

## How to implement employee recognition programs that will increase morale

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Employee recognition is the open acknowledgement and expressed appreciation for an employee's contributions to their organization, and it provides several business, social, and wellness advantages to teams. While the interest in addressing recognition in the workplace may be recent, psychological research has well-documented evidence of our need to be appreciated, respected, and acknowledged. This knowledge has spurred the development of employee recognition programs in organizations around the world.

One way to understand the impact of recognition programs is through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Essentially, after our baseline physiological needs (i.e., food, water, rest) are met, we can focus on our need for shelter and security, followed by belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization, in that order. Modern employee recognition supports both belongingness and esteem in the workplace.

Recognition is integral in creating a psychologically safe environment, where employees feel that it's acceptable to offer feedback, make mistakes, and share contrary opinions. By rewarding strategic risks through recognition, teams can reinforce creative and innovative behaviour without feelings of insecurity or embarrassment. Being recognized releases the flow of oxytocin, the chemical our bodies create when we bond with others and feel loved. The TINYpulse Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture Report found that 58% of the happiest employees will recognize and encourage their peers' success when given tools to make it easy. With that in mind, organizations are increasingly adopting and rethinking recognition programs. As they can improve employee engagement, reduce turnover, increase productivity, boost morale, and build purpose when used correctly.

### **Best practices for recognition programs**

Managing your recognition program using the following five recommendations will help you make the most of appreciation on your team:

- Define clear recognition program objectives and criteria

Employers should be clear about what behaviours or actions they would like to see from recognition programs and the impact of recognition on business objectives. Whether you are starting a new employee recognition program or updating an existing one, challenge your team to answer the following questions:

What types of behaviours will be rewarded? Reference your business objectives and decide which behaviours to incentivize, and remember that effective recognition is tied to organizational values.

Reward deliverables completed on time if lateness is a challenge, and applaud cross-departmental collaboration if your organization is stuck working in silos.

How should the desired behaviour be rewarded? It's important to know your team and reward behaviour accordingly – everyone prefers certain languages of appreciation over others. In general, praise should be public and can be a great learning opportunity for the whole team. Tying that praise to a tangible reward or experience can remind employees of their achievements long after praise is given.

How often should recognition occur? Effective praise is frequent, so it is important to regularly recognize your team. Giving recognition on the spot is a good habit, and reiterating that praise during team meetings, especially for special achievements, can amplify the effects of recognition. Who should recognition come from? Recognition is traditionally given top-down by managers, but peer-to-peer and 360-degree recognition is even more effective.

- Use a multifaceted rewards and recognition program

Many employers assume that employees always want money instead of non-tangible rewards, but research suggests that's not true. Research by Deloitte, for example, identified two different types of recognition- praise and emblematic recognition and token and monetary rewards. They found that both types of recognition are important to employees, as this approach helps to constantly and frequently reinforce desired employee behaviours.

- Give employees voice and choice

Engage your employees to better understand the types of rewards they are most interested in. Once you have drafted ideas for potential rewards, it's easy to get employee preferences by sending a survey and asking everyone to rank the options. Giving employees a say in rewards redemption can increase their investment in the program and make recognition even more enjoyable.

- Ensure effective implementation and roll-out

When introducing a new system or approach, it's important that communication around the roll-out is clear and the implementation is as painless as possible. Any team participating in a new program should be clued in on that program's purpose, how to use it, and when it will take effect.

Beyond measures of productivity and performance, employers can use recognition as a catalyst for widespread positive organizational change by engaging employees, connecting teams, and fostering a culture of appreciation

Nearly every company can benefit from implementing or improving their existing recognition practices.

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<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/How-To-Implement-Employee-Recognition-Programs-That-Will-Increase-Morale>