

How do you make sure your Reward and Recognition programs are on target?

One approach is to use a concept called the “Zone of Self-Interest.” Simply put, it is crucial to identify a particular activity that is known to be a *key to your success* and then put a program in place to reward that behavior every time it occurs.

People tend to do things if they feel that it is in their own best interest. Organizations need to connect what employees want for themselves to overall organizational goals by rewarding behavior in a way that is meaningful to them and their own self-interest. By pointing out that a particular behavior is rewarded, you could be well on your way toward reinforcing the performance that will help achieve business goals. Moreover, people don’t walk away from companies they feel care about them, so rewarding them can stabilize your talent pool.

To help assure your recognition process is on track, consider the following factors:

- Be strategic and make sure it reinforces your company values.
- Make your approach personal. Think about what will be truly memorable for the employee.
- Be inclusive. Your program should be able to occur in all directions: top-down, peer-to-peer, etc.
- Include easy-to-use, robust tools with appropriate reporting capabilities.
- The process should be fast, requiring few approvals, so the award is closely tied to the action performed.
- Use a cross-functional team to design the process (payroll, IT, communications, HR) so it appeals to all targeted functions.
- Conduct ongoing communications to inform and encourage use.

(No Good Deed Goes Unrewarded, Scott Himmelstein, HR Magazine, January, 2010. p. 27.)

When creating your program, be aware of the tendency to assume “one size fits all” and that everyone will respond positively to the same program or practice. While it may seem difficult to individualize recognition programs, there are ways to help heighten effectiveness:

- Each manager should spend time on a regular basis with each employee to determine how that employee is best motivated.
- Managers should find ways to integrate the identified type of recognition into the employee’s development plan.
- Recognition needs to be given consistently.
- Be sure there are opportunities for management to recognize everyone’s contributions.
- Clearly communicate the reason for the recognition.
- Provide opportunities for peer recognition that can result in increased productivity.

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Valued Employees = Engaged Employees = Business Results

Studies prove employees need to feel valued and know the work they do on a daily basis matters. More than three-quarters of employees, 76 percent, who responded to the 2008 World of Work study published by Randstad, an Atlanta-based employment-services firm, said feeling valued was the most important factor for happiness at work, out of more than a dozen options. When asked to identify the employer attributes they valued most, the top response (67 percent) was “recognizes the value I bring to the organization.”

(Length-of-Service Awards Becoming More Personal, Rebecca Hastings, SPHR, 2009 HR Trendbook, p. 46.)

Employees who feel “cared for” by employers are more likely to return the favor by paying attention to the company’s bottom line, treating customers better, and supporting the overall work community. As Allan Schweyer of the Human Capital Institute points out: Engaged employees work smarter, not harder.

The key to making recognition and rewards programs work is to target them to specific business goals and individual employee needs. Goal alignment and reward reinforcement promotes excellence and increases the likelihood of business success. At the end of the day, your organization is more likely to craft the right program by:

- Understanding the respective strengths of various rewards and recognition approaches.
- Remembering that demographics matter—as the nature of your workforce changes, so should the nature of your approach.
- The mix can be different for each employee. The key is to determine the mix on a one-to-one basis.

(Finding the Right Mix, Performance Improvement Council)