



# Everyday Recognition.sd

A guidebook for creating a culture of  
employee recognition throughout  
South Dakota state government

Every employee has a need for praise and recognition, and the more often they get it the better. Supervisors are in the best position to give recognition, but few do it often enough or creatively enough. The goal of EverydayRecognition.sd is to create a culture of recognition, appreciation and gratitude throughout state government. The program is meant to encourage all supervisors, as well as co-workers, to make an effort to recognize a job well done and to say thank you...everyday!

As part of EverydayRecognition.sd, all departments will be required to develop some type of employee reward and recognition program specifically for their employees. Some agencies already have formal employee recognition programs and activities in place. These can be continued and showcased on the EverydayRecognition.sd website. Eventually, all departments will have a description of their formal and informal recognition program activities listed on the website.

This guidebook will serve as a tool for agencies in developing their agency reward and recognition program. It provides information on the importance of recognition in the workplace, guidelines to assist agencies in developing a customized program, as well as recognition ideas. An appendix is also included to assist the agency recognition committee in developing the agency's program.

### ***The Importance of Employee Recognition***

The implementation of an effective reward and recognition program can create a positive working environment that encourages employees to thrive. Recognition makes employees feel valued and appreciated, it contributes to higher employee morale, increases organizational productivity, and can aid in recruitment and retention. Recognition is a powerful motivator. It serves to reinforce the enthusiasm, commitment, and social conscience of employees and is a great vehicle for conveying the agency mission and goals.

The appendix at the back of this guidebook includes a variety of articles about effective recognition activities. Take some time to read through them and also share them with your agency committee members.

### ***A Culture of Appreciation***

How do we acknowledge others? To answer this, consider a workplace with an attitude of appreciation that is a routine part of every day. Everyone is continually appreciating everyone else. You don't have to be a supervisor to acknowledge someone else. Employees are aware, and are on the lookout to catch people doing well. This culture assumes people are out to do their best

and regularly notices them doing it. Sincere and genuine appreciation is forthcoming. Employees are at their best because their standards of excellence are their own. How do you create this kind of a culture of appreciation?

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? But it needs to be sincere. Meaningless “warm fuzzies” won’t work. Jim Brintnall, author of *What Makes a Good Reward*, says rewards and recognition have to be **SMART!** That means rewards should be:

- **Sincere.** Above all else, recognition should reflect a genuine expression of appreciation.
- **Meaningful.** Recognition practices should be aligned with the values, goals, and priorities that matter the most to the agency and the employees.
- **Adaptable.** The diverse workplace demands a variety of choices. Consider creative options to keep your program fresh. No single recognition format works for everyone all the time.
- **Relevant.** Some personal dimension is essential to recognition. No matter how formal or informal, expensive or affordable, the relevance of any recognition will be improved with a personal touch – it’s the little things that make a big difference!
- **Timely.** It is important that recognition respond to the actions and behaviors that you want to reinforce. Too much time passing devalues recognition.

In developing a program incorporating gifts, prizes, and/or cash, remember that some employees are recipients and some are non-recipients. Pay careful attention to your goals and determine if a particular program works well in your work unit or agency. It is possible to cause more harm through competitive contests than to provide some form of recognition that rewards a greater number of your employees. Also, consider whether the recognition and reward program focuses employees more on the gift or prize than on the underlying goals of the program.

*“There are two things people want more than sex and money...  
recognition and praise.”*

*Mary Kay Ash, Mary Kay Cosmetics*

## ***Developing your Department Recognition Program***

***Step One:*** Appoint an **agency coordinator** to ensure recognition activities are coordinated and communicated.

The role of the agency coordinator includes:

- Participating on the department recognition committee,
- Ensuring all general information is communicated to BOP to be included in the website,
- Coordinating training and information about the program throughout the department,
- Functioning as the “go to” person by agency employees with questions and concerns,
- Ensuring all recognition plans and activities are fully documented.

***Step Two:*** Assemble a **work group/recognition committee** to develop the internal recognition program and associated activities. The committee can be made up of managers, employees or both. You may decide to have more than one committee if your department has large numbers of employees in separate locations.

