A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO RECOGNIZING YOUR EMPLOYEES EFFECTIVELY
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RECOGNITION IS A MANAGER’S MOST POWERFUL TOOL

How can you help your employees see their role in the big picture? What’s the best way to excite them and encourage them to grow? How can you ease them through change? What will help them raise the bar to deliver results and ensure their success?

Would it surprise you to know that recognition can accomplish all of those things? In fact, good recognition is the most versatile and influential tool you have at your disposal. It can drive engagement, build relationships, and tie together a geographically dispersed team.

Okay, but what exactly is good recognition? For some managers, it comes easily. For others, navigating the path of effective employee feedback—or even finding the time to try—can be a real challenge. This guide is intended for both—to remind you of some best practices for recognition and to encourage new, creative ways of managing through recognition that will make your job easier and make you and your team more effective.

Let’s get started!
WHY RECOGNITION MATTERS
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At its heart, recognition is just another word for positive feedback. That is—it is feedback that is focused on an employee’s strengths and what they are doing right.

According to Gallup, managers who fail to give feedback fail to engage 98% of their employees. But those who do give feedback based on an employee’s strengths reduce disengagement in their teams to under 1%.¹

Of course, all recognition is not created equal. Poorly delivered recognition can ring false and even backfire into bitterness and resentment. Appreciation must be seen as authentic, fair, consistent and personal in order to have the power to move your employees.

Good recognition reinforces what your employees are already doing right and offers a model for future success. It connects them with your team and your organization in a way that increases their affective commitment and emotional connection.

When done well and consistently, recognition can make your job infinitely easier.
You are busy. It’s hard enough to get a to-do list finished—never mind finding time to sit and reflect on each employee’s performance. Regular, ongoing recognition breaks feedback down into small, individual moments. It is simpler and easier because you are noticing and appreciating great work in real time in manageable bites. By embedding it in the day-to-day it becomes a simple, reflexive and burdenless part of your routine.
Recognition also provides you with information to make your whole job of managing easier. Each recognition moment adds to a broader picture of strengths and weaknesses—so when it comes time to create individual development plans or evaluations, you have a real-time record of that worker’s achievements—as they were created in the moment, and not recalled months after the fact.

Moreover, it lifts the burden off of you alone. Social recognition is peer-to-peer, which means it can come from anyone to anyone. This makes your entire team your eyes and ears on the ground, noticing their colleagues’ performance when you cannot be there. This provides a double bang for the buck because not only are peers expanding the scope of recognition, but you are also encouraging each of those employees to also think about what it means to practice your company values and to be inspired by the activities of their peers.

And finally, recognition is a great way to get new employees quickly oriented. By recognizing them during their first weeks and encouraging them to recognize others, you can quickly show your newest reports what it means to really practice your values and what behaviors you want most.
HOW RECOGNITION HELPS YOU COACH A TEAM

Recognition is also great for managing a broader team or department. Each recognition moment helps to strengthen the relationships among your team members and between your team and others in the organization—and you'll get a visual map of those relationships just by leveraging the data that recognition produces. Relationships are how work gets done in an organization. So it follows that facilitating them will increase departmental and interdepartmental flow, break down barriers, and make it easier for your department to function.

If you're trying to manage your culture on a departmental level, recognition is a fantastic tool. You can pool data on your team members to get a sense of where your department may have weaknesses or soft spots. Say, for example, you notice that your department of engineers is getting many awards for quality, but few for innovation or risk-taking. This may indicate work that can be done with the group at large. Or perhaps your marketing organization is often recognized by R&D, but rarely by sales—perhaps there is relationship building that needs to happen.
Change management can be a daunting challenge for many managers. Recognition can help there, too. By enabling the new behavior you want to see, and rewarding those who practice it, you can help others in your department see what your “must-win” battles are and what it means to embrace change. This kind of positive reinforcement is a nice alternative to the cajoling or brow-beating that can sometimes accompany unwelcome change.

