

Top 5 Tips for Implementing Recognition and Rewards



1. Begin with purpose

Effective recognition programs drive business results when they align with your company's mission and values. Leaders and managers should be fully educated on the role recognition plays in driving a desired culture. The most critical element in delivering meaningful recognition is authenticity, so as you begin, ensure that management is fully on board.

2. Create an atmosphere for recognition

As restaurateurs know, presentation matters and that experience begins with the moment patrons walk through the door. The same applies as you seek to create a culture of engagement. Use existing communications and gatherings to "market" your new program and set the stage for a meaningful recognition experience. Build anticipation for their first "taste" of success – being recognized and rewarded.

3. Allow for flexibility and style

Not only are your employees unique when it comes to how they want to be recognized, your managers will have a style that they will bring as well. Trying to fit every manager into the same box in terms of when and how to give recognition will tend to stifle your efforts and will challenge that important point from above – authenticity. Manage the budget tightly, but allow flexibility in the delivery.

4. Recognition is for people, not robots

For recognition programs to be impactful, they must be personally meaningful. This seems intuitive and in fact it is fully supported by new research in neuroscience. However, far too often we seek convenience and skip the act of appreciation. In a crunch for time, we hope that an email and a reward of some kind will serve our purpose, but that is almost never the case. The email and reward are one part of the "transaction", but the other part is the personal connection, the elevation of the recipient's status in their group, and the emotional impact of being truly appreciated. Whether one-on-one or in a group setting, recognize your people... in person.

5. Non-cash rewards outperform cash by a long shot

Merchandise, specialty gift cards, and experiential rewards are by far the most impactful options (by a 3-to-1 margin) to drive behavior. They have trophy value, and the memories (attributable to your company) last far beyond any cash-like offering. These 'non-cash' offerings also enable more of that viral marketing and promotion within your business. Employees are able to talk with other employees about the iPad they just earned, but that would not be the case if instead they were simply given a \$500 generic gift card. Use a points-based program to enable your own non-cash selection.

Jumpstart Your Program with these Best Practices

Allow points accumulation. Employees who save for bigger items will use that as motivation.

Gross up awards. Points are taxable in most cases. Offer a lower award amount and use the balance to pay the taxes for them.

Surprise and delight. Random acts of recognition for unplanned reasons will light up strong positive emotions.

Check in with employees. Employees who save for bigger items will use that as motivation.

Encourage 'social-ness.' Running an effective recognition and rewards program is a differentiator for employers of choice – let the word get out!