The role of the recognition committee includes:

- Developing the formal and informal rewards and recognition program for the agency,
- Developing informational materials/training to ensure all employees are made aware of the plan,
- Determining the types of rewards and the criteria for earning them,
- Determining how and when formal awards are presented,
- Routinely monitoring and evaluating the program to make necessary revisions. (See Appendix, page 21 for sample employee survey.)

***Step Three:*** Develop the department’s recognition activities and program as a part of EverydayRecognition.sd.

Activities may include any or all of the following:

- Formal awards and the criteria to earn them,
- Informal methods of recognizing employees,
- Office, program and/or department specific awards and activities,
- Whatever you come up with!

See the **Appendix** for helpful ideas on developing your program.

**Step Four:** Create clear lines of communication to announce the program and provide all the employees the information about it, including the expectations for supervisors and employees.

Communication pieces may include:

- Kick off meeting,
- Promotional materials outlining the activities and rewards,
- Training sessions for all supervisors and/or employees,
- Status updates via email, Internet and Intranet, newsletters.

**Step Five:** Provide information regarding your department recognition activities to the Bureau of Personnel regularly to ensure information for the EveryDayRecognition.sd website is up-to-date and relevant.

Information to share should include:

- Name of agency coordinator(s) and members of the recognition committee,
- Informal activities taking place in the department,
- Formal recognition program, including awards given,
- Information about employees who have been recognized,
- Anything you want included on the recognition website!

**Step Six:** Provide a method for on-going review and evaluation of the program to ensure it is accomplishing what it should. Consider developing a survey or informal set of questions to get the information you need.

Possible areas to survey include:

- Employee reaction:  
Do they understand the program? Are they excited? Do they like the rewards and activities? What do they like/dislike the best?
- Changes in behavior:  
Are recognition tools being used more often? How frequently do managers recognize their employees? To what extent is recognition a part of the work unit or agency's communication tool? Is there an improvement in performance?
- Overall:  
Are there areas for improvement? Is there a culture shift happening? Did you meet the goals of improving morale and creating a culture of appreciation? What do we want to continue/discontinue? What worked the best? What generated the most agency-wide enthusiasm? Why?

# Appendix of Tools and Resources

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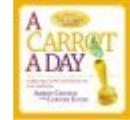
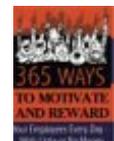
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Check out [www.EverydayRecognition.sd.gov](http://www.EverydayRecognition.sd.gov) for more tools and resources!

## *An Attitude of Gratitude: Booklist*

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	<p><b><i>Get Weird! 101 Innovative Ways to Make Your Company a Great Place to Work</i></b></p>	<p>by John Putzier, 2001</p>
	<p><b><i>Fun Works: Creating Places Where People Love to Work</i></b></p>	<p>By Leslie Yerkes, 2001</p>
	<p><b><i>Make Their Day! Employee Recognition That Works</i></b></p>	<p>By Cindy Ventrice, 2003</p>
	<p><b><i>The 1001 Rewards &amp; Recognition Fieldbook : The Complete Guide</i></b></p>	<p>By Bob Nelson &amp; Dean Spitzer, 2003</p>
	<p><b><i>1001 Ways to Reward Employees, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition</i></b></p>	<p>By Bob Nelson, 2005</p>
	<p><b><i>1001 Ways to Energize Employees</i></b></p>	<p>By Bob Nelson, 1997</p>
	<p><b><i>301 Ways to Have Fun at Work</i></b></p>	<p>By Dave Hemsath &amp; Leslie Yerkes, 1997</p>

	<p><b><i>101 Ways to Reward Team Members for \$20 (or Less!)</i></b></p>	<p>By Kevin Aguanno, 2003 &amp; 2004</p>
	<p><b><i>The Customer Comes Second: Put Your People First and Watch 'em Kick Butt</i></b></p>	<p>By Hal Rosenbluth &amp; Diane McFerrin Peters, 2002</p>
	<p><b><i>Fish! A Remarkable Way Boost Morale and Improve Results</i></b></p>	<p>By Stephen C. Lundin, 2000</p>
	<p><b><i>A Carrot A Day: A Daily Dose of Recognition for Your Employees</i></b></p>	<p>By Adrian Gostick &amp; Chester Elton, 2004</p>
	<p><b><i>Recognizing and Rewarding Employees</i></b></p>	<p>By R. Brayton Bowen, 2000</p>
	<p><b><i>Love'em or Lose'em: Getting Good People to Stay</i></b></p>	<p>By Beverly Kay &amp; Sharon Jordan-Evans, 2005</p>
	<p><b><i>365 Ways to Motivate and Reward Your Employees Every Day: With Little or No Money</i></b></p>	<p>By Dianna Podmoroff, 2005</p>
	<p><b><i>The CEO and the Monk</i></b></p>	<p>By Robert Catell, 2004</p>