Finally, recognition helps you to manage quality of performance. Whether you have an employee not working to their full potential, a team member struggling to understand your expectations, or a direct report who's disengaged in their work, these situations can be distracting and draining for a manager. They pull valuable resources of time and energy away from the real tasks at hand, and no one likes them. Recognition helps you to have proactive, positive conversations with employees about what they’re doing right—that can help avoid later, more unpleasant conversations about what they’re doing wrong.
Countless studies have shown the impact of recognition on employee engagement, productivity, safety and other key business metrics that impact your bottom line. Bersin by Deloitte, for example, has shown that organizations who recognize employees have 14 percent higher employee engagement, employee productivity and customer satisfaction. Our own research agrees, identifying a direct correlation between recognition and more satisfied, productive and engaged employees.\(^2\)

In addition to driving productivity and performance, recognition can be a huge help on a team level, to inspire employees to meet goals that have been set for your department or group.

A manager’s job can sometimes be more work when managing up than managing down. Recognition data is a splendid way to not only meet goals that have been set by senior leaders but to gather solid metrics that show your team is performing to those goals. Recognition reach, strength of values, and interdepartmental recognition activity can all help to show senior leaders a more nuanced picture of your departmental performance and culture, and your department’s contribution to the business.
WHAT IS RECOGNITION?
WHAT IS RECOGNITION?

Okay so we’ve explained how great recognition can move the needle for you as a manager, but what exactly is great recognition?

Let’s start with what it is not:

- **Recognition is not vague:** “Thanks for all you do” is not recognition. It is a platitude. And your employees recognize it as one. To be effective, recognition must be specific and call out exactly what was so remarkable. This has the added benefit of giving that employee and others a map for how to recreate that success.

- **Recognition is not an entitlement:** Recognition should never be applied evenly to everyone regardless of merit. This reduces appreciation to a meaningless perk, and robs it of all meaning and power.

- **Recognition is not focused on the company or manager:** One critical mistake that some managers make is to assume that employees will enjoy what they enjoy. Some employees appreciate a lunch out with the boss or drinks on the company after work. Others consider it to be “forced fun”—and the recognition moment backfires. Great recognition is focused solely on the employee and their contribution.

- **Recognition is not a popularity contest:** Good recognition is thoughtful and transparent and must be given always on the basis of merit and never on the basis of popularity.

- **Recognition is not an incentive:** Incentives are expected and come as a result of meeting a set goal. Recognition comes spontaneously based on fantastic performance that goes above and beyond the expected. Incentives have their place, but they are not recognition, and will not elicit the same results.

- **Recognition is not one-size-fits-all:** Different people respond to different motivations. Your recognition efforts should be respectful of that uniqueness—particularly when you are connecting recognition with a tangible reward to make it more lasting. Ensure that recognition and reward also incorporates individual choice.

- **Recognition is not trinkets and trash:** Don’t make the mistake of letting a pin or trophy stand as surrogate for a heartfelt message of thanks and a meaningful reward. Years ago these items were the currency of recognition, but most of them are gathering dust in the back of closets.

- **Recognition is not an annual event:** Don’t save it up for the annual performance conversation, etc. If recognition for above and beyond behavior isn’t timely, employees will stop making the extra effort long before you get around to thanking them.
So what is great recognition?

Here are a few qualities it always has:

- It is positive
- It is appreciative
- It is specific
- It recognizes uniqueness
- It celebrates effort, contribution and achievement
- It is consistent and fair
- It is merit-driven
- It is unexpected
- It is frequent
- It is appropriate to the effort
- It is social (shared with others in the organization)
- It knows no global borders
- It happens as close as possible to the event
- It resonates with company and team values, goals and mission
- It comes from anywhere: manager, subordinate or colleague
- It has substance and weight

6 Recognition Best Practices

1. Timely
2. Specific
3. Meaningful
4. Appropriate
5. Consistent
6. Unexpected

From Globoforce insight consulting services
We live in an increasingly more social world, where our connections to others have become essential to our own growth and success. Companies are no different.

Organizational structures are becoming less based on hierarchy and more based on networks of relationships. The way we share information at work now depends on inclusion—of peers, direct reports, and others across all areas of the organization.

By “social” we do not mean that it is frivolous or chatty or camped out at the water cooler. We mean that it is shared and that it is part of your community experience. Social recognition is the process of leveraging technology to amplify recognition and broadcast it within the walls of your company, so that everyone can see what the company values, participate in congratulating and reinforcing that behavior, and be inspired to emulate it themselves.

57% of companies surveyed have seen increased engagement as a result of implementing peer-to-peer recognition -Globoforce/SHRM
Another term we used on that list is “substance.” By substance, we mean that a recognition moment must be supported—by a meaningful note, a video, a substantive reward—something that lends psychological weight and meaning to the experience.

