim Brintnall’s description of “What Makes a Good Reward?” (See Resources section for authors and articles.) Jim says it’s got to be SMART! That means that rewards should be:

- **Sincere.** Above all else, a good reward should reflect a genuine expression of appreciation. Token acknowledgements leave something to be desired.
- **Meaningful.** To endure a motivating influence, rewards should be aligned with the values, goals, and priorities that matter the most.
- **Adaptable.** The diverse workplace demands alternatives. Consider creative options to keep your program fresh. No single reward format works for everyone all the time.[Recognition should be adapted and valuable to the receiver.]
- **Relevant.** Some personal dimension is essential to a good reward. No matter how formal or informal, expensive or affordable, the relevance of any recognition will be improved with a personal touch - - it’s a little thing that makes a big difference.[Recognition should be provided by someone of significance to the receiver.]
- **Timely.** It is important that rewards respond to the behavior they are intending to reinforce. Don’t let too much time pass or the reward may be devalued and credibility eroded.

To ensure that employees tie recognition into the work unit or agency’s strategic goals, be certain to tell employees what they did right and how it interacts with the goals. Include supervisors and employees in the development of your recognition program to represent the values and goals of a diverse cross-section of the work unit or agency. Provide the opportunity for recognition to come from a variety of sources. Peer-to-peer recognition usually is highly valued by employees. It can be used to develop a supportive work environment.

For many employees, recognition received through the expression of genuine appreciation for the work they do is a reward. Being involved in a project or receiving special training may be another’s reward. Make no mistake, however, that most employees would not turn down a monetary, non-monetary or recognition leave reward! We have compiled a list of no, low, moderate, and higher costs options that agencies may consider.
How to Get Started

Start in your immediate sphere of influence.
Motivation is very personal, and to be successful with it you need to operate at a very immediate, personal, one-on-one level. One of the great things about this topics is you don't need anyone's permission to start using principles involved. You can immediately use positive recognition, praise, and encouragement toward performance goals with those individuals with whom you work. Simple praising, gestures of thanks, public acknowledgments of achievement are the high-leverage actions that will get employees motivated in your workplace.

Do one thing differently.
The best goals are attainable, reasonable goals, so it may be best to suggest to managers that they only focus on doing one thing differently. Far better to have managers focus on one thing that can be consistently done than a dozen things that all go to the wayside once the managers step back into their old routines. For example: start each staff meeting with good news and praising for individuals who deserve it, perhaps reading "thank you" letters from satisfied customers or employees from other parts of the organization. It is estimated that 90+ percent of our daily behavior is routine, so don't underestimate the power of selective focus.

Involve those individuals you are trying to motivate.
Bring up the topic of recognition and ask the question: "Does anyone think we need to do more recognition around here?" I've never heard of any employee saying, "I just get too much recognition where I work," so this is almost a rhetorical question. Take the initial interest you receive in having more recognition, and ask whether anyone in the group would be willing to help come up with a program for the group. Some of the best recognition programs are driven by volunteers. After initially helping them establish goals, have them develop the criteria and mechanics for the program. From the outset, it can be their program, not management's; the result is it will be more likely to succeed. Remember, the best management is what you do with people, not what you do to them. Make employees partners in their own success.

Focus on what you can do, not what you can't do.
In almost every work environment there are constraints that can keep you from implementing recognition activities. For example, many organizations are unionized, which restricts some recognition practices; public organizations must be careful how they use public funds for recognition activities; nonprofits and smaller companies may not have any financial resources to devote to recognition programs; older companies my be slow to stop using paternalistic incentives; and larger companies may feel hypocritical using recognition activities during or after layoffs. Instead of dwelling on what you can't do, focus on the hundreds of things you can do.

Don't expect to do recognition perfectly.
Some managers attempt recognition activities, than abandon their efforts because they didn't feel they were initially successful. Remember, any new behavior or change will be awkward at first. There is no perfect right way of doing recognition. Instead, try things, learn from what worked, and see to improve. See the help and feedback from others in your work group as you try some new behaviors. Be sincere and have fun and you will seldom go wrong!
COST EFFECTIVE RECOGNITION IDEAS

“People want to feel that they Do Make A Difference”

INDIVIDUAL RECOGNITION

Parking Spots – Reserved parking spots show recognition of an employees work and helps establish their status among peers. Keep employees motivated by rotating ownership of the spot of the month.

Employees' work anniversaries or milestones should be recognized and celebrated. Celebrate birthdays and promotions.

Flex Hours – No matter what a person does for a living, at some point his personal life will likely require some time away from work. Whether he needs a personal day, a two-hour lunch or a half-day at the end of the week, the ability to flex work schedules helps accommodate their other responsibilities.

Thank you notes - Leave a candy bar at an employee's desk along with a handwritten thank you note indicating how the employee has contributed to the company or department.

TEAM RECOGNITION

Recognition Spread - Coordinate a staff pizza party or "make your own sundae" event to recognize your employees' hard work.

Recognition Hall of Fame - Post on ‘recognition board,’ bulletin board, newsletters, web site

Wellness Program - Sponsor free chair massages at the end of a stressful but successful month or allowing your employees an hour a day to exercise without taking their personal leave.

Annual Picnic - Organize an official Employee Recognition Day. Ask management to serve lunch for the staff. Drop off small gifts at employees' desks. Talk about achievements and hand out certificates of appreciation.

CONTESTS

Every time an employee exceeds goals, write his name on a slip of paper and put it in a box. The more goals exceeded the more chances he has to win a prize. At the staff meeting, once a month, pull a name from the box and award that person a prize.

Instead of purchasing corporate artwork from outside the company, hold a contest for your talented employees. Have categories for photography, painting, sculpture and so forth. Display the items and organize anonymous voting online. The winning artwork in each category can be purchased by the company and be displayed with appropriate artist recognition.
RESOURCES

The following provides a compilation of research on recognition and rewards to aid you in your search for information on recognition programs (web sites, books and articles). Your research can be enhanced by the wealth of information available at your fingertips by accessing the Internet. The listings below were used in the development of the manual and contain more in-depth material that you may review.

**Web Sites**

About.com Human Resources [Employee Recognition](http://www.incentivecardlab.com/)

Society for HR Management – [www.SHRM.org](http://www.SHRM.org)

ASTD – [www.ASTD.org](http://www.ASTD.org)

**Vendor Web Sites**


Walk the Talk - [http://www.walkthetalk.com/](http://www.walkthetalk.com/)

Corporate Inspirational Motivational - [http://www.simpletruths.com/](http://www.simpletruths.com/)

**Books**

- 1001 Ways to Reward Employees by Bob Nelson
- 1001 Ways to Energize Employees by Bob Nelson
- Getting Employees to Fall in Love With Your Company by Jim Harris
- Recognition, Gratitude & Celebration by Patrick Townsend and Joan Gebhardt
- Rewarding and Recognizing Employees by Joan Klubnik