	<p><b><i>30 Days to a Happy Employee : How a Simple Program of Acknowledgment Can Build Trust and Loyalty at Work</i></b></p>	<p>By Dottie Bruce Gandy, 2001</p>
	<p><b><i>Encouraging the Heart: A Leader's Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others</i></b></p>	<p>By James Kouzes &amp; Barry Posner, 2003</p>
	<p><b><i>Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work</i></b></p>	<p>By Jack Canfield, 2001</p>

## **Recognition Do's and Don'ts** By Todd Henneman Eight tips on creating effective reward programs.

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**Don't expect a rewards and recognition strategy to succeed if the day-to-day management style is punitive.** "If management pushes, pushes, pushes, pushes, pushes and can't be happy or satisfied with anything, and then all of a sudden when you reach your goal they're happy, it's like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," says psychologist Aubrey Daniels, president of Aubrey Daniels International. "You're not ready to be happy because you're not over the beating that you just took."

**Determine what you're trying to accomplish.** "Is it an improvement in quality?" Daniels asks. "Is it an improvement in productivity? Be precise."

**Understand that cash isn't king.** "Cash gets confused with compensation," says John Putzier, author of *Get Weird! 101 Innovative Ways to Make Your Company a Great Place to Work*. "Suddenly it becomes, 'Gee, I got that last month, but I'm not getting it this month.' It becomes a negative."

**Broaden what you consider to be rewards and recognition.** "If you thought of it as the trophy and the plaque and the certificate, it is," says Bob Nelson, president of Nelson Motivation Inc. "But that's a small piece of it, and that's a shrinking piece of it. The bigger piece of it is the intangible, the interpersonal."

**Ask your employees what types of recognition they prefer.** "What you think employees might value can be very different from what employees really value," says Elaine Weinstein, senior vice president of human resources and chief diversity officer of energy corporation KeySpan.

**Remember that timing is important.** "Timeliness is so essential in recognition," says Lynne Eskil, a recognition and service award adviser for the Boeing Co.'s engineering group in Puget Sound, Washington. "If it's delayed, people feel it's not at all meaningful."

**Set up programs so everyone who merits recognition gets it.** "They say it's an honor to be nominated, but those inverted-pyramid types of reward and recognition are in many ways counterproductive to morale," says Matt Weinstein, founding president of Playfair Inc.

**Get managers involved.** "Employees want the recognition coming from the people who are impressed with them," says management consultant Cindy Ventrice, founder of Potential Unlimited. "Having HR impressed with you doesn't have quite the same impact than if it's the CEO or the GM."

*Workforce Management*, October 10, 2005, p. 50

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# Everything You Thought You Knew About Recognition Is Wrong

By Bob Nelson

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What has happened to recognition programs in our country today? Once a source of great pride and prestige, formal recognition programs are now perceived as stale and irrelevant by most employees, a by-product of a bygone era. While companies have been investing more money in such programs, their effectiveness in terms of improved morale and performance has steadily declined.

## "Always have" doesn't mean "always should"

Let's look at a few examples of formal recognition programs that tend to be out of step with the times and preferences of today's employees:

**1) Years of Service.** In stable, predictable times, in organizations where employees have a job for life, marking milestones toward retirement makes a lot of sense. Today few, if any, employees take jobs expecting to be there 20 or 30 years later. Some incentive companies are quick to point out that almost every North American company offers length-of-service awards. It's as if this fact, in and of itself, is some sort of proof that they work.

