

FROM THE AUTHOR OF  
**Thanks! GREAT Job!**

**Thanks,  
Again!**

*More Simple,  
Inexpensive  
Ways for Busy  
Leaders to  
Recognize Staff*

**Nelson Scott**

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# Tip #1

## The 4 As of Staff Recognition

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Not all staff recognition tips are created equally. Some will work for you. Others won't. Some can be modified to fit your circumstances.

Use the following to assess the tips, tools and techniques you will encounter in this book and elsewhere:

**Adopt** recognition tips with which you are comfortable and which you feel will fit your workplace culture.

**Adapt** others so they fit your circumstances. Let these tips inspire you to discover new ways to recognize staff.

**Avoid** those staff recognition practices with which you are uncomfortable or which you feel won't align with your workplace culture.

**Abandon** staff recognition practices that don't work or have become stale.



# First, a Bit About You, the Reader

The most frequent reaction to me telling someone that I write and speak about staff recognition is, “That’s really needed. I know someone (often their current or former boss) who needs to hear your message.”

They continue to describe how recognition is a rare commodity where they work or where they once worked. They feel they are not now, or were not previously, valued or appreciated.

Realistically, their managers and supervisors are not the audience for this book. Of course, those individuals should learn about staff recognition, but those who are unable to fathom the benefits of expressing appreciation in the workplace are unlikely to purchase a book filled with staff recognition tips.

Greek philosopher Aristotle is credited with the observation that “nature abhors a vacuum.” The same is true in the workplace in the absence of feedback of any kind. Eliminate feedback vacuums by providing negative feedback when required and recognition when deserved. The absence of recognition and words of encouragement creates a vacuum that staff will soon fill with negative thoughts. They will assume that the boss is unhappy with their performance but reluctant to deliver bad news. Without praise for what they do well, they will begin to worry about what they have done wrong.

They will continue to “lead” workplaces characterized by poor morale, low engagement and high turnover, and wonder why.

But that's not your workplace.

This book is for frontline leaders like you—managers, supervisors, school principals, small business owners, department heads and others who grasp the power of staff recognition.<sup>1</sup>

You are a *believer*! You understand that acknowledging the contributions and achievements of individual staff members and teams makes a difference. You don't need to be convinced that you should express appreciation frequently.

Believing in the power of recognition means you stand out from most managers and supervisors. Research by Gallup and Workhuman found that four of every five leaders said staff recognition was not a priority for them, and roughly two thirds said they had no budget for staff recognition.

That's why I've devoted little space to arguing the benefits of staff recognition, apart from sprinkled references to a few studies that confirm what you already believe. If you are looking for more evidence, check out my first book (*Thanks! GREAT Job!*), review the counter arguments to the reasons some managers give for not recognizing staff in Theme #27: How to Respond the Next Time Someone Says, "I Don't Recognize Staff Because . . ." (p. 150), read any of the fine books by others listed in Theme #2: Filling Your Staff Recognition Tool Kit (p. 8), or just Google, "Why is staff recognition important?"

Despite your history of success in recognizing staff, you are likely still looking for new ways to say thank you in your workplace. There is always a place for new staff recognition practices. In this book, you will find tools and techniques you can use immediately and others that are the spark that ignites your imagination to develop your own unique recognition practices.

Because most frontline leaders have limited resources (specifically, little time or money) to devote to staff recognition, most of the tools, tips and

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1 While written primarily with frontline leaders in mind, senior leaders and frontline staff could also find the content of interest. In particular, Theme #5: Senior Executives, Frontline Staff and Recognition (p. 29) is meant for senior leaders, while Theme #20: Recognition by Everyone: Unleashing the Power of Peer Recognition, Part B (p. 118) and Theme #23: Recognize Bosses on Their Day—and All Year Long (p. 134) will be of value for frontline staff.

2 Available from [www.GREATstaffrecognition.com](http://www.GREATstaffrecognition.com)

techniques in this book are inexpensive and easy to implement. These are “low-cost, high-value” ways to strengthen your expressions of gratitude—low cost in terms of your time, effort and money and high value as perceived by recipients.

As you browse this collection of ways to recognize staff, highlight those that you could use, mark those that will need to be changed to fit your workplace and cross out those which are simply not right for you.

The book is organized by themes, each one including a brief introduction, followed by related staff recognition tips, tools and techniques.

The themes are divided into four sections—Laying the Foundation, Using Your Staff Recognition Tools, Responding to Staff Recognition Needs of Specific Groups and Overcoming Barriers to Staff Recognition. There is also a bonus section with ideas that didn’t fit any of the themes but were too good to leave out.

Finally, like a murder mystery, there is a reveal at the end of the book. But unlike a whodunit, it’s OK to turn to the last page to discover who *will do it*.



# *Section 1*

## Laying the Foundation

Defining staff recognition and why it's important; creating your staff recognition tool kit; the staff recognition role of senior executives; making a habit of recognizing staff.



# Theme #1

## Recognition Builds Workplace Relationships

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An audience member in one of my programs once observed that recognition is all about building relationships. How true!

Staff members' experience with the boss is the most important relationship in the workplace. When frontline leaders care about their staff, are fair in their dealings with them and treat them with respect, it creates a work environment where staff feel they belong. Staff members are willing to do their best *for the boss* and are less likely to leave.

Feeling they are valued as individuals and appreciated for how they contribute and for what they achieve makes staff members more confident about how they do their jobs. Well-delivered recognition creates an emotional connection between frontline leaders and staff members and among co-workers. It connects them to their work and to the organization and its purpose, which can increase employee happiness and engagement and improve retention.

