



RewardGateway
the employee engagement people



Why Manager Participation is Key to Creating a Culture of Appreciation



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It's no surprise that employees crave recognition in the workplace and modern workers *expect* consistent recognition.

In fact, in our recent study we found that 75% of employees in the U.S. agreed that motivation and morale would improve at their company if managers simply said "thank you" more and noticed when people do good work. And according to KRC Research, 83% of leaders say they could do more to recognize others.

Let's uncover how to improve manager-led recognition in the workplace.

The presence of recognition skepticism at any level is bad for engagement

You may have worked with a reward and recognition provider to design a beautiful solution that your employees were clamoring for, hoping it would improve churn and produce amazing results right away. And the design and features are important. But the truth is that the success of recognition within your culture is often in the hands of a company's managers.

Managers may agree with recognition and reward in theory, but the combination of feeling overworked and underappreciated can lead to a group that isn't motivated to recognize consistently enough to really make a difference to your culture and business results. **Recognition skeptics may be easy to spot (“They get paychecks - that should be enough!”) or they may be more subtle (“I love the idea of recognition, I just don't have time to do it.”).**

Do these phrases sound familiar? Maybe you are more of a skeptic than you'd realized. Skepticism doesn't support your engagement efforts, and importantly, it stands in the way of putting in place the ultimate habit to support people: Recognition.

Why aren't managers recognizing?

Managers feel overworked and underappreciated:	Managers are employees too. If there isn't already a culture of recognition, they may not have the energy to fight the trend.
Leaders don't believe it really will impact results:	It's not that people don't want to recognize, but it may not feel like a big enough priority or something that will support the goals they are being held accountable to.
It doesn't feel like the manager's idea:	The leadership landscape has been shifting. What worked 20 years ago doesn't work anymore. No one likes change.
When in doubt, we try to be tough:	When people get promoted into leadership roles, they may not have had formal training and may default to traditional leadership stereotypes. No one wants to feel like they are “too soft,” so it is easy to resist a supportive, collaborative leadership style and just get “tough.”
There is a lack of training on recognition techniques:	If we ask managers to recognize without giving guidance and training, they may not see their efforts making a difference. And they may be right.

How can managers become consistent practitioners of recognition?

It's key for managers and HR leaders to be champions for recognition to help transform company culture, achieve business results and connect your people. Managers and leaders can (and should) set the example for how the strategic recognition should be done - the question becomes "how?"

1 Model it from the top

If managers see recognition modeled by leaders they report to, it becomes clear that recognition IS something that leaders can and should do. It can be as simple as adding a "recognition moment" to the start of leadership meetings or webinars.

Either bring an example of someone supporting the mission, goals or values of the organization OR ask the group to share in-person. Here's an example: "who has seen someone delivering on a value or business goal?" To make it more likely that people will be able to call stories to mind, more focused questions are more successful early on.

An example could be, "who has seen an example of our Teamwork value in action?" or "who has seen someone work to save us money or time?" Be prepared to be patient. **When the stories start flowing, either leaders can share them with the organization as an eCard, or they can remind people to share them as eCards themselves so everyone in the company sees it.**

And when employees go above and beyond to help the business or colleagues, smash targets or exceed goals - take it to the next level and send a personalized, monetary reward.

When you start a practice like this, you may get silence. Being tenacious will push back on the current recognition culture until a focus on the positive feels more natural and starts to get the legs you need!

2 Ask for strategic recognition

If recognition feels boring or high-level, it is less likely to take root. To get managers hooked on the value of success stories, make sure they are interesting, valuable stories.

Strategic recognition helps managers:	1. Set and reinforce expectations for living the company values (especially when interacting with colleagues and customers).
	2. Communicate about the experience in a strategic way, keeping it top of mind and making it part of day-to-day conversations.
	3. Hold everyone (themselves included) accountable to live the employer brand by providing incredible visibility across the company.

Ask for these three steps in your recognition stories: **Action**, **Value** (or focus area), **Impact**. When you use the AVI model, we not only are more likely to see the value of the actions, but to be inspired by the stories in ways that will create real change. Let's break down how to write a strategic recognition using the AVI model.

Beth received "Work Hard" eCard from Timothy

1. Action ← Last week, when Beth was doing the regular office orders, she took a couple of hours to research other providers and potentially less expensive options for our most commonly ordered supplies.

This is a great example of stepping outside the ordinary day-to-day actions to focus on our Value of Operational Excellence.

2. Value →

3. Impact ← With her research she was able to save us \$25.00 on our weekly orders, or about \$1,250 a year. Thanks, Beth! When you save us money, it allows us to have more to put back into employee entertainment and process improvements that make us a stronger company!

React 1 Comment 6 hours ago

Jeff and 3 others reacted

3 Remind managers to focus recognition on topics that matter to them

Often managers assume recognition is about making others happy. While making a difference to others may be a motivator for some, that perspective makes it easier to drop recognition during frustrating or busy weeks. Inconsistent recognition won't get you closer to your goal.

Remind leaders they can **recognize actions they want to see done more**. If I am using recognition (or rewards) to drive the actions I care about - I am MORE likely to recognize during busy, frustrating weeks. It becomes a leadership discipline. If I am overwhelmed by small tasks, I can recognize those employees that come to me with solutions rather than just problems. If we are struggling with our customer satisfaction scores, I can make it my mission to recognize those that deliver a great customer experience!

Recognition can be a solution to my problems, not just one more task on my list.

4

Make recognition expectations clear and achievable

Leaders don't need to transform who they are to be successful in supporting a culture of recognition. The commitment required is something simple and achievable: Just 10 minutes by the end of their week.

Managers can spend a few minutes each week considering who has supported important values or business results, and then either posting the recognition into a formal recognition program, sending an email, writing a quick personal note or telling the story at the start of team meetings.

This practice can be especially sustainable if managers put a reminder on their calendars – perhaps on a Friday morning when they are feeling fresh – to consider what happened during the week and take time to recognize great work. As a best practice, it's key to make the recognitions public via social recognition wall so that others in the business can stay aligned on big initiatives and aware of the team's hard work.

If you're not comfortable yet writing recognition yourself, you can:



Receive notifications to know who on your team has been recognized, so you stay updated with key projects.



Add comments to existing recognition when your someone on your team gets recognized, so you're still joining in on the conversation.



Engage with other moments of recognition for a cross-departmental employee who's helped you on a project.



Add a "like" or "applaud" reaction to show your support for a desired behavior to help drive the business forward.

Whether you are a manager looking to support a more engaged team or an influencer looking to direct a team of managers to build a more sustainable recognition culture, these few simple strategies can help you save time and be more successful.



Discover how Reward Gateway's reward and recognition tools can help you better connect your people and start building a culture of continuous recognition. Find out more:

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