

An illustration of several hands reaching out towards the center, rendered in various shades of teal and light blue. The hands are positioned as if they are about to clasp or support each other, symbolizing teamwork and mutual support. A dark teal curved line separates the illustration from the text below.

How to Strengthen Appreciation in the Workplace

RECOGNATION

Every Moment Matters™

The Questions

At the highest level, the four pillars of employee engagement are answers to questions every team member is asking themselves, whether they know it or not. We are constantly assessing the answers in both our personal lives and in the workplace.

The questions are as follows:

- 1 DO I FEEL CONNECTED?**
Employees feel a connection to co-workers, the organization, and/or to the work itself.
- 2 DO I FEEL INFORMED?**
Employees are aware of what's going on in the organization, both good and bad.
- 3 DO I FEEL VALUED?**
Employees feel that their individual efforts and contributions are appreciated.
- 4 DO I FEEL MY OPINION MATTERS?**
Employees feel they have a say in both their own work and the direction of the organization.



The answers to these questions can vary significantly between different employees, which is why it's helpful to have them rate themselves on a scale. Their answers are meant to be a starting point so you can dive deeper into why they may rate themselves high or low in each category.

Appreciation

Do I Feel Valued?

Positive feedback is the regular fuel that drives high-performing teams. We want to know that we matter and that our work makes a difference. Employees are not likely to be “all in” when they can’t see that they are valued by their manager, peers, and the organization as a whole.

Feeling insignificant and unvalued can erode all three of the other pillars. If you genuinely want healthy and thriving relationships with your team members, express your gratitude for them on a regular basis. Create a culture where anyone can give and receive appreciation – one where people naturally want to lift one another up.

Recognize both their daily effort and big wins. Show that you value them as a “human being” rather than a “human doing.”



As a Contributor

People want to know that the work they do is valued. They want to know that all the time and work they put in matters. One annual award ceremony is not enough to make them feel truly appreciated. Employees need to be recognized for:

- » Completed projects
- » Promotions
- » Years of service
- » Going above and beyond
- » Daily efforts

If an employee doesn't feel appreciated for what they contribute, they likely won't keep doing it. Turnover will increase if employees feel the need to look for validation from another employer.

As a Person

It's true – people are your biggest asset. But they are also something more than just an asset or a job function. They are real people with real lives outside of work. On top of thanking employees for their contributions, express appreciation for who they are and what they bring as people. For example, you can recognize and appreciate:

- » Character traits (i.e. resilience, passion, positivity)
- » Personal accomplishments
- » Birthdays and life milestones
- » Unique perspectives they bring

People want to be seen as whole human beings. They want to be able to bring their whole unique selves to work. They can only feel comfortable doing that if they feel valued and accepted for who they are.



Understanding Preferences

When you are expressing appreciation, one of the most important things to keep in mind is personal preferences of the recipient. If you ignore these, your appreciation can fall flat or seem disingenuous.

All About You Survey

Getting to know different preferences may take some time, but something that can help is an All About You survey. Consider asking:

- » Do you prefer to be recognized publicly or privately?
- » What is your favorite snack?
- » What is your favorite sweet/treat?
- » What are some of your hobbies?
- » Do you have a favorite sports team?

The first question is especially valuable. There is nothing worse than putting someone in a public spotlight that doesn't want to be there. And the rest of the questions can help you personalize and tailor appreciation to each individual.

Giver of Appreciation

Another preference to keep in mind is the giver of appreciation. Many employees prefer receiving it from their direct manager. Some enjoy being recognized by their peers or the CEO. You can send out surveys asking employees when recognition and appreciation mean the most. Regardless of preferences, it's good to have a mix of appreciation coming from different levels of the organization.



Holistic Approach

In addition to preferences, it's also crucial to tap into the different forms of appreciation. There are **three main dimensions** that you should focus on to craft a holistic strategy:

Formal

This dimension is highly structured, oftentimes based on years of service or nominations linked to organizational values and goals. Accompanying this form of appreciation can be:

- » Trophies
- » Monetary rewards to be redeemed
- » Large company party or celebration



Informal

This dimension consists of less structured celebrations of a team's progress, the completion of a major project, or an achieved goal. Some forms of it include:

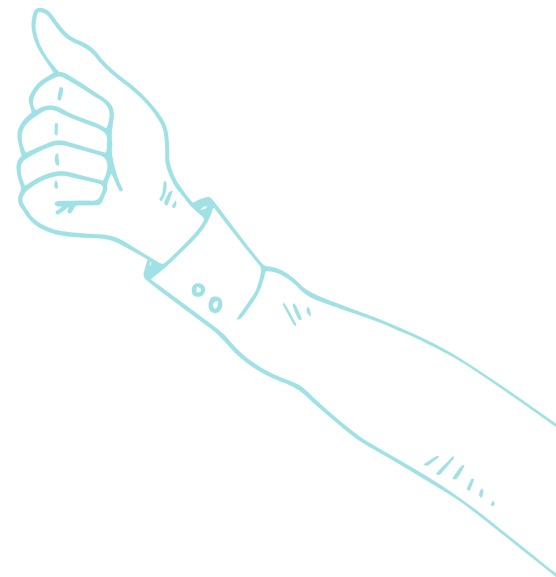
- » Company-wide lunch
- » Team outings
- » Bagels or donuts brought in the morning

Day-to-Day

This dimension is frequent, ongoing recognition of behaviors, activities, and accomplishments. Appreciation in this form can be given by anyone, to anyone. Some examples are:

- » Handwritten notes or eCards
- » Surprise treat on an employee's desk
- » Verbal praise at meetings

The form of appreciation you choose ultimately depends on the occasion. While you will utilize every dimension, you will most frequently give out day-to-day recognition. It maximizes the amount of appreciation you give out rather than waiting for very special occasions.





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