Words are powerful, but employees appreciate when companies “put their money where their mouth is” and avoid the hard feelings that might come when praise is perceived as lip service. Scholars of organizational psychology argue that recognition and tangible reward for effort will:

- Increase initiative, creativity and ‘out of the box’ thinking
- Produce an increase in productivity
- Reinforce and encourage desired behaviors
- Improve people’s attitudes toward tasks that might otherwise be considered ‘thankless’
Scholars tell us this works because:

**Rewards make us feel more competent:**
According to one prominent scholar: “A tangible reward that one perceives as being deserved for successful performance of an activity is likely to maintain or enhance the perception of self-competence without undermining feelings of self-determination.” ³

**Rewards make us more willing to perform tedious tasks:**
A related study showed that “rewards can be used to enhance time and performance on tasks that initially hold little enjoyment.” ⁴

**Rewards make us more creative:**
According to another researcher, rewards for creativity and for high performance both increase creativity measurably. ⁵
Okay, so now we have sorted out what recognition is and why you want it. Let’s get down to the brass tacks of how to do it. First up, when do you give recognition?

**Criteria:** You should recognize when you are inspired to, and only when you have a clear reason to do so. Keep your eyes and ears open for moments where employees are excelling (see the next section on what specifically to look for) and make it a habit to ask yourself each day or week if employees have done something extraordinary that is worthy of your thanks. (They probably have.)

**Timing:** The principles of psychology and operant conditioning demand that positive feedback come as closely as possible after the event that inspired it. Don’t wait for monthly, quarterly or—even worse—annual performance reviews to point out great behavior. Even if you still remember what they did right, they may not.

**Frequency:** Recognition should not be a once-a-year or once-a-quarter activity. By providing consistent ongoing feedback, you show your team that what they do matters to you, and you are noticing them—and it inspires them to work better. According to Gallup’s Q12 survey, employees who had received recognition for doing good work within the last seven days had 10-20% higher productivity. How frequently should you recognize? A benchmark study by Stanford University recommends that you reach 5-8% of your team every week with recognition.
Spontaneity: Recognition should never be expected. Studies show that expected rewards become transactional and fail to deliver results and drive the intrinsic motivation that powers employee engagement. Avoid getting into a rut where you are providing recognition automatically for a given result. By focusing on company values and employee effort and behavior—rather than only looking at deliverables—you can avoid the pitfall of predictability and genuinely surprise and delight employees.

A note on mobile: One great practice to make recognition part of your everyday is to download a mobile app that is connected back to your platform and will allow you to nominate, approve, congratulate and redeem awards wherever you are. This ensures that recognition moments occur in a timely way and that recognition-worthy behavior is never lost because you are away from your desk and forget about it. It also helps you to reach teams that are geographically more dispersed or offline.

When to create a team recognition

We generally refer to recognition as individual appreciation for individual work, but from time to time you may want to present a team award. How do you know whether to recognize as an individual or as a team?

- Consider if levels of effort were the same from all members.
- Consider if type of effort was the same from all members.
- Consider if time put into the project was the same for all members.
- Would the team agree?

If the answer to all of these is yes, then go ahead and recognize the team with the same award and message. If not, be careful of trying to make your own life easier at the risk of ignoring differing levels of effort or commitment. It could create bad feelings.
So, what should you be looking out for in order to create this inspired, frequent recognition? We gave you something of a clue in the preceding section. You’re looking for something along the spectrum of effort and results.

You may be celebrating something an employee did easily, but that had a phenomenal impact on the organization, or you may be celebrating something that failed but took a herculean effort and produced a lot of learning. Or there may be something special about the way an employee made an otherwise ordinary contribution.

Remember, the real value of an employee’s effort is often in how something was accomplished, not just what they accomplished. The best recognition practices recognize employees for any and all of these reasons. Here are a few questions to ask yourself if you’re wondering whether to recognize:
Is it something you’d like to see them do more of?

If you see something great that you want the employee to keep doing, then recognize it. Recognition and reward are one of the purest and most powerful forms of positive feedback.

Is it something you’d like to see others doing?

When you see an employee doing something you want others to emulate, absolutely recognize it. Particularly when you have a social recognition feed, this is a powerful way to send a message to other employees about what your department and company value most.