Just because such recognition programs exist, that doesn't necessarily mean they are a source of motivation for today's employees. In one *Fortune* 500 organization with which I recently worked, over half of all surveyed employees didn't view years-of-service awards as a form of recognition *at all*. In another organization, a long-term employee told me they had to go to personnel and demand their 20-year pin! (She showed it to me--it was still in the box.)

In most organizations today, years-of-service awards have become more associated with endurance than performance. They've become a badge of honor that "I survived"--all the more so if the organization has experienced a merger or layoff in recent years. Sure, you want to retain your employees--especially your top performers--for as long as possible, but it's increasingly not the clock they get on their 10-year anniversary that keeps them with the organization and energizes them to do their best work.

Holding celebrations and giving gifts for employee retirements or new-employee orientation are versions of the same thing.

**2) Employee of the Month.** An equally questionable, although widespread, recognition practice is the employee-of-the-month program. I know of one organization where management periodically announces the employee of the month at the managers' team meeting, everyone applauds, and then the person in charge says: "If anyone sees George, tell him he was selected for this honor!" More often than not, no one ever does.

We don't need employees of the month as much as we need employees of the moment, and we need them each day, every day. To select one person from many employees tends to make the majority feel unappreciated at the expense of the one individual who is honored. As a result, the honoree may feel guilty or even embarrassed.

Add to this the unwritten rule that you can't be selected more than once for the honor, and management ends up scrambling to find someone who hasn't yet received the award. The selection criteria become skewed and soon the focus is just on finding someone--anyone--to

give the award to. Once again, this sends the message to employees that if they just hang in there, they too will eventually be recognized.

**3) Attendance Awards.** With the onset of flextime, telecommuting and virtual work teams, work is increasingly what we do more than where we are. The technologies of cell phones, e-mail, pagers, Palm Pilots and faxes easily connect us all during designated "working hours," whenever those may be. In some work environments, with some groups of employees, being physically on the job and on time is critical. These positions are increasingly fewer in number.

### **Where did recognition programs go wrong?**

How did we get to this state of affairs? Recognition efforts in the United States have lagged shifts in employee preferences for several reasons. First, companies look backward to "what we've done," thus making their evaluations of programs historical rather than current. They don't take the time and make the effort to determine existing employee preferences. Companies tend to be reactive rather than responsive to what motivates today's employees, looking to change or improve things only when there's overwhelming evidence that what they're doing isn't working. If other organizations are continuing with similar formal recognition programs, the status of such programs is perpetuated, even as they become stale, stagnant and irrelevant.

Second, the \$27 billion-plus incentive industry, with its focus on moving merchandise and promoting expanded expenditures on existing recognition programs, hasn't helped the situation. The incentive industry has not picked up on what's really important to employees today and is more focused on continuing to move and customize merchandise, awards and plaques than on motivating employees or improving performance. Once a program has been budgeted, it's easy for an organization to continue that funding year after year. It's difficult to stop and reassess whether the money is being spent wisely, or even if there is any return at all.

Third, the fact that employee values and expectations have changed has amplified the disconnect that exists today. Today's employees expect to have more meaning in their jobs from their very first day of work, more involvement in their jobs, more thanks when they do good work, more flexibility in their working hours and more balance between their work and personal lives. Recognition practices have not kept up with these changed employee expectations.

### **"Too many mugs"**

Consider merchandise awards. Often the stuff that employees are given to motivate them has become a joke. In other instances, it has become an outright insult. Sure, the first coffee mug you get for finishing a project is nice, but how many coffee mugs does one person need? Same with pens, T-shirts and even certificates of appreciation. Just yesterday I was reviewing employee focus group comments on the topic of recognition from a large client I am working with and noted that the employees were very clear about what they *did not* want:

- "No pens, pen sets or watches"
- "No clocks, paperweights or T-shirts"

- "Too many mugs"

From the employee perspective, trophies, plaques, nominal gifts and mementos all fall into the same category. And printing your organization's logo on the merchandise doesn't magically transform it into something of unique value, especially if the object is something that the employees could have purchased themselves anyway.

Incidentally, a note to the incentive industry: Please stop confusing automation with innovation. Offering "point programs" online helps more efficiently administer existing recognition programs, but it doesn't make them more effective, nor mean that they should be done at all! It doesn't help much to save companies time and money if what they're doing are the wrong things.

