Achievers

2013 Trends in Recognition

Utilizing Recognition to Drive Employee Engagement

Contents

Introduction: Why Recognize?

In the past few years, as companies have grown wise to the needs of a changing workforce, recognition has become a buzzword for HR professionals in-the-know. However, recognition is often discussed in a vacuum, with little thought to greater business impact. Unfortunately, recognition for recognition's sake isn't the kind of the thing that will drive performance at your organization. Recognition strategy has to be done right in order to drive overall Employee Success, which is the force behind any high-performing organization. If you're going to recognize, you have to do it right.

So what kind of recognition is successful? The kind of recognition that reinforces desired behaviors in a way that is meaningful and timely, because, quite simply: behaviors that are recognized get repeated. That's why in the last five years we've seen both an emergence of employee recognition technology and many companies investing in it. The companies making the leap are the smart, forward-thinking organizations that are thinking ahead of the curve literally and figuratively; the most recent Gartner Hype-Cycle printed in 2012 shows that Social Employee Recognition is on the verge of mainstream adoption. The companies jumping on the trend early are the ones that will win the war to acquire and retain great talent.

Figure 1. Hype Cycle for Human Capital Management Software, 2012
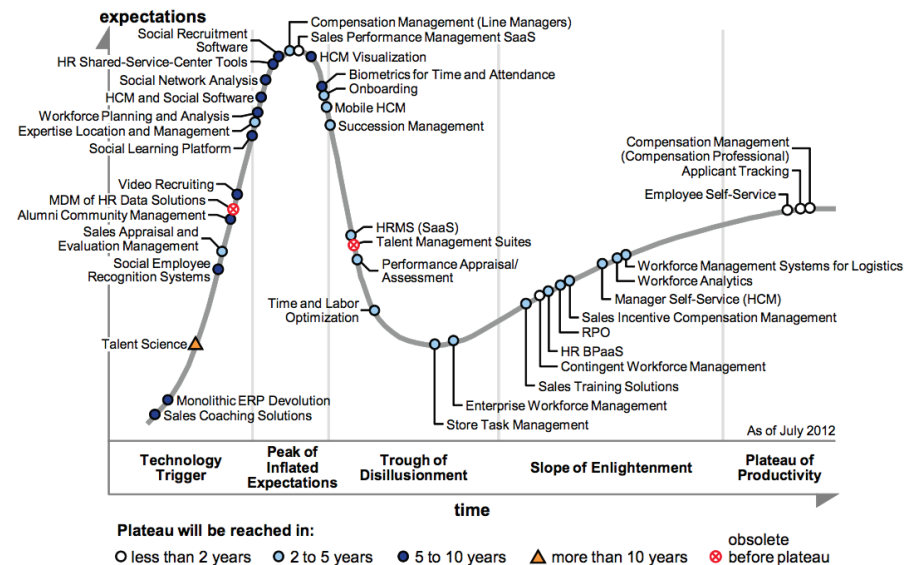
"The companies jumping on the trend early are the ones that will win the war to acquire and retain great talent."

Why It Works

So why does this all matter? What's the reason that recognition has become such a powerful force in the workplace? The biggest reason is that recognition enables organizations to reinforce behaviors that are key to the success of the business at the same time as it keeps employees engaged. In fact, it's been proven time and time again that recognition drives engagement and engagement directly leads to above-par results. A recent study by HR Magazine found that "Engaged employees perform 20% better and are 87% less likely to leave their organization."[1]

Not only does an engaged workforce mean better performance, it also means dramatically reduced turnover, which has a significant impact on a business' success. We all know how much time and money it costs to re-recruit, re-train and regain momentum lost through turnover.

Of course while an engaged workforce will get you ahead, the converse is also true: a disengaged workforce will put you far behind. Disengaged employees don't just hurt the organization with their own poor performance; they also impact the high performing colleagues around them. Gallup stated in 2012 that "actively disengaged employees erode an organization's bottom line while breaking the spirits of colleagues in the process." Within the U.S. workforce, Gallup estimates the cost of a disengaged workforce to be more than $300 billion in lost productivity alone.[2]

So how does this relate to recognition? Gallup identifies that companies who recognize their employees generate 27 percent higher profits, 50 percent higher sales and 50 percent higher customer loyalty. It's clear that recognition leads to engagement and reinforces the key behaviors that drive company success. Sounds simple, right?