Is it something that embodies company values?

Recognize behavior that is a clear embodiment of your company values. This shows that employee, and your whole team, what it means to practice your company values. So when you see behavior that aligns with those values perfectly, call it out.

Is it something that has helped your company achieve its mission and goals?

Like values, a company’s mission, vision and goals can sometimes feel very disconnected from day-to-day work. When you see activity that moves the needle on those things, call it out. This is a fantastic way to make those aspirations real to employees in their everyday lives.
Is it something above and beyond the call of duty?

One of the definitions of engagement is the application of discretionary effort, which is a fancy way of saying “she did something she really didn’t have to do.” Sometimes this involves taking on tasks that are not our responsibility or that are a stretch for us. Sometimes it is in burning the midnight oil or buckling down on productivity in order to complete an assignment. When employees do work they don’t have to do, or they don’t have to do, they almost always deserve kudos for it.

Is it something others are noticing and talking about?

If you’ve got customers, vendors, other managers, senior leaders, or other employees buzzing in your ear about something great one of your team members is doing, chances are you have an opportunity for recognition. (That is if they haven’t beaten you to it!)

Is it something they’ve recently been recognized for?

Consider recognizing once in a while the effort and attitude that goes into completing thankless tasks – even if they ARE routine. Thankless tasks are some of the hardest to bring ourselves to complete, day after day. It’s fantastic when every once in a while we realize someone is noticing and grateful for our daily grind. Don’t go wild with this sort of recognition, but acknowledgement of their effort can go very far. Indeed, if you identify an opportunity for recognition for your employees who are doing thankless tasks, make sure to recognize them publicly.

Is it something others are noticing and talking about?

Be creative here. If there is a new aspect of the work that you think deserves credit and acclaim, then by all means recognize it. But if it is something the employee has been specifically thanked for within the last month or so, why not visit that recognition and add your congratulations, instead.

What about eThanks?

Try to minimize awards that are seen as low or no value, like eThanks. If they must be used, they should be only the lowest tier of recognition—and should never be more than 10% of the awards you give. This is because employees value when a company adds weight to thanks by “putting its money where its mouth is.” Moreover, when a recognition program includes tangible reward options, receiving an eThank can be a let down for many employees. If you employ eThanks for recognition, be sure that you use it thoughtfully and only for the most modest of contributions.

One of the definitions of engagement is the application of discretionary effort, which is a fancy way of saying “she did something she really didn’t have to do.” Sometimes this involves taking on tasks that are not our responsibility or that are a stretch for us. Sometimes it is in burning the midnight oil or buckling down on productivity in order to complete an assignment. When employees do work they don’t have to do, or take on responsibility they don’t have to take on, they almost always deserve kudos for it.
Is it something that has impacted company or team business results?

Results usually deserve praise and appreciation. It’s rare when we can draw a direct line from employee actions to business results. When you can do that, be sure you include recognition in the mix.

Is it something that is an everyday part of their job?

This can be tricky. Skip recognition for truly routine work that is not particularly remarkable and doesn’t require special effort. Thanking someone for making coffee or running meetings strays into a grey area. However, if an employee executes an everyday task in a particularly successful or impactful way that catches your attention, recognition is warranted. If you believe an employee deserves recognition but can’t quite put your finger on why, give it more thought. Is he bringing something unique to the table? Is she innovating in some way that impresses you? Thanking someone for mundane tasks sets the bar low on recognition, and cheapens its impact on everyone – so be sure when you recognize, it is for a clear reason.

Do you feel bad because the employee hasn’t been recognized lately?

Be careful of this one, too. It may be that the lack of recognition is warranted. Recognition should never be applied just to be inclusive or kind. If you see an employee who has not been recognized, take it as a cue to look more carefully at that employee’s performance. It could be that he’s just flying under the radar, and when you look closely you see plenty of activity worthy of thanks. But don’t just recognize for the sake of it. Ever.

Did they do something that made your life much easier?

Yeah, this is personal, but so is recognition! Sometimes employees are thoughtful and make you small favors of time, attention or energy that make an enormous impact on just one co-worker: in this case you. If it was a small thing, it is worth a small award. If someone reached out to give you a big hand with a project, give them a big thanks.
Let’s expand a bit on the question of appropriateness. It is critical, when you recognize, that you calibrate the level of the award to the level of achievement.

