

Associate Recognition

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to clearly communicate ideas for associate recognition to all leaders in order to more consistently and effectively recognize associates for significant contributions, with the goal of creating a "best place to work" environment that will motivate associates to higher levels of productivity and morale.

The Basics of Recognition

What is recognition?

Recognition takes many forms - some material in nature, others requiring nothing more than a thoughtful gesture. However, numerous studies have been conducted that show that while recognition in the form of money (e.g., bonuses, raises, or promotions) is important to employees, a key motivator is **thoughtful and personal** recognition that shows true appreciation for a job well done - recognition that associates can take home to share with family and friends.

Recognition is more an art than a "cookbook" science. Effective recognition is dependent upon the kind of recognition, and how well it impresses upon an associate's personality. Therefore, it is critical that leaders invest adequate time planning and understanding what each team member values.

While this document serves to provide leaders with ideas for recognition, it also serves as a springboard for encouraging leaders to use their creativity for tailoring recognition toward each associate.

Why recognize associates?

Recognizing associates consistently and meaningfully motivates associates to perform to higher levels and contributes toward creating a positive working environment from which all associates can benefit.

How do I provide thoughtful and personal recognition?

The key to exercising thoughtful and personal recognition is to remember the following acronym: P.A.T.S. (i.e., on the back).¹

Person (P)

Fortunately, thoughtfulness and personal recognition co-exist well within a culture that focuses on understanding what each individual values. Start by understanding what associates find rewarding. You'll quickly discover that different people value different kinds of recognition. For example, some associates may value personal, informal, and private recognition (e.g., a simple "thank you" email). Still others may value official, formal, public recognition (e.g., Service Award at a Division Meeting). Understanding what drives an associate is the first step toward ensuring that recognition truly motivates the associate to continue trying his/her best.

In addition to understanding **what** associates value, we need to also ask, "**Who** should be recognized?" Careful thought should be given in identifying all contributors in an effort before advertising recognition - it is very easy to insult associates by not including them when it is deserved. Likewise, we should only recognize associates who have contributed directly to the effort. Relevant leaders should also be included in recognition activities to help market the successes of the effort and share appreciation.

TIP: Remember to recognize associates for their contributions to activities that may not have a definitive start/end date (e.g., support efforts). We are often good about recognizing development (e.g., enhancement or project) contributions but have a more difficult time recognizing support efforts that are just as significant. By having department or team meetings/celebrations that recognize both development and support team efforts, we can ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

Achievement (A)

Effective recognition is also a function of whether the recognition matches the significance of the achievement. An associate that works on an effort that spans years until completion should be recognized more substantially than an associate who finishes an effort in a day. For certain, an associate's contribution does help determine the level of recognition. However, it should never be the only deciding factor for determining whether an associate should be recognized. **All associates deserve some amount of recognition for a finished effort.**

Timeliness (T)

For recognition to be effective, it must be given immediately following the completion of an effort. Recognition that comes months after an effort is completed loses effectiveness as associates forget specifically what was accomplished, therefore making recognition less meaningful. In addition, associates that have immediately moved on to other efforts cannot

take with them the confidence, and reinforcement of good qualities that recognition brings when given immediately following an effort.

Specific (S)

Finally, when recognizing associates, please remember to specifically state why recognition is being given. Stating specifics is the key to reinforcing the good qualities we see in an associate and helping him/her build and leverage these favorable qualities for future efforts. Also, being more specific naturally makes recognition more personal and meaningful.

Communicate the Significance

When recognition requiring spending is conducted, leaders should communicate to associates that the event is to reward them for extraordinary efforts/successes - again, remember to be specific. In addition, because spending is required, leaders should mention that this form of recognition is not the only form given for every success. Therefore, monetary recognition should never be an *expectation* of associates, but rather an *added benefit*.

TIP: When communicating the significance, remind associates involved to avoid advertising recognition to other associates that are not sharing in the event to avoid the tendency for associates to compare levels of recognition.

Associate Recognition Ideas

Informal Awards

Cafeteria Gift Certificate

Leaders can recognize/reward associates with a Cafeteria Gift Certificate that are good for spending at any cafeteria.

Beat Your Leader at Bowling

Want to bring out the competitive spirit in your deserving team? Challenge them to an afternoon round of "Beat Your Leader at Bowling" or some other sport.

Bowling Party

Great for everyone. Make reservations if you expect a large group of people. Typically, you can have teams of 5 compete against each other for a grand prize. Great alternative for rainy days.

Candy Jar

Great for everyone with a sweet tooth. Maintain a stocked candy jar and reward an associate when stopping by to communicate an accomplishment.

Certificate of Achievement

Design your own achievement award based on an event or periodic recognition. Feel free to use your creativity in the types of awards (certificates, etc.) you hand out.

Chili Cook Off

Do associates on the team enjoy making and eating chili? Exercise everyone's culinary creativity by having a chili cook off to celebrate the accomplishments of the team. Spice up the chili cook off by using your creativity with awards (certificates, etc.).

Complimentary Tickets to Company Boxes

Does Company have complimentary tickets to the Baseball Cardinal, Rams and Blues games in the Company Box? Ask your leader if tickets are available to reward significant special accomplishments.

Dave and Busters

If food and games are your team's cup of tea, this may be the perfect place! Reserve a pool table area, or perhaps supply a few complimentary games for team members to exercise their competitive spirit in a social atmosphere.

Dinner For Two

Reward an associate with a dinner for two. This is well received for special recognition after working a Saturday, weekend or an exceptionally long work week.

Dinner Theatre at the Lemp Mansion

Great for associates that like watching AND participating in plays. Appetizers, drinks, and 3 course sit-down dinner served. Reservations required (way in advance around holidays). Once you pay for a ticket, there are no refunds for back-outs.