### **Recognition: Not what it used to be**

Companies have to break the bad habit of recognizing employees only by occasionally giving them stuff. They must realize that for most employees, most of the time, how they're treated on a daily basis matters more to them and most effectively communicates that they are trusted and respected, and that they are important.

Even traditional forms of recognition such as achievement awards, cash substitutes (such as gift certificates or discount coupons), nominal gifts or food, and public perks (such as parking spots) have diminished in importance for most of today's employees. These all ranked at the bottom of employee preferences in research I've conducted across industries. As one participant commented in the focus group mentioned above: "Employees no longer hang up their certificates."

### **How do you recognize employees?**

Employees' faith in institutions has drastically declined; they view themselves as working more for other people than for organizations. It's those people they work for--and with--that can most make recognition meaningful and special. In a recent study I conducted, 78 percent of employees indicated that it was "very" or "extremely" important to them to be recognized by their managers when they do good work, and 73 percent said they expected that recognition to occur either "immediately" or "soon thereafter."

So what is most important when it comes to how employees prefer to be recognized today? Ironically, it's the simple forms of sincere thanks that still mean the most. In fact, of the top 10 recognition factors that employees indicated were important when they did good work, *four* were types of praise--personal, written, electronic and public--each typically generated by those individuals they hold in high esteem at work, given in a timely, sincere and specific manner.

Other top-ranked motivators were support and involvement, that is, providing the information that employees need to do their jobs, involving employees in decisions (especially those that affect them), asking employees for their opinions and ideas, and supporting them when they make a mistake. Autonomy and authority, such as allowing them to decide how best to do their work, allowing them to pursue ideas they might have for improving things, and giving them a choice of work assignments, also ranked high for employees. So did flexible working hours, learning and development opportunities, and the availability and time of their manager.

What do these factors have in common? They are all intangible, interpersonal and highly situational. Granting the above items in response to good work when it occurs is the most desired form of recognition cited by today's employees. These actions say, "I'm here as a person, not just a manager, when you need me the most." One employee recently told me that she was having a tough time with some personal issues, and during a meeting her manager said: "Mary, I want you to go home, take care of what you have to there, and come back when you're ready." She took a few days off and came back to work ready to dig in. "That happened over seven years ago," she told me, "but I think about it and the courtesy and consideration that manager extended to me almost every single day."

### **The shift to informality**

Caroline Strumbly at Progressive Insurance illustrates the shift she's seen in her organization: "My group within our company is starting to lean toward less formality around recognition. Recognition is being pushed into the managers' hands (along with the budget). Managers will be responsible for coming up with individual programs to recognize their team members, moving away from structured recognition to more personalized forms of recognition."

This shift toward less formal recognition makes sense because that is what employees today say they most value. More personal, "here and now," sincere thanks and forms of recognition are preferred over more formal programs, which are less frequent and less personalized, and often have lost relevance, meaning and excitement in most organizations today.

### **A balanced approach**

You don't have to do informal recognition to the exclusion of formal recognition. My recommendation is that you ask employees (via a survey, assessment, focus groups or all of the above) what they value from a list that includes current programs and practices and potential new items, activities and practices. See how they respond. Then, once you have a motivation baseline of your employees' preferences, systematically move away from those things that your employees no longer seem to value and toward those things they seem more excited about.

This allows you to discontinue programs and practices that are not valued with a minimum perceived "take away" loss, because you're acting on their feedback (which itself will be motivational to most employees) and adding things that they have indicated they value more highly. This process will also validate those things that are currently working and provide an energy surge to your overall recognition efforts, making them more fresh, fun and dynamic.

### **Joint effort**

There's no substitute for the personal touch, and for real-life communication with your employees about what they value, need and want in order to be more effective contributors to you and the organization. Effective managers today know this and realize that it's what you do *with* your employees more than what you do *to* them that counts.

You'll get the best from your employees and keep them the longest when you show them that you personally care. And the best way to do that is through your daily efforts in recognizing and thanking employees when they do good work, not through any number of formal recognition programs.

# Nelson's Ten Commandments of Recognition

Take time to meet with and listen to employees--as much as they need or want.