If you have a formal recognition program, you undoubtedly will have a variety of award levels to choose from, and guidelines for doing so. They might look something like this sample recognition system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>POSSIBLE AWARD REASONS:</th>
<th>SCOPE:</th>
<th>IMPACT:</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP:</th>
<th>TIME INVESTMENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Did a quick but meaningful favor&lt;br&gt;- Voluntarily lent a helping hand&lt;br&gt;- Showed good effort&lt;br&gt;- Positive attitude and growth&lt;br&gt;- Quick contribution&lt;br&gt;- Expression of your appreciation</td>
<td>Part of normal day-to-day job</td>
<td>Positively affected your job or team</td>
<td>Took independent action or supported a team effort</td>
<td>Less than a day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>POSSIBLE AWARD REASONS:</th>
<th>SCOPE:</th>
<th>IMPACT:</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP:</th>
<th>TIME INVESTMENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Extra effort&lt;br&gt;- Stepped up&lt;br&gt;- Made a situation better&lt;br&gt;- Made a difference to someone&lt;br&gt;- Well-executed routine task&lt;br&gt;- Single action vs. series of actions</td>
<td>Part of normal day-to-day job</td>
<td>Positively affected your job or team</td>
<td>Took independent action or supported a team effort</td>
<td>Less than a day to a few days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>POSSIBLE AWARD REASONS:</th>
<th>SCOPE:</th>
<th>IMPACT:</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP:</th>
<th>TIME INVESTMENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Above and beyond effort&lt;br&gt;- Overcame an obstacle&lt;br&gt;- One-time contribution vs. series of actions&lt;br&gt;- Made a difference to someone&lt;br&gt;- Achieved a goal&lt;br&gt;- Visible impact and outcome</td>
<td>Discretionary effort shown</td>
<td>Positively affected your job or team</td>
<td>Took independent action or supported a team effort</td>
<td>Several days to a few weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
<th>POSSIBLE AWARD REASONS:</th>
<th>SCOPE:</th>
<th>IMPACT:</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP:</th>
<th>TIME INVESTMENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Exceeded expectations&lt;br&gt;- High pressure situation&lt;br&gt;- Outcome different w/o involvement&lt;br&gt;- Well-executed complex task&lt;br&gt;- Goal achieved vs. impromptu action&lt;br&gt;- Completed short-term project</td>
<td>Within normal job scope with discretionary effort beyond the day to day</td>
<td>Impacted nature or direction of the team, work group, or operation</td>
<td>Leadership role in a personal or team contribution</td>
<td>Several weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 5</th>
<th>POSSIBLE AWARD REASONS:</th>
<th>SCOPE:</th>
<th>IMPACT:</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP:</th>
<th>TIME INVESTMENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Significantly exceeded expectations&lt;br&gt;- High profile and high pressure situation&lt;br&gt;- Outcome different w/o involvement&lt;br&gt;- Very complex or involved project&lt;br&gt;- Goal achieved and business results seen&lt;br&gt;- Completed long term project</td>
<td>Taking normal job scope to the next level or achieving the height of competency</td>
<td>Impacted the larger business</td>
<td>Significant leadership role in a personal or team contribution</td>
<td>Weeks of months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each award (and the reward that accompanies it) conveys to its recipient a certain level of acknowledgement and appreciation, so it is important to get that level right. A low level award in exchange for months of work on a project might backfire on an employee—feeling like you are damning them with faint praise. Likewise, giving a large award for a minimal effort cheapens the award itself and makes it seem as if it is easy to achieve with no real effort.

The optimal number of awards will include five different tiers to choose from, so you can be sure, as in the example above, that you are calibrating the thank you to the behavior.
Now you know when to recognize and what to recognize and how to choose an award level. This next part can be the most challenging part of recognition for many managers: what in the world to write!

Here are seven tips on how to write an authentic, memorable and impactful message of appreciation to your employees.

1. **Specificity**: Be as precise and explicit as you can be about what exactly the employee did that was worthy of recognition.

2. **Talk about results**: Part of your specificity should be to explain not just what was done, but why it was worthy of recognition. In other words, what were the results from that activity?