Director Award Theme

Design your own Director Award theme to recognize individual and team achievements based on an event or periodic recognition. Feel free to use your creativity in the types of awards (certificates, etc.) you hand out.

Gift Cards

Struggling to find a reward/recognition for an associate? A gift card provides for a flexible way to reward an associate with an opportunity to purchase the reward of their choice.

Holiday Gift Exchange

Have a random drawing for all team members for whom they will give a gift. Plan a day and time when gift exchanging occurs. This can be done on-site or off-site. Works especially well when used in conjunction with another activity.

Ice Cream Social

Have team members contribute toward bringing ingredients for creating their own unique ice cream sundae - feel free to schedule a conference room for the occasion.

Company Catalog Gift or Gift Certificate

Company Catalog gifts or Gift Certificates can be fond and practical reminders of significant accomplishments to the company. The variety of gifts in the catalog gives you the freedom to choose a gift that is appropriate for the occasion. Company catalog gifts and gift certificates could be obtained and secured for use as a quick reward/recognition.

Leverage Department Meetings

Is your next Department meeting coming soon? If so, take this opportunity to ask the facilitator to tout your team's successes for everyone in the department. Feel free to use your creativity in the types of awards (certificates, etc.) handed out.

Leverage Company Service Awards

Is an associate scheduled to be recognized for a 5, 10, 15, 20 or 25 year service award at the next Division meeting? Take the opportunity to thank him/her specifically for their contributions the day of the event.

Leverage Team Day Away Time

There's nothing better for building camaraderie than recognizing all associates within a team for specific contributions made across all areas (support, enhancements, projects, etc.). Feel free to use your creativity in the types of awards (certificates, etc.) you hand out.

Leverage Bonuses

Bonus Reviews are a perfect opportunity for leaders to thank associates for specific contributions to the Company reflected in bonus amounts, and reinforce the positive qualities in an associate that can be carried on to other efforts.

Use of Office Knick Knacks

Do you have more vendor stress balls, mugs, key chains, pens, and T-shirts than you know what to do with? Put them to good use by giving them to associates as a simple gesture of thanks.

Lunch With CIO or Other Senior Leaders

Arrange for an opportunity for an associate or team to have a lunch with the CIO, company leaders and legends. This is special recognition to many associates to share lunch and have the opportunity to interact with the company's senior leaders.

Lunch With Your Leader (aka Reward and Recognition Day)

Take an associate or team to lunch to recognize their achievements. A limit can be set on associate contribution and the leader takes care of the rest. It is a great win-win for both the associate and the company. It also enables more frequent recognitions by sharing the expense. Another fun twist is to let the associate choose the location.

Company-wide Memo

Communicate the outstanding success of an effort through a company wide weekly memo.

Movie Tickets

Has an associate sacrificed significant time away from his/her friends and family to you're your company a better place for all? Consider offering tickets to the associates and one other guest of his/her choice as a show of appreciation.

Night Out With The Family

Reward an associate with a night out with their family. This is well received for special recognition after working a Saturday, weekend or an exceptionally long work week.

Picture With Company Leaders

Arrange for an opportunity to have a photo op with company leaders and legends. This is special to many associates to have the opportunity to interact with company leaders and to have a lasting momento of the experience.

Potluck Lunch

Do associates on the team enjoy making and eating good food? Exercise everyone's culinary creativity by having a potluck lunch to celebrate the accomplishments of the team. Spice up the potluck by picking an exciting theme.

Putt Putt Golf

Want to bring out the competitive spirit in your deserving team? Bring them to an afternoon round of Putt Putt - watch the weather!

Scavenger Hunt

There's nothing better for building camaraderie than a good old-fashioned scavenger hunt. This could be at your next team or department outing and held at the zoo or some other venue. Feel free to use your creativity for the types of events.

Star Jar

Leaders can collect thank you notes from associates to other associates in a special decorated jar that you can read during team meetings. Notes can be signed, or anonymous. Make it more interesting by holding regular note drawings for prizes.

Team Building Events

Want to bring out the competitive spirit in your deserving team? Design an afternoon team building event. There are countless possibilities from sports, games, movies, etc.

Thank You Email

Simply the easiest, fastest, and sometimes most effective way to say "Thank You". Remember to CC the associate's leader(s) to help them also share in the thanks.

Thank You Card

Hand out personally delivered hand-written thank-you cards for associate recognition. Encourage recognition between peers by distributing blank cards for exchanging thanks between team members. Have team members proudly display their cards. You can make it more interesting by numbering the cards, and hold drawings for prizes.

Thank You Card or Email from a Senior Leader

Senior leaders in a firm are quite often more than willing to send a personal thank you to associates on a job well done. It will help if you provide the text for the email or card, also provide a list of associates. This is helpful by making it very easy for busy executives to send a personal thanks.

Thank You Luncheon

Get out to enjoy the fresh air, enjoy good food, reminisce about the effort's successes, and get to know each other on a more personal basis.

Traveling Plaque

Make one for your team or department and award it to an associate for a job well done. The associate can keep and display it until you or they recognize an achievement by another associate in your organization and the plaque is passed on to the next associate.

Traveling Trophy

Everyone on the team can aspire to receive this trophy, given to special associates that have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Have fun thinking of creative names for the trophy.

References Books

1. Nelson, Bob, *1001 Ways to Reward Employees*, New York: Workman Publishing, 1994.
2. Priceless Motivation, Michigan: Priceless Motivation, 2002

Additional Suggestions?

If you have additional recognition suggestions that you would like to see added to this list, please e-mail them to insert your email address here.