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Bob Nelson believes that today's workforce may be more motivated by a personal thank-you than a pay raise. He shares his top 10 ways (in order of priority) to motivate employees:

1. Personally thank employees for doing a good job. Thank them face-to-face, in writing, or both. Do it early, often, and sincerely.
2. Take the time to meet with and listen to employees--as much as they need or want.
3. Provide specific feedback about performance of the person, the department, and the organization.
4. Strive to create a work environment that is open, trusting, and fun. Encourage new ideas and initiative.
5. Provide information on how the company makes and loses money, upcoming products and strategies for competing in the marketplace, and how the person fits into the overall plan.
6. Involve employees in decisions, especially as those decisions affect them.
7. Provide employees with a sense of ownership in their work and work environment.
8. Recognize, reward, and promote people according to their performance; deal with low and marginal performers so that they either improve or leave.
9. Give people a chance to grow and learn new skills; show them how you can help them meet their goals within the context of the organization's goals. Create partnerships with employees.
10. Celebrate successes of the company, of the department, and of individuals. Take time for team- and morale-building meetings and activities.

*Workforce*, April 2003, p. 50

## **Dear Workforce: What's the Best Reward for Employee of the Month?**

Actually, the best reward may be to scrap the whole thing.

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### **Q** Dear Workforce:

Our company is beginning an employee of the month program for our hourly employees. We are a manufacturing company with about 150 employees. We want this program to build goodwill with our employees. What type of rewards are the most beneficial as recognition for an employee of the month program?

-- Jeremy

### **A** Dear Jeremy:

If you want my reaction, it would be DON'T start an employee-of-the-month program, but instead raise the awareness of your managers about the importance of them appreciating their employees on a daily basis when they do good work -- one-on-one or via voicemail, in writing or email, in meetings, etc.

The rewards that are most beneficial to any employee are the ones they want! Find out what those might be by asking them in one or more ways. It very well may not be "stuff" at all, but perhaps autonomy, flexibility, trust, support, visibility, opportunity, and so forth... Good luck!

## Have an Attitude of Gratitude

Problems are arising, not in *what* we do to recognize employees (our actions), but in *how* we deliver the recognition (our attitudes). It's the *how* that's critical today. **By Ann Perle**

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**D**uring this month when we celebrate Thanksgiving, it's a good time to reflect on how thankfulness—and more specifically, gratitude—fits into the cultivation of employee commitment and motivation. A spirit of gratitude makes a huge difference in how employees perceive the expression of business thank-yous. This can impact corporate productivity and profit in a big way.

Everyone knows that employers traditionally have "thanked" employees for their work by giving them a paycheck. Many employers also recognize employees for any extra effort they put into their jobs through recognition programs. These programs are institutionalized ways of saying "thank you" to employees for jobs well done. As a business community, American businesses collectively seem to have fairly good recognition programs.

Problems are arising, however, not in *what* we do to recognize employees (our actions), but in *how* we deliver the recognition (our attitudes). It's the *how* that's critical today; it's the one element of our recognition efforts that can make all the difference in successfully thanking workers and gaining their commitment.

### **Employee commitment is withering.**

It's no secret that companies are struggling to secure employee commitment these days. Employees are less secure and less trusting of their employers than ever before. This comes at a time when our economy is thriving, and more areas of business are booming. According to a recent cover story in *USA Today*: "A new nationwide survey on the mood of workers reveals lingering insecurity and unhealed wounds from the downsizing and restructuring that battered Corporate America in the early years of this decade." The article went on to say: "Despite a 4.8 percent jobless rate and the tightest job market in 25 years, workers are feeling more anxious than ever."

Of course, much contributes to creating those anxious feelings. And no single remedy will alleviate them. However, there are things that businesses, and especially HR pros, can do with employee recognition that will help. It has to do with connecting with employees again. Simply, it means adding back the human touch to everything we do.

Let's begin by seeing our employees as people, human beings, who have strengths, weaknesses, and ups and downs. People are neither "intellectual capital" nor commodities; they're people. Almost all of us want the same thing—the ability to contribute our talents in a meaningful way and to be acknowledged for that contribution.

