



Change the Way the World Works

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

*Engage, Align, and Recognize  
Your Employees to Inspire Success*



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# INTRODUCTION

Top employers are facing a perfect storm in the fight for talent. Unemployment is at its lowest rate since 2009<sup>1</sup> and job openings have increased by 73 percent.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Baby Boomers are rapidly retiring and new college graduates are significantly lacking the skills businesses are seeking. And if that isn't enough, at least one third of the existing workforce is ready to quit.<sup>3</sup>

The number one reason employees quit is that they don't receive recognition for the work they do. Ninety percent of employers say they have some recognition programs in their workplaces<sup>4</sup> but with only 13 percent of the global workforce engaged<sup>5</sup>, these programs are clearly far from effective.

It's not safe to assume your workforce is being suitably recognized, because the reality is that they likely are not. Their hard work is not appreciated, nor validated in a way that evokes inspiration. It's time to re-think recognition—the main catalyst to engaging and aligning your workforce, driving improved business performance.

The knowledge and services workforces are dramatically different today. They crave a purpose-driven company, regular feedback, career opportunities, and interesting work. With 70 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) generated by the knowledge and services industries<sup>6</sup>, the standards and ideals of the workforce are shaping the way businesses operate.

*The Ultimate Guide to Employee Recognition* will challenge conventional thinking and help you become more future-focused, so you can respond to the needs of today's workforce and lead the way to employee success. You'll learn to create a meaningful strategy from start to finish that yields higher levels of retention, higher customer satisfaction, exceptional employee engagement and alignment, and an unmatched culture of recognition and success.

## HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE:

*The Ultimate Guide to Employee Recognition* is structured in two parts:

- ➔ **Part one** reveals the case for employee recognition, providing strong fundamentals to support building your strategy.
- ➔ **Part two**, the how-to section, provides step-by-step tactical instructions to plan, design, execute, and communicate your strategy.

Turn the page and dive in to the essentials of employee recognition.





PART 1

# THE CASE FOR EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

*Face the changing workplace head on and build  
your case for an employee recognition strategy.*



## THE MODERN WORKFORCE AND CHANGING WORKPLACE

### Organizations Now Complement Hierarchy with Cross-Functionality

As organizations become flatter, today's employees have more opportunities to collaborate and thrive. Employees have more accountability and opportunities to take ownership and collaborate cross-functionally.

### THE EVOLUTION OF CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COMPANIES:

#### Yesterday

- Hierarchical
- Top down
- Information on a need to know basis
- Status and rank determine control
- Recognition is ad hoc and disconnected

#### Today

- Authority broadly delegated
- Collaborative and bottom up
- Open information flow
- Status and rank are not key factors
- Everyone recognizes each other's successes



### The Drought of Skilled Employees Will Incite the War for Talent

The war for talent is on. Successfully recruiting and retaining top talent is a big competitive differentiator. The number of available jobs is on the rise, but the US economy will also suffer a shortfall of six million skilled workers this year.<sup>7</sup> By next year, 60 percent of new jobs will require skills held by only 20 percent of the population.<sup>8</sup> This will impact your company and you must shift your thinking to stay ahead of it.





## Millennials are Taking Over the Workforce

Today, Millennials make up about 36 percent of the workforce. By 2018, that number will have increased to 50 percent.<sup>9</sup> This generation is unique and presents unique challenges for top employers to inspire and retain them. Constant feedback, clear communication, and collaborative work environments are key engagement drivers for this group.



