

# Recognize Results



*If you know what recognition deficit feels like, you should be keen on recognizing the results achieved by others.*

**M**OST WORKERS ARE STARVED for recognition. In fact, some of your employees may be experiencing a recognition deficit.

While most managers believe that pay is the most important factor in whether employees stay or go, employees consistently rank recognition for their good work as number one. The mother lode of employee motivation and job satisfaction lies in the cycle of challenge, achievement, and recognition—the CAR motivational cycle, as first presented by Frederick Herzberg, the father of modern motivation theory. His study showed that the factors that produce job satisfaction are, in order: achievement, recognition, the work, responsibility, advancement, and growth. These factors are related to job content. Factors that may take away job satisfaction but not produce it—demotivators—are related to job culture: policy, administration, supervision, relationship with boss, work conditions, salary, relationship with peers, personal life, relationship with subordinates, status, and security, in that order.

You may be measuring what counts, and what you are measuring may be getting done, but unless you recognize and reward what gets done, the productivity of your people will decline, along with your retention rates.

## Why Managers Don't Recognize People

Many managers get low motivational millage out of the CAR cycle because:

**1. They subscribe to the philosophy, "If you don't hear from me, that means you're doing a good job."** This low-energy, low-maintenance management practice is popular among autocratic managers who

have worked for managers who treated them this way. Many managers who use this style think: "My people are expected to do their job, and they get paid to do it." They resist employee recognition practices, and resent employees who are governed by their feelings and who need more praise and recognition.

**2. They believe that "rewards and recognition" is the responsibility of the human resources department.** Some programs have the unintended effect of letting managers off the hook in providing recognition. If managers don't "own" the practice, they may never do it.



**3. They don't spend enough time observing or measuring employee performance to know if they are achieving results in the first place.** Obviously, if they don't know who the top performers are, they will be reluctant to recognize and praise anyone.

**4. They don't know how to recognize and are afraid they will do it the wrong way.** If you haven't been taught how to recognize results, and if you aren't being recognized yourself in creative and appropriate ways, how would you know how to do it?

## Two Ways to Recognize Results

Employee recognition has become a large industry, providing prizes, travel, cash, and praise. Many managers believe that only cash rewards—bonuses, raises, and promotions—are effective for motivating and keeping their best performers. While money is

important to all employees, it is more important to some than others. Money can help to motivate and retain when given promptly in recognition of a specific achievement. But the top motivator is the chance to be challenged, achieve results, and be recognized.

There are two forms of recognition:

**1) Informal rewards that managers initiate to recognize and motivate certain individuals in a timely way.** Here are six ways to get the most out of informal rewards: 1) Match the reward to the person's personal preferences—some people are more motivated by a letter of appreciation. 2) Match the reward to the significance of the achievement—don't overdo when recognizing people for small achievements; 3) Give the reward as soon as possible after the achievement; 4) Explain why the reward is given; 5) Recognize groups and individuals within groups—recognize everyone on the team, but single out those who made the greatest contributions; 6) Find out what your workers value as rewards—if the yearly bonus, for example, is now considered an entitlement, it no longer has the power to motivate.

To encourage specific achievements or contributions by key performers on highly valued assignments, consider the following seven rewards: 1) Outstanding Employee Award, based on completing urgent projects, collaborating cross-functionally, generating money-saving ideas, and fostering teamwork; 2) Productivity and Quality Awards that provide meaningful incentives or rewards; 3) Employee Suggestion Awards that encourage employees to submit more ideas; 4) Customer Service Awards that encourage the highest standards of service; 5) Sales Goal Awards that reward high performance; 6) Team Awards that reward all the members; and 7) Attendance Awards that encourage employees to be prompt and not miss workdays and Safety Awards that recognize employees for following safety procedures and minimizing accidents.

**2) Formal recognition and rewards that the organization initiates to motivate all employees.** A well designed formal rewards program will help keep your most valued employees. Here are some ideas: 1) Multilevel reward programs and point systems that are tailored to the needs of different employees and recognize a few employees in a dramatic way.

2) Contests that run a short time, have simple rules, offer desirable prizes, and reward performance directly and promptly. 3) Field trips, special events, and travel that provide "bragging value." 4) Education, personal growth, self-development, training and services that build needed skills. 5) Advancements or promotions that add responsibility, give special assignments, or allow people to mentor younger employees or lead a cross-functional team can yield payoffs in visibility and job enrichment. 6) Stock or ownership incentives, such as employee stock options, that motivate performance and retention. 7) Celebrating employee anniversary dates helps to keep long-term employees. 8) Custom benefits, health, and fitness programs that allow employees to select benefits that best fit their needs. 9) Charities, volunteer activities, and service projects that encourage employee participation.

Relate formal rewards to organization and employee needs, ensure the reward's fairness, and present the rewards in a timely manner. Talk up the value of the rewards, but don't oversell the program. If you're not sure what recognition to give, just ask! If you don't tailor the reward to the employee, the reward will not have the motivating effect you desire. Give them several ideas to choose from and a chance to write in their own ideas and submit their preferences.

## Ask Two More Questions

To get the desired effect from your recognition and reward efforts, ask your people two questions: 1) For what do you want to be recognized? and 2) How would you like to receive your recognition? Start recognizing your workers, not as you would like to be recognized, but as they would like to be recognized. Instead of focusing on big events, work to create a culture of appreciation. Make acknowledgment a part of the daily routine. Become an obsessive observer. Notice what other people are doing and acknowledge their efforts. A simple "thank you" or "awesome job"—sincerely conveyed—can transform a relationship. EE

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