



FROM NELSON SCOTT...

Staff-Recognition Tips

Staff-Recognition Month May 2015

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Why Recognize Staff

Recognizing others may reduce your stress

Feeling stressed? Overwhelmed with work? Facing a difficult challenge? Step back for a moment to express appreciation to someone for a job well done. Focusing on positives, even for a few minutes, may be a powerful source of stress relief.

Staff recognition influences the quality of customer service

Why recognize staff? It's about your customers. The service your customers receive reflects how staff feels they are treated. Staff members who feel respected and valued will serve customers in a respectful and caring manner.



If employees are upset and don't feel cared for, what will be first in their minds is their resume, not the customer."

**—Hal Rosenbluth,
businessman & author**



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Peer Recognition

Encourage peer recognition by modeling recognition

Peer Recognition Day is the third Tuesday of each month. It's a day to encourage staff to acknowledge their co-workers for what they do that makes others more effective, their jobs easier and the workplace more enjoyable. A good way to encourage peer recognition is by modelling recognition. Be an example to your staff. The more often you recognize staff members, the more likely they are to express appreciation to their co-workers.



 www.greatstaffrecognition.com/articles/peerrec.htm

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GREAT Staff Recognition

The acronym **GREAT** is a reminder of the five ingredients of staff recognition.

Recognition must be inspired by a **Genuine** sense of appreciation for what the recipient did. You strengthen this message when you make it **Relevant** (linked to the organization's values and goals), **Explicit** (including a specific description of what the recipient did well), **Appropriate** (reflecting the recipient's interests and recognition preferences), and **Timely** (delivered soon after the actions for which the recipient is being recognized).

Recognition should also be delivered **Frequently** (measured in day and weeks, not months or years).

Recognition is not about certificates and trinkets

Much of the conversation about staff recognition focuses on tokens of appreciation that can be used when recognizing staff—certificates, plaques, gift cards and merchandise. While the right items carefully selected with the recipient in mind can strengthen your message of appreciation, these are only the tools of staff recognition. They are only effective when used by individuals who are inspired by a Genuine sense of appreciation for what staff members did. Any tokens of appreciation should be accompanied by a specific description of how the recipient contributed or what was achieved and why it was important.

Being fair doesn't mean recognizing all staff equally

Treating all employees fairly is important, but that doesn't mean treating everyone the same. Don't become one of those leaders who feel that recognition should be delivered to all staff in the same way and at the same time. That ignores the fact that not all contributions and achievements are equally significant to the organization's success. Those leaders believe that by treating all employees the same they will avoid upsetting staff who are not being recognized. They don't want anyone to feel bad or angry because they didn't receive the same recognition as their colleagues. I think they should be more worried about how top performers feel when they see those who contributed less receiving the same recognition as they do.



"There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people."

—**Thomas Jefferson**, the third American president

(or maybe it was the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle)

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Clarify what's expected. Recognize it when it happens

Do staff members understand how what they do fits into the big picture? Why is what they do important? How does their work contribute to the organization meeting its goals? What behaviour is expected of them that will reflect the organization's values, such as customer service, collaboration and innovation?

Meet with staff individually, in small groups, or as a full staff to answer these questions. It will help clarify what is expected of them, and why.

Confirm that your expectations are real by recognizing staff when you see them do what you expect of them. Every time you do, you are providing the positive feedback they desire. By linking recognition to the company's mission statement and values, you are reminding them of what the company feels is important and of your expectations.

Deciding what to recognize

Effective staff recognition begins with knowing what to recognize. A good place to begin is with the documents that define your organization's purpose: its mission statement, values and goals. What behaviours are key to your company's success? List what you want people to do. What can they do that helps fulfil your mission? What behaviours reflect your values? What needs to be done to achieve your goals?

Return to this list regularly. Recognize individuals and teams when you witness behaviours that are on your list.

Learn something new about each staff member this month

How well do you know your staff members as individuals? What don't you know about them? During Staff-Recognition Month, commit to learning one fact about each of the people you work with that you can use to recognize him or her in appropriate ways—hobbies, interests, aspirations. Here are seven questions to help you get to know staff members better.

The impact is greater when recognition is Timely

We often allow urgent tasks to push aside important tasks, such as recognizing staff. Resist waiting until tomorrow, or the next day or next week to acknowledge contributions and achievements. Recognition is best when delivered while the memory of what was done is fresh in everyone's mind—yours, the employee who deserves to be recognized and his or her co-workers. Timely recognition has more impact than recognition that occurs days or weeks after the event.