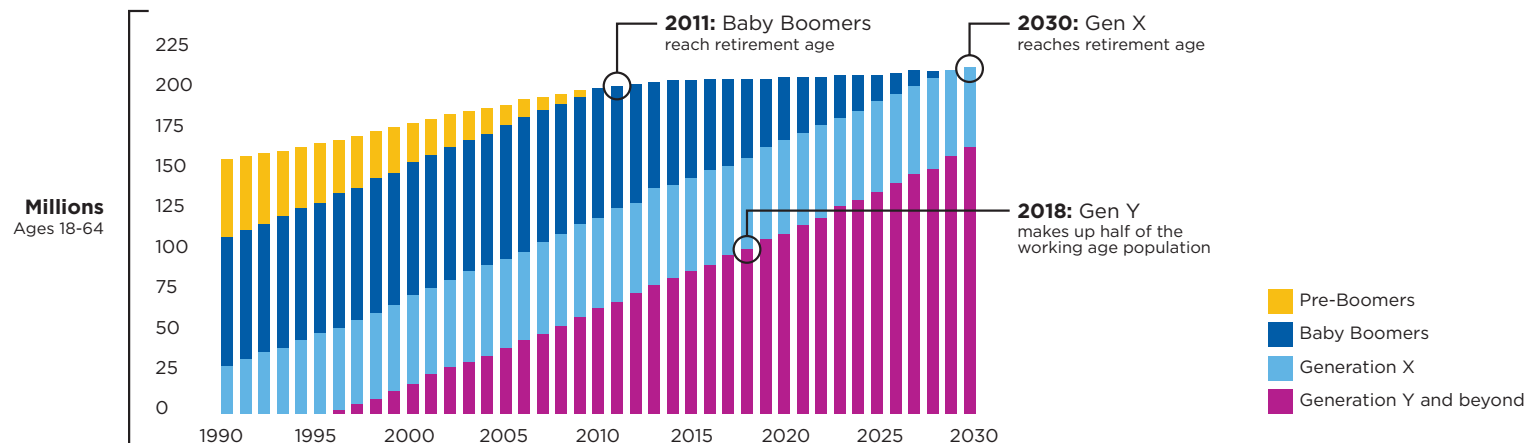
# 2014

36% of the workforce are Millennials

# 2018

50% of the workforce are Millennials

## GEN Y IS FAST-BECOMING THE MAJORITY OF THE WORKFORCE



*Want to learn more?  
Read the Class of 2014  
study for tips to recruit  
and retain Millennials.*

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## Customer Centricity is the Rule

Today the customer is in complete control. Companies that prioritize the customer experience will prevail, as they generate 60 percent higher profits than their competitors by doing so.<sup>10</sup> Your employees are ultimately responsible for creating repeat customers so you must empower them to OWN the customer experience.

Adapting to the modern workforce and changing workplace is critical to long-term business success. The foundation for new strategies begins with focusing on your employees and prioritizing what needs to change based on the reality of this new talent landscape. You'll be set for success if you create a future-focused recognition strategy to engage and align employees.

## Companies Face New Challenges to Inspire All Employees—Especially Outside the Office

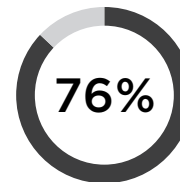
Understanding how to keep your remote employees engaged, aligned, and recognized will be paramount to business success. Knowledge and service employees can work anywhere—even outside the office. Remote employees aren't just an extension of your team; they *are* your team and they expect flexibility within their work environment. Cubicles are quickly being left behind as we shift to a mobile workplace.

### THE MOBILE WORKPLACE



**1 in 5 people**

own a smart phone today<sup>11</sup>



of businesses say mobile devices increased employee responsiveness and decision-making speed<sup>12</sup>



By 2017, 90% of enterprise apps will be both desktop and mobile, up from 20% in 2013<sup>13</sup>

# RECOGNITION CATALYZES ENGAGEMENT AND ALIGNMENT

Employee recognition helps companies align employees to business objectives by reinforcing behaviors tied to corporate results. And it solidifies employees' emotional connection with your company, making them more engaged. Recognition is a catalyst for engagement and alignment. These are the three ingredients to drive remarkable business success every single day.

That's because engaged, aligned, and recognized employees will work harder to satisfy your customers, and in turn create greater shareholder value. Otherwise known as the service-profit chain, employee engagement and customer loyalty are inextricably linked. These employees have been given the development and tools to delight the customer and deliver exemplary service that creates repeat business. This translates to higher revenue growth and profitability.

Strong employee alignment requires that all employees “get” the big picture. Only 37 percent of employees have a clear understanding of what their organization is trying to achieve and why.<sup>14</sup> Employees need to understand how they directly impact your business success for their jobs to feel valuable.

Alignment is dependent on communicating your business objectives and core company values across the company. Recognizing employees for living your core values every day helps to connect employees with the bigger picture and purpose, and reinforces the right behaviors for your company. Make sure employees understand the behaviors being measured and why. This requires frequent and effective communication, especially from managers to employees. Organizations that have leaders who are highly effective communicators have 47 percent higher total shareholder return.<sup>15</sup>

If you reinforce desired behaviors with positive feedback, they will be repeated. Engagement and alignment are the invaluable results of employee recognition. Recognition makes it possible to better leverage your best resource—your people.