Not exactly. As we stated above, there's actually a right and a wrong way to recognize. Recognition done incorrectly is a substantial expense that won't help you meet business goals and may even hurt your organization in the long run. In order to maximize the power of recognition at your company and drive Employee Success, you'll need to understand (and implement!) the key trends moving into 2013. Let's get started!

1. See Lockwood
2. See Gallup

How Did We Get Here?
The Big Influences Driving the 2013 Recognition Trends

When it comes to developing a recognition strategy, there are four main changes to our workforce today that HR and businesses need to be aware of and react to in our approach to recognition. They are:

1. The workforce is more global, mobile and social than ever
2. SaaS is becoming the default application for HR Technology
3. Changes in the economy mean programs are scrutinized for ROI
4. 51 percent of the workforce is now Gen X, Gen Y, and the Millennials[3]

01 The workforce is more global, mobile and social than ever

If you were to ask a random group of employees in a company if they interact on a daily basis with a peer that isn't in the same physical location, you would get a majority of hands in the air. Not only that, but the contingent workforce is also growing.[3] This means your employees are working in different offices, and possibly even different time zones.

Everyone needs to be "on" at all times, and that means more **mobile** devices. In fact, according to Gartner, in the year 2013 it is predicted that mobile devices will outweigh computer usage as the most common Web access device worldwide.[4] Employees are constantly checking work emails, and engaged with their mobile devices and they expect the same capabilities on those devices as they have on their computers.

4 Changes to the Workforce Today

01 The workforce is more global, mobile and social than ever

02 SaaS is becoming the default application for HR Technology

03 Changes in the economy mean programs are scrutinized for ROI

04 51 percent of the workforce is now Gen X, Gen Y, and the Millennials[3]

3. See U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics
4. See Gartner Highlights Key Predictions for IT Organizations and Users in 2010 and Beyond

Of course, some of those capabilities include **social**. And when you shift to social, with social enterprise software (for example, Jive or Yammer) and communication tools being rolled out seemingly each month, the workforce now communicates and has access to more information than ever. More importantly, they're accustomed to getting that information via social platforms, which have become a hub for conversation and professional interactions.

So what does all that mean for recognition? To begin, it's harder to recognize employees and teams face-to-face, not to mention track those interactions across organizations. Employees are often more accustomed to communicating with devices and across social networks than they are with an in-person team or manager. That means we lose control over the recognition process and it becomes difficult to provide a consistent employee experience.

02 "SaaS" is becoming the default application for HR Technology

The definition of SaaS is "Software-as-a-Service." It's the idea that software is available and accessible 24/7 online, or "in the cloud," without on-premise installation requirements. Basically, it's not like the old days where companies like Oracle and SAP would come into an organization and begin installing physical software onto your company's computers. There is no installation required. It's online, integrates with your business, is super secure and enables simple upgrades of newer technologies.

Whether 'SaaS' is a new or old concept to you, it has become the default service model for HR technology. Remember when you used to do applicant tracking in Excel spreadsheets? Taleo (acquired by Oracle in 2012) now does that and whole lot more with its SaaS technology. SuccessFactors (acquired by SAP in 2012) similarly put performance management in the cloud. Many HR functions are now being supplemented with SaaS that's easy to access and share, plus provides reporting and insight. Recognition is no exception. Now, robust employee recognition SaaS platforms are the norm.

"Software-as-a-Service" is available 24/7 "in the cloud," with no installation required. It's online, integrates with your business, is super secure and enables simple upgrades of newer technologies.

03 Changes in the economy mean budgets are scrutinized for ROI

Raise your hand if you've been asked to slash budget in the last five years. Are you getting some funny looks from the people sitting near you in the office or on the bus? It's ok, you can put your hand down. In all likelihood, they've had to slash budgets too. Like you, and everyone else around the country, they're under constant pressure to define ROI for all initiatives. Things that are hard to measure are getting slashed from the budget. You must prove value when it comes to bottom-line success.

Given the recent economic crisis, companies are carefully scrutinizing all spends – and eliminating all those that don't provide clear, measurable value. When it comes to recognition programs, they're asking: Is what we're spending budget on improving performance and having a proven positive impact? Or is it just there, and we're spending it because we've always spent it? The latter simply isn't going to cut it anymore.