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Simple, Cost-Effective Staff-Recognition Techniques

Inspire with carefully selection quotations

Quotations can inspire, but seldom those found on so-called “motivational posters” that plaster the walls of some workplaces.

“*Feedback is the breakfast of champions.*”
—**Ken Blanchard**

“*There is no such thing as limits to growth, because there are not limits to the human capacity for intelligence, imagination, and wonder.*”
—**Ronald Reagan**

“*Only he who can see the invisible can do the impossible.*”
—**Anon.**

These all-too-familiar words have become more cliché than inspirational.

The quotations that will inspire—and show that you care—are words carefully selected with the recipient in mind. These may have been spoken by someone who the recipient admires, an author whose writing she enjoys, or may reflect the person the recipient is.

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Begin the week by acknowledging what went well last week

What went well last week? Who was responsible? Begin the week by acknowledging individuals and teams for the previous week's successes. Describe what went well (be specific!) and why it was important. Explain how what happened is Relevant and related to the company's mission statement, values or goals.

100s of tips to add variety to your staff recognition

Each of us have default staff-recognition techniques that we use over and over. For me it's thank-you notes and coffee shop gift cards. When a technique is used too frequently, its impact may be reduced. Occasionally, force yourself to step away from the familiar. Recognize staff in different ways. Your staff will appreciate the change and you may discover a new favourite way to recognize staff.

There are several sources to which you can turn to discover new ways to recognize staff. Of course, I would like you to buy and read my book, *Thanks! GREAT Job!*, but it's just one source. There are several great books, filled with staff-recognition ideas: *1,501 Ways to Reward Employees* or *The 1001 Rewards and Recognition Fieldbook* by Dr. Bob Nelson, *The Carrot Principle* or *Managing with Carrots* by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, and *Make Their Day!* by Cindy Ventrice are just a few.

And if you're not already a subscriber, sign up to receive *Briefly Noted* every couple of weeks and get at least three staff-recognition tips in every issue.



www.greatstaffrecognition.com/book/index.htm

www.greatstaffrecognition.com/briefly/signup.htm

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Creating a staff-recognition toolkit

Create a staff-recognition toolkit so that you are always prepared to recognize others. Include thank-you cards, sticky notes, gift cards, treats, a special pen used only to recognize (perhaps with a distinct ink colour; my choice is green), and other tools you can use to recognize the contributions of others. Include, as well, a collection of staff-recognition tips, such as *A Carrot a Day* by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, *101 Recognition Secrets: Tools for Motivating and Recognizing Today's Workforce* by Rosalind Jeffries, or one of the books listed in the previous tip.

Summer-themed staff recognition

It's Victoria Day, the long weekend when summer begins for Canadians. When it's warm and the sun is shining, it's a good time to consider how you can add a summer theme to your staff-recognition plans. Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking of ways to celebrate team success during the summer months:

- ▶ Get outside. Encourage staff to leave the building during their breaks, to enjoy the good weather with their colleagues. Maybe you could even allow them to extend their breaks by a few minutes.
- ▶ Serve cold drinks to staff during their afternoon break.
- ▶ Fire up a barbecue in the parking lot and cook them burgers or hot dogs for lunch.
- ▶ Deliver ice-cream treats and a few words of appreciation to staff members at their desks.



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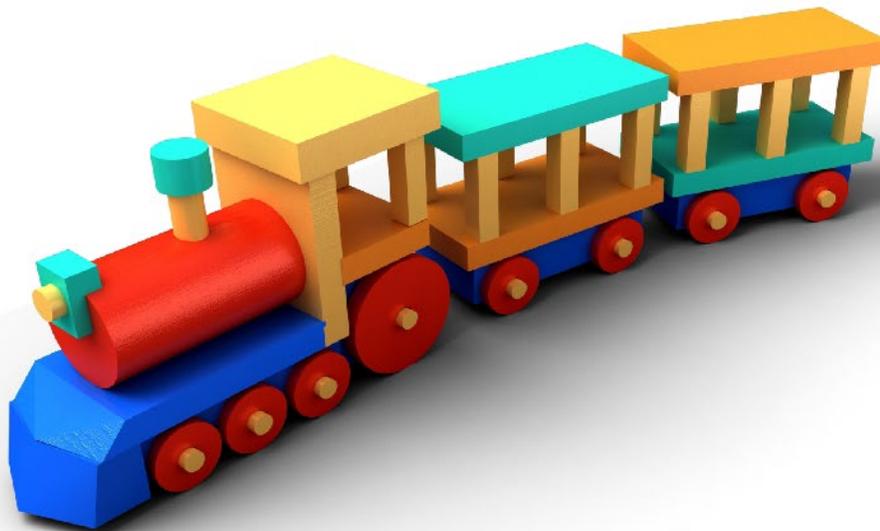
Adding fun and humour to recognition

Making the recipient of recognition the target of jokes or put-downs is never a good idea. Doing so diminishes the value of the recognition.