Before digging in to define your recognition strategy, considering how to frame the plan for senior management will go a long way to secure buy-in.





# SECURING SENIOR MANAGEMENT BUY-IN

When senior leaders are actively involved in employee recognition, companies are nine times more likely to have strong business results.<sup>16</sup> Everybody wins.

They're probably reluctant to admit it, but your C-level executives view your employees as your number one cost. And they're right. They also think in quarters, semi-annual, or annual time-frames, while employees work hourly and daily. However, your executives will warm up to employee recognition if you speak the same language: using data. That will mean ROI for financial leaders, customer satisfaction for sales leaders, and engagement for HR. Provide evidence of the outcomes that can be achieved from a recognition strategy that engages and aligns employees.

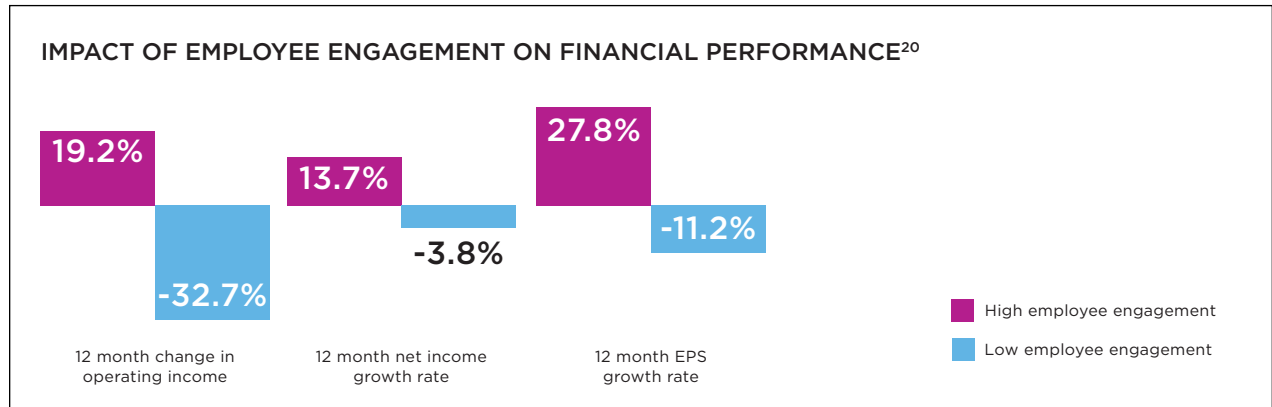
## 1. Present the ROI on engaged workplaces:



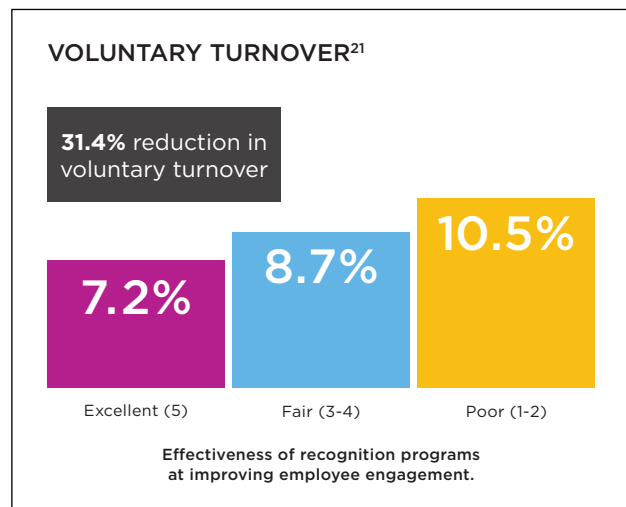
## 2. Share the impact of employee engagement on financial performance:

Engaged employees perform 20 percent better and are 87 percent less likely to leave their organizations.<sup>18</sup>

And organizations with high engagement rates are 78 percent more productive and 40 percent more profitable than those organizations with low levels of engagement.<sup>19</sup>



## 3. Show how recognition has a strong impact on employees:



## Employee Recognition Impacts Engagement

### Meridian Credit Union

Meridian Credit Union, with \$8 billion in assets, saw measurable, positive business impact when they implemented an Achievers Employee Success Platform to engage, align, and recognize their workforce. The company serves more than 260,000 customers, has 63 branches and eight commercial business centers. The firm fully believes that the greatest leading indicator of success is employee engagement. In 2009, administrative and management costs of running their homegrown recognition program were greatly reduced by implementing the Achievers Employee Success Platform.