"In general, I do believe that the personal touch has been lacking in employee recognition," says Hilton Augustine, chairman and CEO of Global Management Systems (GMS) Inc., a global network systems integration consulting firm in Bethesda, Maryland. "In the IT industry within which the demand for professionals far exceeds the supply, attrition is the [death] sentence for companies convicted of inattention to their employees." How can we, as an HR community, bridge this problem? How can we let our employees know they're meaningful to us—beyond

the paycheck? What would happen if we cultivated an attitude of gratitude at work? And how would we go about doing this?

### **Gratitude is saying "thank you," and meaning it.**

There's an important difference between simply saying "thank you" and being grateful to people who contribute above and beyond the call of duty. It's this element of gratitude that has been missing in many of our recognition efforts. Successful gratitude at work is all in the spirit behind what we do.

Recognition is the mere acknowledgment of people for their actions; it's a quid pro quo, this for that, arrangement. Gratitude is deeper. It's a gesture backed by sincerity of purpose. It involves feelings. And in its deepest form, gratitude is a type of love. That perhaps, is what scares us. What place do feelings such as love and gratitude have in the workplace?

Plenty. Gratitude is appreciation for benefits received. It's an emotion that opens us up to seeing life in a more positive light and having feelings of goodness, joy and love. It makes the workplace more meaningful. And where workers find meaning, they generally find motivation to perpetuate that sense of meaningfulness. Hence, employers gain commitment.

### **Add gratefulness into recognition programs. What are some ways to express gratitude?**

Here's one top-down way. Augustine, the CEO at GMS, says he sends out CEO thank-you cards to employees' homes. Says Augustine: "I use cards with success theme covers and personally hand write notes to employees specific to their accomplishments. I believe employees get an extra-personal stroke when they open the cards surrounded by their family members."

Here's a line-manager approach. Mark Uebel, director of HR for the Center for Behavioral Health in Bloomington, Indiana, says managers at his firm are budgeted \$50 per employee per year to use in any way they see fit (gift certificates, meals, flowers and so on). It's meant to be used as a simple pat on the back. "It's not a huge gift," says Uebel. "But it *is* big when it's used genuinely."

Therein lies the entire key to gratitude: It's not just what you give to employees, but how you give it to them that makes all the difference. It needs to be personal and genuine. But from my own experience as an HR director, I know how difficult this can be. Sometimes I've caught myself saying "thank you" when I had already mentally moved on to a new topic, yet there I was, standing in front of the person. I hadn't been "present" mentally and emotionally with that employee at the time of contact. Unfortunately, the result was that my gesture wasn't an act of gratitude, it was a rote act of giving thanks. What happened was the person felt he or she wasn't important to me—the opposite of what I aimed to do.

Some supervisors believe gratitude can be overdone and should be saved for special occasions. This is nonsense. If you sincerely say "thanks," then it can't be abused and will always be received with sincerity. Why be stingy with gratitude and abundant with criticism? Perhaps it's the style we all learned—that if we criticize enough, we can change behavior. However, if it really worked, we all would have achieved perfection by age seven! Criticism doesn't work. What works is to give thanks, encouragement and inspiration. Let's look at giving gratitude as a way to inspire and encourage both our employees and ourselves. We do such remarkable things.

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## *Types of Recognition*

### *No cost:*

#### *Verbal*

- Face-to-face appreciation (thanks) or words of encouragement
- Informal or formal public appreciation (staff meetings, etc...)
- Take a few moments to speak to the employee and get to know on a more personal level
- Written and/or documented acknowledgement
- Write and send a letter and add to personnel file
- Place a brief note (Post-it) on employee's desk or computer monitor
- Acknowledge the employee in department newsletter or bulletin
- Request a note to the employee from the Office of the Governor and Lt. Governor

#### *Perks*

- Name a day for an employee
- Temporarily name a conference room after the employee
- Provide a reserved parking space
- Encourage/allow attendance to special events, training opportunities, etc...
- Allow the employee to spend a day or coffee break time with the Department/ Division Director
- Allow a day or other appropriate time period of casual attire
- Give the employee a temporary title promotion (can be a fun title)
- Assign Team Leader responsibilities (if applicable to employee)
- Assign additional tasks in an area the employee particularly enjoys