Fortunately, those SaaS technologies we talked about in the last section give us great insight into metrics that clearly determine the value of each element of our HR budgets – especially recognition programs. We're able to clearly track and measure results and tie them to performance. It makes it easy to define ROI and tie program success to employee success to overall business success.

04 51 percent of the workforce is now Gen X, Gen Y, and the Millennials

HR Professional (five years ago): Hey, did you know these new generations are coming to the workplace? What are we going to do?

HR Professional (today): Hey, did you know these new generations are coming to the workplace? What are we going to do?

They're not coming. They're here! As much as the older generations may not want to admit it, the new generations have taken over the majority of the workforce. Why does this matter? They had a different upbringing, different motivation, see work and their job in a different light and need to be managed differently. It particular, they need to be managed differently when it comes to recognition. Many of them grew up as the "trophy generation" – meaning everybody got a trophy just for participating, whether or not they won. As a result, they require consistent recognition and feedback that most organizations aren't equipped to give.

In a recent Achievers Class of 2012 survey, this new generation chose salary as their fourth ranked motivation of finding a new job.[5] They want to make an impact, grow in the company (quickly) and by nature, they need an environment where they are being recognized often. This new generation requires companies to think of a new strategy for recognizing employees.

There's no doubt that life through the HR lens has changed dramatically in very recent times. This combination of a new workplace, new technologies, and new external environments has transformed the way we need to look at recognition in the workplace.

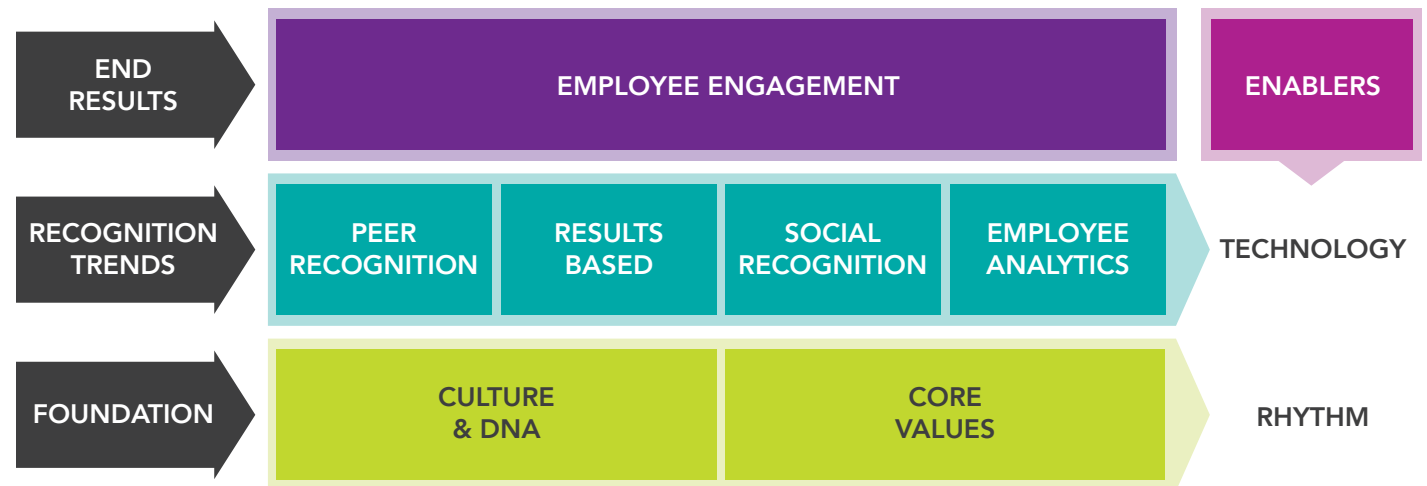5. See Class of 2012: Understanding the Needs of your Future Workforce

2013 Trends in Recognition:
Four Best Practices to Positively Impact Employee Success

Formalized recognition has been around forever in the workplace. In fact, long-term service awards started in the 1900's at Ford, where Henry Ford encouraged employees to stick around for years on the vehicle assembly line by rewarding them with high-end gifts such as watches. Some would say not much has changed since then, but the reality is we've seen a dramatic shift in the way companies are recognizing and rewarding their workforces.