Analyzing the impact of engagement by comparing the top and bottom quartile of engaged employees showed that each highly engaged employee (top quartile) was responsible for over \$2 million in growth, while each of the least engaged employee (bottom quartile) were responsible for \$1.29 million. The most engaged employee was solely responsible for a 4.7 percent increase in the company's client-base, while the least engaged employee was responsible for just over 1 percent. Meridian's operating margins increased over 10 percent for employees within the top quartile of engagement.

On the other hand, the bottom quartile of engaged employees caused -1.2 percent in operating margin growth.

Engaged employees were the key drivers of success for Meridian's improved financial results. Their recognition program was responsible for driving the behaviors that created better alignment and improved business performance. Companies like Meridian benefit from one consolidated Employee Success Platform to improve engagement, alignment and recognition.



### Your Next Move

An employee recognition strategy that has buy-in from senior leaders can transform your company by creating a culture of recognition that promotes strong engagement and alignment—every day. You'll build your reputation as a top employer and attract the best talent. So what should you do next? Make your case. The investment you have today in recognition or rewards can be better spent and deliver more impact and ROI. Gather relevant information about your company and ask questions. Survey employees to determine whether you have low or average engagement scores. Present the findings to your executives and show them you can reduce your company's costs and have a positive impact on the results that matter most, revealing the ROI of employee recognition.



A person wearing a light blue button-down shirt is holding a tablet. A white rectangular overlay is positioned on the left side of the tablet, containing text. The person's hand is visible, with fingers resting on the tablet's surface. The background is blurred, showing more of the person's shirt and possibly a desk or other surface.

PART 2

# THE HOW-TO SECTION

*Learn to plan, design, communicate, and roll-out  
your employee recognition strategy.*

## PLAN: CREATE YOUR OWN RECOGNITION ROAD MAP

Learn to plan, design, communicate, and roll-out your employee recognition strategy.

Modern recognition strategies are necessary to win in today's competitive business environment. Old-school strategies miss the point about engagement, alignment, and recognition, and can actively disengage employees with untimely and meaningless rewards. Avoid the pitfalls of old-school programs by creating a modern recognition strategy that engages, aligns, and recognizes your employees. A consolidated program provides valuable insight and eliminates manual processes for tracking results. Your winning strategy must be transparent and advanced—just like the modern workplace. Here it is: your step-by-step how-to guide to replace dated programs and make significant business impact. It's ultimately up to you, so what are you waiting for?

PricewaterhouseCoopers' 2013 CEO Survey included a quote from Jean-Pascal Tricoire, president and CEO of Schneider Electric SA, France. He said, "People need a sense of purpose. Gross margins are not the stuff of which dreams are made. And even without going so far as to talk of dreams, you cannot inspire people to take action, create, or motivate without instilling a sense of purpose, especially when times are difficult."<sup>23</sup> Even in the face of global economic turbulence, companies with an engaged, aligned, and recognized workforce can succeed. And yours can, too. Employee recognition is the spark that gets it all going.

It fulfills our intrinsic need to achieve and motivates us because of our inherent desire for acceptance and belonging. Recognition provides the avenue for purpose to be infused into daily actions. It provides perspective as recognition shows the receiver how their work connects with all levels of the bigger picture—how it impacts the people around you, the department, the company, the purpose of the organization. Recognition infuses everything with energy.

The next section will help you implement an inspiring recognition strategy that engages and aligns your employees.

*"People need a sense of purpose. Gross margins are not the stuff of which dreams are made. And even without going so far as to talk of dreams, you cannot inspire people to take action, create, or motivate without instilling a sense of purpose, especially when times are difficult."*

## Five Steps to Charting Your Road Map

### 1

#### Determine Your Company's Starting Point

Before you can cross the finish line, you must understand where to begin. Before planning changes, investigate the current state by answering, “What does our current employee recognition, engagement, or alignment strategy look like?” With a complete picture of what is in place today, determine industry best practices and benchmarks, which will help you better visualize the direction you need to go.

**Best practice:** Undertake an employee engagement survey to obtain real up-to-date data and use the insights to guide your next steps. Then, conduct focus groups with employees and managers and ask for feedback about survey results.