3. **Consider your words**: Language has tremendous power. Choose your words carefully and make your message pithy and impactful. Consider words like “because” and “as a result” to transition from action to success. (See the back of this guide for 101 Recognition Words to inspire your writing.) Never, ever never give recognition that includes the words “Thanks for all you do.”
4. **Individuality**: Try not to use the same phrases in every recognition message you write. Cut and paste is not your friend when it comes to recognition messages. The contribution was unique, so take the extra moment to explain how.

5. **Use their name**: It’s a little thing, but studies show that when you use someone’s name, their brains light up.  

6. **Tell a story**: Tell the story of their success and use emotionally evocative language that captures the sequence of events and the “moral” of their hard work.

7. **Say thanks**: Make sure somewhere in your message you include the word “thanks” or “thank you.” It might seem like a no brainer, but it means a lot.

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**Anatomy of a great recognition**

“Thank you for your success in project management. Much appreciated.”

**VS.**

“I have seldom seen anyone as tenacious as you were, Nina, on the roll-out of our ABC project. From the late nights you spent building support materials, to the countless meetings you spent building consensus. Our customers noticed too, and Bill called me today to tell me that they just got approval on the job. This is due in no small part to your perseverance and energy. You truly embody our company value of determination. Thank you for your passion and commitment to excellence.”
AFTER THE AWARD

Once you’ve crafted and sent an award, what should you do? Here are four things to consider:

1. **Acknowledgement:** Be sure that you don’t behave awkwardly or avoid the topic of the award. Particularly if the award is made social on an internal news feed, but even if it is not, be comfortable about mentioning the award and taking an extra moment to reinforce it in person. It is entirely appropriate. “Did you see that award, Nina? It was so well deserved. Thanks again.” Likewise it is always a good idea to write a note thanking a nominator, when you’ve received a recognition, yourself—or to drop by in person to say thanks.

2. **Congratulations:** Encourage people to congratulate the award and participate yourself in that reinforcement by reading and adding congratulations to awards that others give. This sort of activity strengthens and extends the recognition moment and is a fantastic way to increase the impression that recognition makes on your culture.

Planning a recognition moment

There are times—particularly with offline workers—when you will want to present an award directly to a worker. Here are a few Do’s and Don’ts for creating a memorable moment:

- Do make sure there are witnesses to your employee’s success – present the award at a staff meeting or other event where peers will be present.
- Do print the award so employees have a reminder – particularly if they are offline.
- Do read the award reason and message aloud - so all employees will connect the achievement with your goals and values.
- Do invite colleagues to share the moment by adding congratulations on an internal social newsfeed.
- Don’t go overboard – calibrate the time spent in ceremony to the level of the award.
- Don’t disclose the award value
- Don’t embarrass the employee – If they are the private type, consider a more quiet method of presentation.
3. **Consistency:** You sent an award, but don’t rest on your laurels. Make it an ongoing part of your routine to notice, be inspired by, recognize and congratulate great work. Even 30 minutes a week engaged in this sort of activity will yield significant results from your team.

4. **A note about privacy and sensitivity:** Our own research indicates that the vast majority (96 percent) of employees enjoy being thanked ‘publicly’ in their company. (To be clear: ‘publicly’ doesn’t mean showy or even in-person – it just means a simple communication that lets others know about the employee’s contribution.) However a small minority of employees do prefer entirely private recognition. A good social recognition platform will include an option to remove a given recognition message from the internal social feed. Ensure that your employees know how to do this, and that they know it is okay to do it if it will make them more comfortable. Once you know an employee feels this way, you might even proactively make the recognition private when you nominate, and let them know they can turn it back on if they desire. It is important that recognition be comfortable for all employees.
HOW TO HELP OTHERS RECOGNIZE

Now you’ve got all the building blocks you need to give great recognition yourself. But of course, as a manager, your role is also to pay it forward, and to guide your own direct reports on being great recognizers.

Here are a few tips on guiding your employees to contribute great peer-to-peer recognition moments to your company and departmental culture of appreciation.

Communicate and encourage participation – Talk with your employees about recognition. Make sure they are educated on how to use the system when you are onboarding them. Make it clear that recognition is not only okay, it is crucial. And if you notice nominations dropping off, remind employees to be looking for opportunities to recognize. (This is a lot easier if your platform, like ours, has push notifications to remind employees who haven’t nominated in a while.)