We just identified some of the factors that are impacting this shift. As we move into 2013 – a time when HR technology and opportunity is at its peak - there are four trends in recognition emerging that make it more possible than ever to drive Employee Success and therefore deliver measurable business results.

Before we go through these trends, let's consider what companies are going after with a formalized recognition strategy, as well as where they need to start.

The figure to the right shows that the end game is employee engagement. But in order to get there using recognition, there are the four trends listed there that we will explore.

END RESULTS	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT				ENABLERS
RECOGNITION TRENDS	PEER RECOGNITION	RESULTS BASED	SOCIAL RECOGNITION	EMPLOYEE ANALYTICS	TECHNOLOGY
FOUNDATION	CULTURE & DNA		CORE VALUES		RHYTHM

What you'll quickly notice is that these best practices require technology in most cases to be successful. It's the evolution of recognition, just as it was with applicant tracking, performance management, internal communication, and so on. Recognition is no different and now technology has now become an enabler of key recognition strategies that we could never entertain before.

The most important part of the model is the foundation. Your company can have all the technology in the world. It can have unlimited resources. It can have access to unlimited funds. Like James Bond, you can have the sexiest and most effective tools on the planet – but if your company doesn't know WHAT people should be recognizing each other for, then it's a useless exercise.

You company foundation, culture, DNA, mojo… call it what you want, but the standard behaviors and values that your company lives and makes decision by needs to be ingrained in the reasons why employees will recognize. Once you've established your company core values and behaviors (and no, not established by a page on your website – more like a concentrated effort to make everyone in the company accountable for those values) then you have built the first step towards shifting to a culture of recognition.

You may also be wondering why rhythm is important. In order to make this work it has to be a constant activity. Recognition can't wait until the annual town-hall to recognize employees for positive behaviors. It needs to be a daily activity that doesn't just live through technology, but through the social and communication rhythm of your company. Find the vehicles you have now to communicate, and leverage them.

Now onto the fun stuff. What are the new recognition trends and best-practices? What's got the HR world all buzzing? What are successful companies doing today that will become mainstream that you can get ahead of the curve on as well? You've come to the right place, so read on!

Want to create a culture of recognition? Ask these questions at your next leadership meeting

01 **What's our current culture?**
Every company has one.

02 **What do we want our culture to be?**
Establish some core values.

03 **What do we value?**
Are we recognizing staff for living our values or company objectives?

04 **Do our systems and processes help or hinder?**
Bolt culture into the way you measure and maintain the business.

05 **What are our leaders like as role models?**
Your culture cannot thrive unless leaders set an example to inspire employees.

Want a simple way to build recognition into your company rhythm? Add a recognition moment open to the group at the end of each team meeting!

Trend 1: Embrace Peer-to-Peer Recognition in Every Direction.

Remember Etch-a-Sketch? Of course you do!

The beauty of Etch-a-Sketch was that with one swoop, everything was erased. Now think of your of current recognition program. Erase the recognition practices (or lack thereof) that you have today. And picture every single employee having the ability to formally and publically recognize anyone else in the company – top-down, bottom-up, side-to-side – for any of the behaviors or values you've identified as a foundation of how your company should operate. Picture it: the new junior recruit recognizing the CEO.

The reality is many companies are doing this today. They're not just allowing peer-to-peer recognition and opening it up to every employee, they're actually allocating budgets to allow any employee to recognize and reward any other employee on a weekly basis, or at their discretion. Crazy? Not at all.

The fact is, once you identify the key behaviors that promote your company values and drive Employee Success, the act of peer-to-peer recognition has many valuable benefits. These include:

- Amplify the daily reinforcement of behaviors your company believes in
- What gets recognized, gets repeated, so you'll see more of those behaviors

- Recognition drives employee's intrinsic motivation, increasing their engagement
- Quickly identify key performers – and high potentials
- Weed out non-performing employees
- Begin to identify potential leaders who embrace recognition and do it naturally

Think of how powerful this is. Assuming you can trust the employees you've hired (and if not, why did you hire them?) you have leveraged the whole organization to promote desired behaviors on an ongoing basis.

And if you don't think people will participate, think again. There are hundreds of successful companies we've worked with that have implemented a program and have seen tremendous usage and measurable success beyond their wildest imagination.