But that doesn't mean that recognition always needs to be delivered with a straight face. Small gifts can add a humorous touch to staff recognition and bring smiles to the face of the recipient and his co-workers. People enjoy coming to work when fun and humour is part of the culture.

Here are a few ways in which humour can enhance recognition:

- ▶ A glove filled with treats for someone who "helped out when an extra set of hands were needed."
- ▶ A desk lamp for someone who "shone light on a problem that was holding us back."
- ▶ A toy train for someone who "kept us on the right track."
- ▶ A toy frog for someone who "helped us take a great leap forward."
- ▶ A Forrest Gump Award (box of chocolates) for a staff member who demonstrated calm when dealing with the unexpected. "You never know what you are going to get."



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Finding time to recognize staff

The U.S. Declaration of Independence begins with these words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” In today’s workplaces, such as yours, two truths are self-evident:

- ▶ You and your managerial colleagues are busy. You have a full workload.
- ▶ Staff recognition is yet another task on your to-do list, but you know it’s important and best when delivered in a Timely fashion.

What are you to do? There are just so many hours in the day.

Here are some time-saving tips that may allow you to work more staff recognition into your busy schedule:

- ▶ Always carry thank-you cards with you—in your purse or briefcase. Whenever you are waiting for an appointment or for a meeting to begin, use this time and your easily accessible cards to write a note to a deserving staff member.
- ▶ Use voice mail. In just a few seconds after the work day ends or first thing in the morning, record a message of appreciation on a staff member’s voice mail, so she will be able to listen to it first thing when she arrives for work. What a great way for her to begin her day!
- ▶ After reading a well-written report, add a few words of praise to the bottom of the document and return it to the author.
- ▶ Send text or email messages of praise during your commute (but not if you are the one driving) or when watching television (better than spending commercial breaks searching the refrigerator for snacks).
- ▶ Take different routes to and from your office, detouring to visit individual staff members to express appreciation for their contributions.

Encourage staff to maintain a recognition folder

At the same time as you recognize a new employee in writing for the first time, also present her with a file folder.

“*I suggest that you keep this note in this file folder. And do the same thing every time you receive a note or letter acknowledging you for your contributions and achievements. Take it out often to review what has been written, especially on those days when you are feeling overwhelmed or frustrated by your job.*”

Caution: Presenting a recognition folder implies a commitment to providing future written recognition. You will be creating an expectation on which you must deliver.

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Take the 24-hour thank-you challenge

For a day, look for reasons to include the words “thank you” in every conversation, whether in person, on the telephone or via email. Remember that to be meaningful, recognition must be Genuine (inspired by a sincere sense of appreciation). Describe what the person did that you appreciate. When your reason for recognition is Explicit, it shows that you really know what staff members do, and why it is important.

Celebrate service anniversaries more often

Many organizations give service awards to employees who have worked for the company, usually at five-year intervals. That’s really not particularly meaningful recognition. Who wants to wait five years to be thanked for their service? Most employees don’t even stay long enough to reach their first five-year milestone.

Celebrate the time employees spend with your organization more often, such as on every work anniversary. Use these milestones as a reason to reflect on the last 12 months.

When expressing your appreciation, describe some of the ways in which the employee has contributed during the past year..

For new employees, even waiting for their first anniversary is too long. The first recognition could come after just one month on the job (*“You’ve been here a month now, Jeff and during that time, you have had to digest a lot of information. I admire how well you have mastered our procedures and reached out to our customers to get to know them and what they need from us.”*) Say thank you again after his first quarter and then at the half-year mark.



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Potluck lunches as a staff-recognition tool

Here's a twist on the traditional potluck lunch, which can be a great team-building activity (is there a better way to get to know people than by sharing a meal?) and a common feature of many workplaces.

Instead of just asking people to contribute to the communal table, invite participants to prepare a dish that holds special meaning for them. Perhaps it is a casserole they remember their mother preparing, a food rooted in their family's culture, or a recipe recently discovered in a cookbook that they just needed an excuse to prepare.

Ask each person to explain why they choose the dish and what makes it special. Listen carefully. Chances are you are going to learn something you didn't know about some of your colleagues. You will know them a little better as individuals and gain insight into how to recognize them in the future.

Now, how would I have explained my usual potluck contribution: the buns and butter I picked up at Safeway on the way to work?