### 2

#### Ensure Your Strategy is Mobile-First

According to Gartner, there are more connected mobile devices on earth than there are people. The workforce is now more mobile than ever before. Gartner also expects 80 percent of businesses to support employees who use tablets by 2014.<sup>24</sup> Employees can work anywhere in the world. Mobile technology can help you create and sustain a culture of recognition, even for offline employees.

**Best practice:** Build a culture of recognition for your offline and geographically dispersed workforce with a mobile-first strategy.

### 3

#### Enable Managers with the Purpose Behind Recognition

Explain to managers the “why” behind recognition. For example, recognition could be used to align globally dispersed employees or inspire better teamwork and productivity. Recognition helps employees rise to the occasion and go above and beyond. Help managers understand why it’s paramount to your business. Most importantly, separate general compensation and recognition (compensation is only part of employees’ basic needs).

**Best practice:** Determine the reason for employee recognition, such as “aligning all employees to business objectives” for example, then communicate it to your team.

*Take the next step: Read [The Secret Weapon to Driving Employee Success](#) to empower your managers to build a culture of recognition.*

[DOWNLOAD E-BOOK](#)



## 4

### Align Business Objectives and Corporate Values with Recognition

Not only does recognition reinforce exemplary behavior, but you can utilize a platform to align employees to business objectives and company values with recognition.

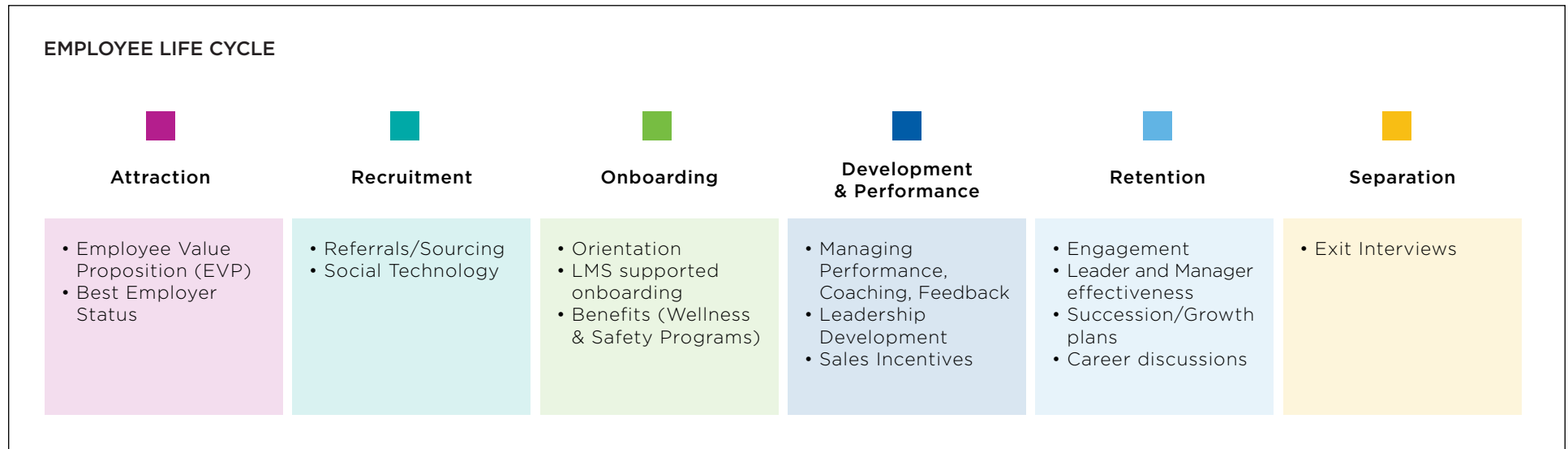
**Best practice:** Determine your end goals. Are they increased employee engagement or retention? Or are they aligning one global culture?

## 5

### Consider how Recognition Impacts the Employee Life Cycle

Talent management is multi-faceted and requires multiple systems and processes. An employee recognition strategy must work in harmony with all aspects of the employee life cycle.

**Best practice:** It's best to implement a tool that seamlessly integrates with all your HR systems. Opportunity to leverage recognition exists at every phase of the employee life cycle. See chart below for more.



# IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT TO KNOW FOR PROGRAM DESIGN AND ROLL-OUT

## 10 Critical Success Factors for Designing Workforce Recognition

This list includes the core elements you will need to consider to design a stellar program. We've done the research so you can focus on what's most important.