Three Tales of Employee Success: Proof Employee Recognition Works

Deloitte, one of the world's largest professional services firms, was looking to create a program that could provide a consistent recognition experience across the organization. Deloitte employees were feeling under-recognized, and with the current economy, Deloitte needed to ensure its employees continued to be engaged so they could drive business results. Within the first month, 97 percent of Deloitte's employees activated their account. Today, the program averages one recognition every 44 seconds and Deloitte's employee engagement team credits the program for creating a culture of recognition at the firm and driving Employee Success.[6]

Meridian Credit Union, worth $8 billion in assets, saw similar user adoption when they implemented a recognition strategy. The company serves over 260,000 customers and firmly believes their greatest asset is their highly engaged employees. The program quickly reached the results Meridian sought to achieve, including high level of participation with 98 percent of employees activating their accounts, and saw 96 percent of recognitions tied to an achievement of sales results.[7]

Eli Lilly, the 10th largest pharmaceutical company in the world, had engagement surveys that showed room for improvement in the area of rewards and recognition. Lilly wanted to move to a solution that would recognize and reward employees sideways, up and down – as well as peer to peer. The business impact of Lilly's new recognition program dramatically reduced administration and management costs of the recognition program resulting in a decreased budget. Most importantly, employee engagement scores moved from 3.96 to 4.13 on a five-point scale (with five being the highest). Additionally, direct financial results showed that the most engaged employees contributed to a 6.5 percent increase in revenue growth versus the least engaged employees of 2.3 percent.[8]

6. See Jones
7. See Garr
8. See Jones

Trend 2: Recognize Performance, Not Presence

Companies are making a shift. Even more, now on the heels of the financial crisis, organizations are scrutinizing budgets and ensuring there is a return on investment on all costs. One of the costs under scrutiny is annual years of service programs. It's a $46 billion[9] market in North America that arguably isn't providing any value to organizations. If you think that's a harsh statement, ask yourself if you've ever worked any harder, or stayed with a job an extra day to receive a long service award. It's also doubtful that service awards will be a draw for candidates in the recruiting process.

So what's the problem with years of service programs? All they do is reward people for sitting in their seat and breathing. In fact, every employee, whether they're a top performer, high potential, average or non-productive employee, gets recognized and rewarded equally.

Back on Henry Ford's assembly line, this wasn't such a bad idea. But over the years, it's become a standard HR practice – possibly to our detriment. Only recently, companies have started to realize that they can make better use of that budget with meaningful recognition programs that impact and drive day-to-day behaviors for the benefit of the business.

This doesn't mean you should ignore levels of service, but it can be done with very little budget or none at all. The trend is that companies are focusing on making an impact on recognition daily as opposed to annually. Another good reason for this? The 2009 US Department of Labor study shows that the average employee tenure is 1.8 years. Most employees never see their five-year service award. But if they're being recognized on a daily basis, there's a good chance you might retain them for years (even if you never promise them a gold watch).

Need more convincing? According to a Gallup poll, companies with large numbers of disengaged workers experience much lower productivity, and these employers experienced over 51 percent higher turnover than their peers.[10] Additionally, almost 50 percent of employees polled said they would leave their job for a company that clearly recognized employees for their efforts and contributions. Finally, among respondents who stated they plan to search for a new job this year, only 24 percent are satisfied with recognition received at work.[11] This presents a clear opportunity for improvement.

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51%
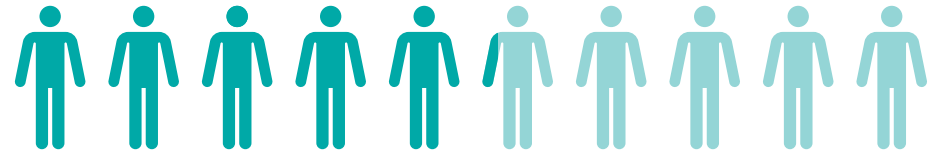
Trend 3: Leverage the Power of Social Employee Recognition

With the world going much more social, social employee recognition has made it to the workplace. Organizations are encouraging and allowing employees to recognize their peers and utilizing new SaaS technologies to let them share it on a social platform for everyone to see.

This has become impactful because it amplifies daily recognition and helps reinforce desired behaviors to drive employee success. Furthermore, it highlights key performers in an organization and identifies high-potentials.