Two powerful, yet easy-to-use ways to say thank you

Take a look at the first page of this guide. It includes two of the most powerful, yet easy-to-use, staff-recognition techniques out there—messages of appreciation on sticky notes attached to a deserving staff member's computer screen, desk or to a small gift, and handwritten thank-you notes. Increase the impact of your thank-you notes by affixing a stamp to the envelope and mailing it to the staff member's home.

 www.greatstaffrecognition.com/recognitionres/stickynotes.htm

 brieflynotedonline.wordpress.com/2015/03/04/7-ways-to-increase-the-impact-of-your-messages-of-appreciation/



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Date-Specific Staff Recognition

Prepare to celebrate National Receptionists Day on May 13

The importance of the role played by receptionists is often overlooked. Take time on National Receptionists Day (Wednesday, May 13) to let these “Managers of First Impressions” know how much you depend on them. Your organization’s receptionist is often the first person that clients meet when visiting your office or calling it on the telephone.

Say thank you with cookies

Combine staff recognition with the celebration of National Chocolate Chip Day (Friday, May 15). Place a plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies on the staff-room table or leave a cookie at each desk or workstation. Leave a note expressing appreciation for how the team or individuals contribute to the organization that reads something like this: “Happy National Chocolate Chip Day. Enjoy a cookie and be reminded that your efforts are appreciated. Thank you for [specific example of something the team achieved or how an individual contributed].”

Environment Week: good time to assess “greenness” of staff recognition

With Canada Environment Week beginning on Sunday, May 31 (running through June 6), it’s a good time to reflect on your recognition practices. Are they environmentally friendly, or is there too much emphasis on trophies, certificates and trinkets that your staff doesn’t really value and will soon discard? Should you be using e-cards instead of printed cards? Would items that recipients consume, such as treats and movie passes, be a better choice than more permanent mementoes, such as plaques and paperweights?

Recognize staff for environmentally friendly practices

Committed to being an environmentally friendly organization? Recognize staff for actions and decisions that reflect your desire to be a green organization, such as:

- ▶ Commuting by bike, public transportation or as part of a car pool
- ▶ Suggesting ways to make the organization more environmentally friendly
- ▶ Avoiding the unnecessary use of paper; double-siding when printing or photocopying; not printing a “couple of extra” meeting handouts just in case they are needed
- ▶ Bringing lunch in reusable containers
- ▶ Using ceramic or travel mugs, instead of disposable cups

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Assessment of Staff-Recognition Practices

Two end-of-the-day questions to build in accountability

Build accountability into your staff-recognition strategies. End the day by asking yourself, “What did I do today to let a staff member or work team know that what they do is appreciated? What could I do tomorrow?”

How do staff members respond to recognition?

What works? What doesn't? To what types of recognition do they respond better? Do they seem to prefer handwritten notes or a simple pat on the back? Do they display certificates and plaques they receive in their work area? Do they appear to relish recognition delivered in public, or does it seem they seek ways to escape recognition that is delivered in front of their peers?

Use your observations to customize the recognition you provide. Recognize individual staff members in ways that are meaningful them.

How much recognition to you provide?

How much recognition do you provide? You might be surprised (in a good way, I hope). Keep track for a week or longer. Each time you acknowledge a staff member for a contribution or achievement, jot down a brief description:

- ▶ “Sent thank-you note to Milo re: setting up the AV for the staff meeting. Everything worked well.”
- ▶ “Spoke to Sue re: plan she suggested for summer coverage while staff is on vacation. Well thought out.”
- ▶ “Congratulated Chuck for completing first aid training program.”

Review your list regularly. Looks like you're doing a good job of recognizing staff.

Congratulations!



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Simple survey to assess satisfaction with staff recognition

How does your staff feel about the recognition they receive? Here is a simple, four-question survey that will both tell you how they feel today and produce actionable information that will enable you to enhance your staff-recognition practices:

1. On a 7-point scale, how satisfied are you with the recognition you and your colleague receive for doing your jobs well?
2. Why did you give this rating?
3. On a 7-point scale, how satisfied could you be with the recognition you receive?
4. What would need to happen for you to feel you could give this rating?

The final question could be a gold mine of suggestions for enhancing the recognition you provide.



Introducing Nelson Scott

Nelson Scott is passionate about staff recognition as a way to improve staff retention, boost morale and increase employee engagement. Through his articles, blog and programs, Nelson provides managers and supervisors with tips, tools and techniques that they can use to recognize staff in ways they will value and at little or no cost in terms of money, time and effort.

Nelson is the author of ***Thanks! GREAT Job! Improve Retention, Boost Morale and Increase Engagement with High-Value, Low-Cost Staff Recognition.***

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