#### *Electronic*

- Leave the employee a voice mail praising him and/or his performance
- Send an e-mail to the employee or all employees
- Acknowledge an employee on the department's web-site

#### *Indirect*

- Take action on employee idea or suggestion
- Hold regularly scheduled staff meetings to keep all employees informed and let them know they are an important part of the organization

### Low Cost:

- Supervisor/Manager wash employees car
- Pack/buy lunch for the employee
- Design and implement a “You were Mentioned” award for occasions when an employee’s performance is praised by a coworker
- Design and implement a “Caught You” award to distribute to employees who are caught in the act of “doing something right.”
- Purchase a “traveling trophy” to rotate among performing employees
- Issue certificates for achievement, length-of-service, etc...
- Send an employee balloons or flowers (may also be “high” cost)
- Hold a special celebration such as an ice cream social, popsicle day, etc...
- Arrange for a photo with the Governor
- Plan a lunch with the Department Director or the employee’s supervisor or manager
- Provide pens, pencils, mugs, etc...may be personalized with a message
- Create a “Smile Team” to schedule random, fun employee recognition events – pot lucks, food day, ice cream social, “Boss” cooks day, trade jobs day, etc.

### Higher Cost:

- Balloons or flowers
- Special celebrations
- Lunch with the Department Director or the employee’s supervisor or manager
- Plaques
- Pens, pencils, mugs, jackets, personalized items

## Sample Employee Recognition Program Survey

Dear Employee:

The results of this survey will help us to assess current and potential employee recognition programs. This survey should take no longer than ten minutes to complete. Your individual responses will be used to improve how {Name of Organization Here} recognizes and rewards its employees. **Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.**

Instructions: Please indicate your response to the following questions by filling in the appropriate square with a dark pen.

### OVERALL EMPLOYEE OPINION

1. How important to you personally is each of the following?

	Not at All Important	Some Importance	Extremely Important
Receiving formal recognition for your efforts in making a difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being recognized by management for your efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being recognized by peers and co-workers for your efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receiving recognition for team accomplishments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling that your work is valued and appreciated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling a spirit of teamwork and cooperation among coworkers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowing that {name of organization here} treats its employees fairly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### AGENCY PERFORMANCE

2. In your experience, how well does {name of organization here} perform in delivering each of the following areas:

	Not at All Well	About Average	Extremely Well
Giving formal recognition for employee efforts to "make a difference"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Management recognizing employees whose efforts make a difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-workers and peers recognizing employees who are making a difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognizing individual team members equally for their efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building a spirit of teamwork and cooperation among co-workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrating that your work is valued and appreciated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Treating employees fairly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the current rewards and recognition programs offered by {name of organization here}?

- Very Satisfied**
                 
  **Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied**
                 
  **Not Satisfied**

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Have you ever received an award from {name of organization here}?

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes, if yes, what for?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	

5. Have you ever nominated someone for an award at {name of organization here}?

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes, if yes, what for?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	

**OVERALL EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

6. Thinking about the employee recognition program at {name of organization here}, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Strongly Agree
<b>The criteria for the recognition programs has been clearly explained to me</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I am aware of the procedures for nominating an employee for an award</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>It does not take much time and effort to nominate employees for an award</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>The recipients of the employee recognition awards are adequately publicized</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>The recognition programs are fair to all employees</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Recognition programs are treated the same by all departments/cost centers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I am aware of the gift awards associated with the program</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I can select an award, if recognized, that will have value to me</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Employee(s) of the Month awards should be issued</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. In your experience how well do current recognition programs perform in delivering each of the following:

	Not at All	About Average	Extremely Well
<b>The criteria for the recognition programs has been clearly explained to me</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Recognizing a special project and/or achievement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Recognizing outstanding achievement individually or as a team</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Recognizing employees who consistently follow the organization's mission</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Recognizing employees who have demonstrated extraordinary achievements</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Please rate the importance of the following criteria as qualifications for an award:

	Not at All Important	Average Importance	Extremely Important
<b>Outstanding performance</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Focus on innovation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Consistently doing a good job</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Exceeding performance objectives</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Cost savings to {name of organization here}</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Exceeding service expectations</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Demonstrated team work</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>