9. See Bersin
10. See Lupfer
11. See Lupfer

Social employee recognition isn't only amplified one-way, but also allows employees to interact with each other in real-time and acknowledge their teammates' accomplishments. How many of us ever feel in the dark about others' job responsibilities, especially in different departments? This facilitates constant communication among employees, regardless of geographic location and time zone, and helps align them with the bigger picture.

However, the real benefit of this trend is when you start sharing on all social media platforms outside of the company.

It might sound crazy at first, but companies are doing it and they're getting great results. So many companies spend endless hours and dollars trying to create a positive, powerful social media presence. With social recognition, you provide an outlet for positive messaging to help support your employer brand and make your employees more engaged and productive. In other words, everybody is #winning.

External social employee recognition means sharing an internal recognition across the individual employees' external networks including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. It's optional, but it plays to people's intrinsic motivations. For the same reason that people share little details about their lives to create an online persona, they'll want to share to their successes in the office through social recognitions.

The benefits? There's a constant flow of positive content related to your company. You build an attractive employer brand, and set your company up for social recruiting. You can even follow best practices and link recognitions to information about hiring. Who wouldn't want to work for a company that recognizes their employees? It's a competitive advantage that doesn't only attract great new talent, it helps retain the A players you already have.

Trend 4: Use Data to Identify High Performers and High Potentials

So with all the great recognition technology out there that enables recognition and feedback daily, you have a mountain of data that should be leveraged. The next trend is using that data to identify who is up and coming in the company and who you should focus on developing and promoting.

What data? Well think about all of your most recognized employees. They must be doing something right. Data from recognition platforms provide insight into who's living the corporate values daily so you can get more understanding of what makes employees successful. Understanding your top performers helps you find more of them.

Also, think about people in your company that are recognizing others all the time. This gives great insight into current or potential leadership that believes in recognition – one of the fundamental principles of a great leader. One of Gallup's Q12 specifies that great leaders recognize employees once a week.[12]

How about the leaders that aren't recognizing? With that data you can also find training opportunities or have one-on-one conversations to support your recognition and performance culture.
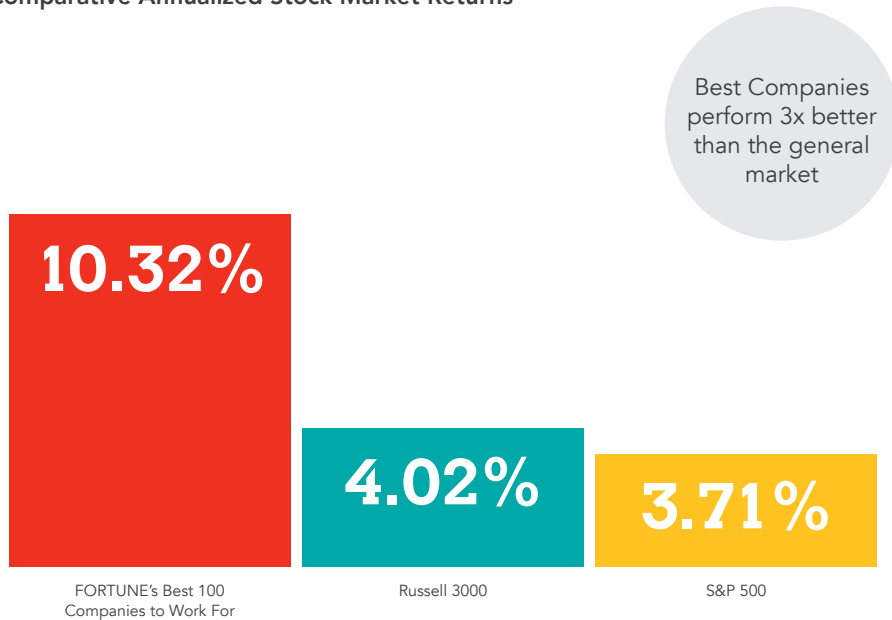
Companies are beginning to use this type of data to support performance management and all other elements of the employee lifecycle. Any insight HR departments and companies can gain on top or bottom performers can be used to make decisions that will impact employee and business success.