### 1 Budget

Companies typically spend as much as 1 - 2 percent of payroll on recognition programs, although most focus on rewarding tenure.<sup>25</sup> It's important to allocate the appropriate budget for recognition programs that foster frequent recognition, making it a daily habit. View this spend not as a cost, but more as an investment in your number one asset.

Decide how much you will spend, and how you will tie performance goals to the right behaviors in order to demonstrate an ROI. Your executives will require updates AND data not only to create your program but keep it running long term.

### 2 Frequency

Align recognition frequency with all other aspects of your strategy. Only 22 percent of employees report that they are recognized regularly.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, recognition must be frequent.

The best part? Recognition can actually occur continuously and not cost a penny. It's free.

### 3 Criteria

Determine the behaviors that align with business objectives and corporate values. Outlining proper behaviors that are aligned to company values helps give your program more structure and credibility and enables recognition to powerfully drive success.

Communicate recognition criteria with your entire organization so employees understand why desired behaviors are aligned with company values.

### 4 Recognition for One and All

Everyone in your organization must use the recognition program if it will have a lasting impact. Recognition can and should happen anywhere, at any time, on any mobile or desktop device.

Create a program that encourages all employees to recognize each other regardless of physical location or title.

### 5 Peer-to-peer Recognition

Remember, even the most competitive organizations are becoming far more collaborative and transitioning away from traditional top-down hierarchies. To create a cross-functional culture of recognition, you'll need to enable peer-to-peer recognition.

Enable peer-to-peer recognition to spark participation at all levels of the organization; otherwise you won't see the results.



### 6 No Barriers to Recognition

Competitive organizations eliminate any approval processes for recognition and implicitly trust their employees who participate. This is more empowering for the employee. Recognition should be organic and seamless.

Recognition provides employees with unsolicited, positive feedback, so make sure to eliminate any barriers or approval processes for employees to recognize.

### 7 Visibility

There are three types of recognition: public, group, and private. Often, making employee recognition visible to the entire organization is an important consideration. Visible recognition can occur in the following ways:

**Public:** Online newsfeed

**Group:** In front of the employee's team

**Private:** Employee/manager one-on-one

Consider making employee recognition visible to your entire organization, as it will help reinforce the right behaviors and provide ongoing participation momentum as employees can see the successes recognized and shared by their colleagues.



## 8 Delivery

You know the value of receiving something thoughtful. Excellent delivery will help your employees feel valued. Recognition can be delivered face-to-face, in a letter or email, at an event, or online. Evaluate the standard template or format for recognitions—it should look as good as the message being delivered.

With global workforces, personalized and meaningful electronic recognition is the way to go.



## 9 Consistency

A consistent employee experience for your entire workforce must include engagement and alignment so employees feel connected to a unified culture and experience. Within a company-wide recognition program consider including different program features that reflect the specific needs of each locale while ensuring the overarching program is consistent.

Offer a unified employee experience, even if some parts of your program need to be customized to meet global requirements.

### **Did you know that a consolidated Employee Success Platform largely eliminates the burden of administration?**

You'll benefit from automatic reporting based on predetermined criteria. Also, you'll be able to get a clear picture of employee performance and how well employees are aligned to business objectives.

## 10 Measurement

Carefully consider what success looks like and how you'll measure it. You must be able to demonstrate the impact of your program on your employees (improved engagement, retention, etc.) and on business performance.

*See how Save Mart Supermarkets implemented the Achievers Employee Success Platform™ to achieve better business results.*



## Jump-Start Your Recognition Culture with an Exciting and Engaging Launch

The way you roll-out your program is just as important as the design process. Employees should feel energized about your new recognition program and inspired to use it. That's why we've put together a cheat-sheet with some best practices for your program launch.



## Spread the Word with Clear Communication

After you've determined your objectives, incorporate them into a communications plan and marketing collateral. Best-in-class communication efforts begin during the design phase, so get key stakeholders involved early.

Create marketing materials to communicate program goals and recognition best practices. Be sure they are aligned with your brand voice and guidelines to provide one consistent message across your organization.

Most importantly, have fun with it and get creative. This is a great opportunity to think outside the box to get employees' attention.

## Equip Employees (and Managers, Especially) with Training

When you actually launch the program special training is required for the program administrators in your organization. Set them up for success by coaching them on recognition best practices, the power of engagement and alignment, how to use the program, and how to effectively use dashboards and reporting tools.