Don’t just empower them—EXPECT their participation – Peer participation in recognition isn’t a ‘nice to have,’ it is critical. You simply cannot be everywhere at once. Your employees are your eyes and ears on the ground, looking for great work. Make sure you make it clear to employees that recognition is something they are expected to do. In our company we even evaluate participation in recognition as part of the employee performance review.
Educate them on noticing people doing things right – Some of the information in this guide might be worth passing on to your employees, so that they, too, can understand what to be looking for and recognizing.

Lead by example – It goes without saying if you are setting an example of actively recognizing, employees are much more likely to follow suit than if you recognize only seldom.

Approve in a timely way – Make sure you are on top of approvals and don’t let pending recognition get stale in your inbox. That sends the exact wrong message about your commitment.

Notice and congratulate – Be part of the recognition moments that happen among your team members by joining in and congratulating employees who receive recognition.

Identify and address inequity – As an approver, it is up to you to sanity check things like award levels and messages, and to help prevent mistakes or misuse of the recognition system. Consider if award levels are appropriate and lower or raise them if necessary. Be sure that no one is being thanked multiple times for the same behavior—redirect any redundant recognition into congratulations. This will not only uphold ethics and compliance, but it will also maintain the integrity and efficacy of the system. If you do make changes to recognitions, be sure to explain your reasoning to the nominator, so they understand for the next time.
HOW TO USE RECOGNITION INSIGHTS

We talked a lot at the start of this guide about the benefits of recognition data for individual and team management. Here we want to unpack some of the specific ways that you can use that data to enhance your existing talent and team management activities.

**Onboarding** – Recognition is a fantastic tool for getting new employees quickly oriented to your culture. It is a sure-fire way to help employees internalize your values and understand what it means to live them. Nominate new employees soon after they begin to resonate with your values and goals, and then invite them to notice and recognize their peers for doing great work. This helps them to understand how their work and their efforts align to company values and contribute to company goals.
**Talent management** – According to a recent Gartner report, the rich talent profile data provided by social recognition “helps managers better understand the contributions of their team members while providing a more complete view of the talent of the organization.” Use these powerful insights to make your talent systems smarter and drive forward your talent strategy by looking frequently at data on who is being recognized and for what, which values are being practiced, and which have not been recognized. What sorts of relationships is that employee forming within and outside of the department, which are being reflected through recognition? These are all powerful clues into how your employees are doing in your company.

**Succession planning** – From line management to the “C” level, succession planning and the development of high-potential employees is an important tool for enriching organizational culture, motivating employee growth, and hanging on to talented flight risks. But it is also easier said than done. How can you get external and impartial input to inform who you should groom for promotion? Recognition data lets you visualize your culture and immediately spot the cultural energizers and linchpin employees on your team—those who are connected most strongly to their peers inside the department and across the company. These are the critical influencers who hold your culture together and are perfect candidates for development.
Performance evaluation – People hate performance reviews. You probably do, too. In fact, more than half of all employees see them as inaccurate, and do not find them motivating. By incorporating crowdsourced recognition data into performance reviews you can bring in a chorus of creditable voices and data that will turn a painful, negative process into a constructive, positive one. When performance reviews come around, be sure that you are reviewing recognition activity over the course of the previous year, and reminding yourself of the accomplishments your employee has been recognized for. Additionally, bring that data into the conversation, discussing the values that employee is especially strong in and the relationships they have built. This provides an extra source of impartial data to strengthen the conversation and your employees’ trust in the process.

Manager self-assessment – And finally, recognition is a fantastic opportunity for self-reflection. As you receive communications on your own recognition activity and that within your team, it might highlight for you problem areas where not much activity is happening, that need your attention. If your team is in a creative role and is being recognized more for respect than for innovation or creativity, perhaps you have cultural issues that need addressing. If you are in a service role to another group, yet there is little cross-department recognition happening, the data might be showing you places to examine and address.
101 WORDS TO USE IN RECOGNITION

And here are 101 other words to provide some inspiration to you as you write messages of recognition.

5 Foundational Terms
Name (the nominee's name), Because, Thanks, Results, (Name of Core Value being recognized)

Words for:

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<thead>
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<th>Quality</th>
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We hope this has been a useful guide for you in how to use recognition for more effective and efficient team management. If you would like to learn more about the Globoforce Social Recognition solution and how to make it work more effectively for you, please contact one of our recognition experts at www.globoforce.com

We’re always happy to help!