12. See Q12 Meta-Analysis: The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organizational Outcomes
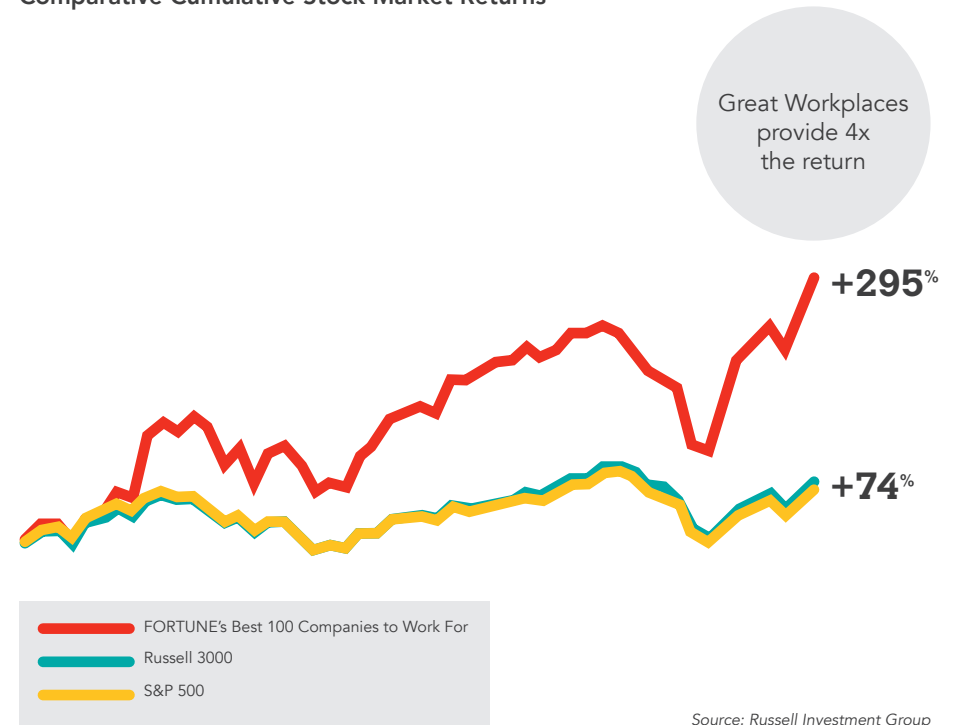
Results:
Or Why Your CFO Will Love It

So why does all this matter? Why jump on the trends of modern recognition to drive employee success? Well, quite simply, because it also drives business success. There is irrefutable evidence today a company culture built around recognized and engaged employees has bottom line impact. For example, FORTUNE's 100 Best Places to Work For list. There are higher rates of return over the last decade, dramatically lower turnover, and overall better business performance.

Comparative Annualized Stock Market Returns

Best Companies perform 3x better than the general market

10.32%
FORTUNE's Best 100 Companies to Work For

4.02%
Russell 3000

3.71%
S&P 500

Source: Russell Investment Group

Comparative Cumulative Stock Market Returns

Great Workplaces provide 4x the return

+295%

+74%

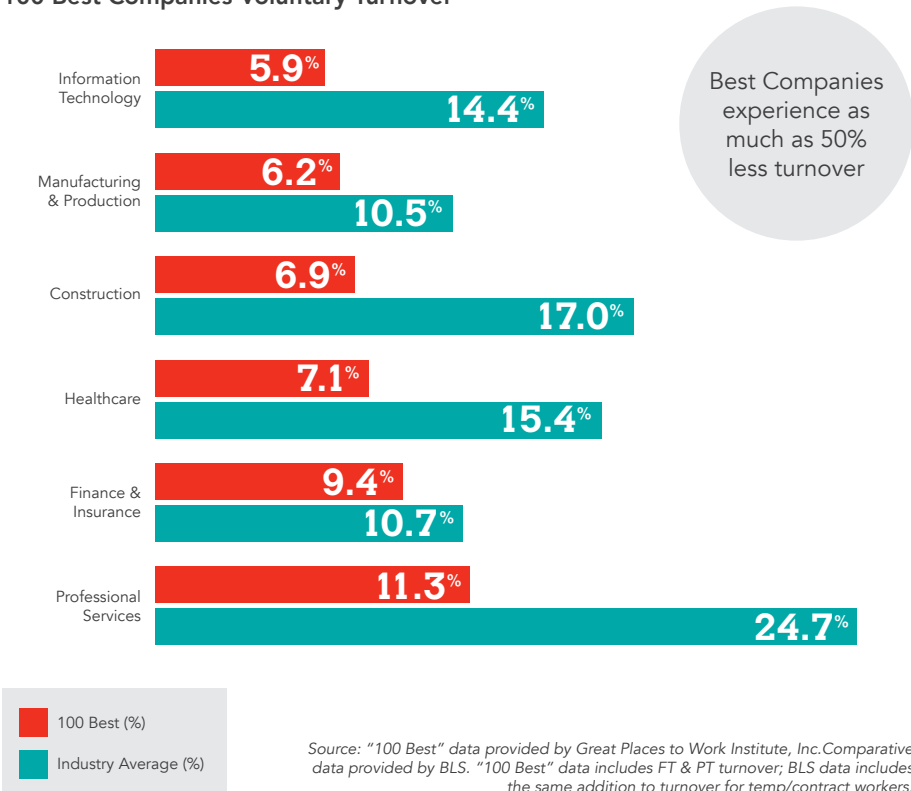— FORTUNE's Best 100 Companies to Work For
— Russell 3000
— S&P 500