But don't forget about managers. Too often managers are trained on the

how, but not the why. If you can help managers understand the "What's In It For Me" they'll jump on board without hesitation.

Don't simply train on process and technology. Everyone must understand the "why" and see the connection to business success.

*Equip managers with training today: Read [The Secret Weapon to Driving Employee Success](#) to provide them with coaching and recognition best practices.*

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## BECOME A CHANGE AGENT

Implementing change is never simple but you can minimize the pain. This section breaks down the basics to help you become an agent of change.



### Remove the Burden of Manual Administration with Consolidation

The way you administer your program will impact its success. Most companies' programs tend to operate in isolation from other HR systems. It's important to consolidate your program into one integrated platform that will scale across your business. There must be harmony.

Front-line employees only need to go to one place, managers get the employee visibility they need, and the company has cost control and reporting to understand where to invest its dollars.

### Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Take considerate measures and communicate the changes to your organization.

Program adoption is critical to create a culture of recognition. Communicate the benefits of your recognition program to all employees early and often.







### Constantly Assess the Program's Value

Your recognition program and your company's values should be aligned. As business goals change, so might your program. You must keep the big picture in mind. How do changes impact the ways in which employees recognize one another?

Communicate all program changes to employees, especially if goals or recognition criteria change.

### Optimize Programs to Keep Them Fresh

Over time, re-examine your program to ensure that it's meeting your organization's goals. Solicit feedback from key stakeholders. You should constantly think about ways to update your program, keeping it fresh and dynamic.

Assess whether certain metrics or criteria are getting the results you want, and if not, continue refreshing until you're satisfied.





## AMPLIFY: THE SCIENCE OF REWARDS

People like to group rewards and recognition together as though they are one. Rewards can complement recognition but are not a replacement. It's not about only giving employees things.

You have a chance to amplify recognition, engagement, and alignment with rewards, done the right way. A paycheck is not a thank you, as it only satisfies your employees' basic needs. You want to reinforce the right employee behaviors, and then reward them accordingly.

If recognition fulfills our intrinsic needs for love, belonging, and self-esteem, then rewards act as an extrinsic motivator. When you receive a reward that you choose, it is more meaningful and you'll associate it with positive memories tied to your company.

## Why Rewards are Critical to Recognition Programs



Bersin by Deloitte's research identified two different types of recognition: praise and emblematic recognition, and token and monetary rewards. In this study, they found that both types of recognition are important to employees, as this varied approach helps to constantly and frequently reinforce desired employee behaviors. Although different types of recognition are important it should always be aligned with your organization's values and business objectives.

### RECOGNITION ELEMENTS AND THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH TOP-QUARTILE BPI OUTCOMES<sup>27</sup>

	Praise and Emblematic Rewards	Monetary Rewards
Recognition Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Give public recognition, with no monetary value (e.g. public "thank yous", certificates, trophies, plaques, etc.)</li> <li>▶ Provide paid days off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Give public recognition, with monetary value (e.g. companywide awards)</li> <li>▶ Allow employees to nominate each other for companywide awards (with monetary value)</li> </ul>
If highly effective at the recognition approach, likelihood of being in top quartile of business performance index	2.8	3.5

See what's new this year for the Class of 2014:



*Read Your Next Generation of Top Talent to learn what these young graduates need from their future workplaces.*

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NOW**

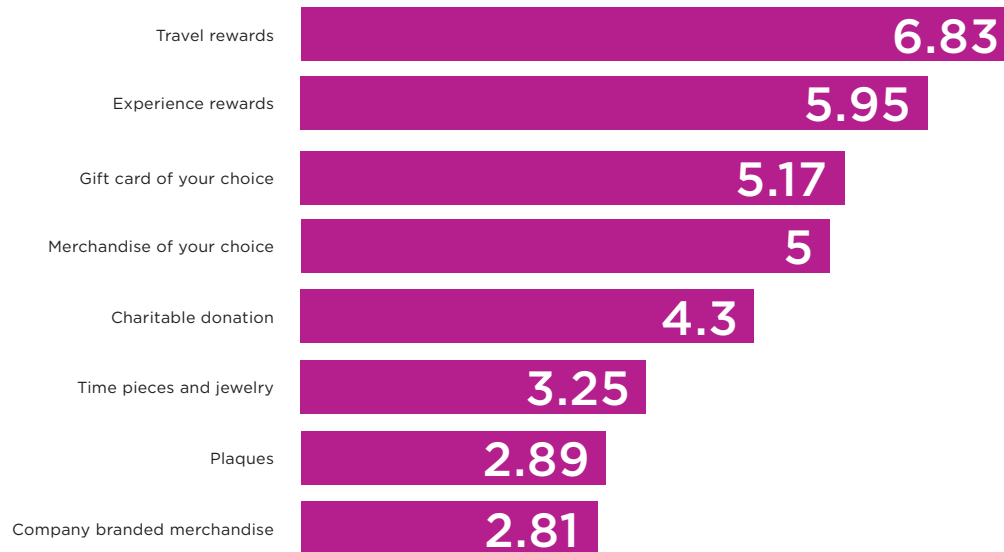
## The Best Rewards are Chosen Ones

Allow personal choice to play a part in rewards. A reward that resonates with one employee may not translate for others, so ensure you are optimizing your investment in your rewards—and your talent. There are many types of rewards from which to choose. It's up to you to decide which rewards align with your strategy and culture.

ConnectEDU and Achievers partnered for the fourth year running to understand what the Class of 2013 would expect in the workplace, and what companies in search of new talent should expect from them. More than 10,000 students were surveyed across the United States. It's interesting to point out that the majority of students chose travel and experience rewards and gift cards as the most appealing rewards. Rewards like time pieces and plaques are not appealing, as they fall at the bottom of the chart on the next page.

**HOW APPEALING WOULD EACH OF THESE REWARDS BE?<sup>28</sup>**

WEIGHTED RESPONSES RANKED ON A SCALE OF ONE TO EIGHT



## Don't Assume Cash Rewards are the Best Option

You must consider both monetary and non-monetary rewards because employees may associate cash rewards with compensation instead of achievement. Recognition must initiate a behavioral movement toward business objectives, so be aware of how cash rewards are perceived.

Spending as little as one percent of your employee payroll on specific, meaningful, and timely rewards is just as important as the other 99 percent of your employee dollars. If you consider the impact on the “average” total compensation package for an employee, one percent added to their paycheck would not only seem small, but will get lost in their direct deposit statement and taxes.

## Think Globally but Fulfill Locally

Select a global provider that offers the total package by consolidating all features and capabilities into one Employee Success Platform. This guarantees a consistent experience for your employees, regardless of country and local currencies.

With respect to global fulfillment capabilities, you must always consider including local, in-country fulfillment. This cuts down on cost to the provider including extra fees for customs and duties, and in turn provides great value to the recipient. For

example, it costs \$60 to ship a gift certificate from the United States to Egypt, but only costs \$5 to ship the same item within country. Imagine the ramifications of choosing the wrong global partner. Your ROI depends on it.



# ARE YOU READY?

The current business ecosystem has become more acutely competitive than ever before. It's imperative that you look beyond what's in front of you today.

The global workforce is fundamentally changing—and requires modern recognition strategies to impact engagement, alignment, and the bottom line. Opportunities to make a positive shift for the future are at hand with the strength of insight provided by your newfound strategic lenses.

Take care of your people by engaging them, aligning them to corporate strategy, and recognizing outstanding achievements in the moment. Your employees will find it unimaginable to leave your company if you excel at these things. Plus, you'll provide your executives with irrefutable program ROI and evident impacts on business success, reaffirming you are a strategic business partner that plays an integral role in driving results.

Best of all, you'll delight your customers and make them loyal, raving fans of your company. And you'll never look back to the old-school way of engaging employees again.

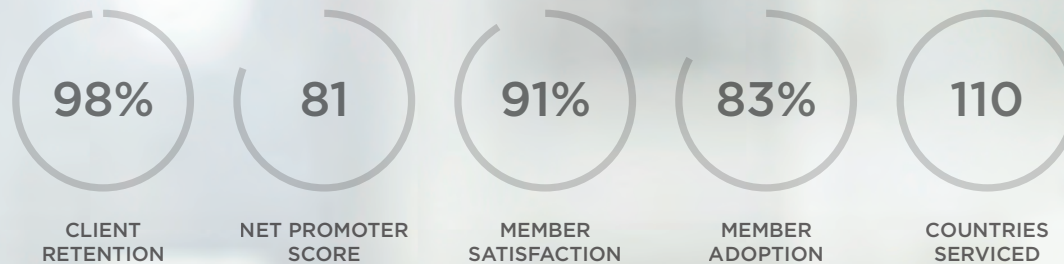


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