Source: Russell Investment Group

The best part, and this comes with a huge congratulations to the HR community, is that the rest of the world is listening. The rest of the business world is starting to come around and realize that recognition and engagement strategies are important. In fact, in 2012 the front page of the *Harvard Business Review* declared the value of happiness and validated how employee well-being drives profits.[13] We can now have some leverage to ensure we're supporting this type of environment and culture to our workplace.

100 Best Companies Voluntary Turnover

Industry	100 Best (%)	Industry Average (%)
Information Technology	5.9%	14.4%
Manufacturing & Production	6.2%	10.5%
Construction	6.9%	17.0%
Healthcare	7.1%	15.4%
Finance & Insurance	9.4%	10.7%
Professional Services	11.3%	24.7%

Best Companies experience as much as 50% less turnover

Legend:
- 100 Best (%)
- Industry Average (%)

Source: "100 Best" data provided by Great Places to Work Institute, Inc. Comparative data provided by BLS. "100 Best" data includes FT & PT turnover; BLS data includes the same addition to turnover for temp/contract workers.

13. See The Value of Happiness: How Employee Well-Being Drives Profits

One More Thing:
The Simple One-Pager On Recognition

You may be all gung-ho on making a difference leveraging recognition in your workplace. But you may be stymied by budget, executive leadership, or some roadblock. If that's the case, you can still use the data here and make a difference. You just have to remember one thing:

Recognition should be SMT – Specific, Meaningful and Timely.

This simple, easy-to-remember formula guarantees that your recognition strategy will amplify specific behaviors that drive results and increase employee engagement. Even if you don't have technology or can't jump on all these trends, get your managers and people to know what is important to your organization (start with your values) and how to deliver recognition.

Here are three ways to ensure that you're recognizing for the right reasons, every single time:

1. Recognition should be specific.
What was the action? This action should reflect your company values and overall foundation that make your business successful.

2. Recognition should be meaningful.
How did the action positively impact your business? For example, your employee's attentive customer service produced a super happy customer.

3. Recognition should be timely.
Do it now, don't wait until the annual company event – because the action will seem to be unnoticed and those behaviors won't get repeated.

Now it's your turn. How did one of your employees impact business success today? Take a moment and recognize them for displaying the right behaviors. Chances are, they'll do it again. Adding recognition as an agenda to your weekly team meeting is an easy way to get impact early. Recognition drives people's internal intrinsic motivation. It works.

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Achievers' 2013 Guide to Recognition helps you create a powerful recognition strategy that drives Employee Success in one, dynamic, how-to guide.

Increase Engagement: At all stages of the employee lifecycle
Reduce Turnover: Keep and motivate your top performers
Drive Behavior: Align your employees to the bigger picture
Plus discover the link between Employee Success and Business Success

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Achievers

The Achievers mission is to Change the Way the World Works. We are accomplishing this by helping companies around the world recognize and reward positive employee behaviors on a daily basis resulting in higher employee engagement and better business results. With our award-winning technology, unmatched customer service and industry-leading expertise we have powered the world's most successful rewards and recognition programs.

Check us out on the web at www.achievers.com