### **Why Recognize Staff?**

- Staff members want and deserve to know they are valued as individuals and appreciated for how they contribute and what they achieve.
- There is a benefit for you: It feels good to acknowledge others for performing well.

Your messages of appreciation may be the boost recipients need to lift their performance from good to great.

Recognition creates workplaces where staff members believe they are right where they belong and feel comfortable being themselves. It's where they want to stay. "The

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best teams care for and support one another,” writes former National Hockey League player Mark Messier in his memoir, *No One Wins Alone*. “They have to. Who’s going to give his all, or function at his best, if he doesn’t feel like he belongs?”

Recognition does not exist in isolation. Recognition thrives in a culture of appreciation, trust and respect. How you recognize staff must be congruent with the workplace culture, including its values and mission statement.

When Michael Burchell and Jennifer Robin, authors of *The Great Workplace*, asked, “Is your organization a great place to work?” and “Why?” what they heard from staff members who felt theirs was a great workplace was that “they believe their leaders to be credible, respectful and fair—they trust them.”

Recognition increases the level of trust. Research shows that 90 per cent of staff members who receive recognition trust the boss who provides that recognition, while only 48 per cent of those who do not receive recognition feel the same. When staff members trust you and their colleagues, they will feel comfortable coming forward with their concerns and questions.

Without respect and trust, attempts at recognition will be regarded as empty rituals rather than **Genuine** expressions of appreciation for what people achieve and how they contribute.

The risk of a book like this, filled with suggestions on how to recognize staff, is that readers may conclude that thank-you notes, gift cards, trinkets and other gestures of appreciation are necessary elements of recognition that recipients will value. They aren’t.

The tips, tools and techniques in this book are simply *aids* to convey messages of appreciation to staff, co-workers and even bosses.

### How Frequently Should You Recognize Staff?

Recent research found that 42 per cent of Millennials (a.k.a. Generation Y, born 1981-1996) expected to receive feedback weekly. What about older workers? The study revealed that fewer of them have this expectation, but it’s likely they would also like to receive frequent feedback, particularly if it is positive or at least delivered in a positive and helpful manner.

Words matter. In particular, your words matter. They matter to the people with whom you work. Words of appreciation make a difference in your workplace. Your words convey how you feel about what staff members do more effectively than any token or gesture.

While the right items, carefully selected with the recipient in mind, can strengthen your message of appreciation, they are simply vehicles to help convey your message. They are only effective when used by individuals 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.

In the words of 17th century French dramatist Pierre Corneille, “The manner of giving is worth more than the gifts.”

Tokens and gestures of appreciation are the exclamation marks of staff recognition. They highlight your words. They underline them and make them stand out.

Selecting the **Appropriate** way to recognize staff elevates the value of recognition in the recipient’s mind.

#### **A Final Thought**

You never know what impact your small gesture of gratitude will have on the lives of staff members. Your words could be exactly what they need to hear. Express gratitude frequently.

# Theme #2

## Filling Your Staff Recognition Tool Kit

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*“Give us the tools and we will finish the job.”*

– Sir Winston Churchill

Prepare to recognize staff by creating your own staff recognition tool kit, filled with tips and what you need to deliver recognition:

Include these tools in your staff recognition tool kit and keep them close at hand so that you can recognize the contributions of staff members when opportunities arise:

- Thank-you and other cards (congratulations, birthday, blank, etc.)
- A pen with an ink colour reserved only for recognition
- Sticky notes of assorted colours and shapes
- Treats that staff members enjoy
- Fun coupons for an extended break or the opportunity to leave early or come in late
- Small gifts
- Coffee shop and other gift cards, movie passes, etc. (If your budget permits)

\*\*\*

*Thanks, Again!* or another collection of staff recognition tips also has a place in your staff recognition kit. Go through and highlight those tips that resonate with you—those that will work for you and in your organization. Mark others as techniques that you could adapt to fit the culture of your workplace. Cross out those to avoid because they aren't right for you, your staff or your workplace.

These books are a rich source of staff recognition tips: *1,501 Ways to Reward Employees* by Bob Nelson; *The 1001 Rewards and Recognition Fieldbook* by Bob Nelson and Dean Spitzer; *The Carrot Principle* or *Managing with Carrots* by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton; *Make Their Day!* by Cindy Ventrice; and *Thanks! GREAT Job!* by Nelson Scott.

\*\*\*

Ask acquaintances and leaders from other organizations how they recognize staff. What works for them may work for you. Some practices will need to be modified to fit the culture of your workplace and others may just not fit the culture of your workplace. There may be some techniques that don't work for them that could work for you. Your different approach and delivery may change what was ineffective for others into tools which you can use to provide meaningful recognition.

\*\*\*

Keep a "Future Recognition Journal," filled with tools and techniques you might use to recognize staff in the future. Add to the list as you learn how other people recognize staff.

\*\*\*

Establish a staff recognition mastermind group by bringing together other managers and supervisors who share your commitment to recognizing staff, so you can learn from each other.

Members could be people from within your organization or leaders from outside. Meet regularly to discuss staff recognition. What are they doing? Is it working? What didn't work? What useful staff recognition resources have they discovered recently? Establish accountability by committing to what you will do to enhance staff recognition over the next few weeks. Report your progress the next time the group meets. See *Conversation Starters for Book Clubs and Staff Recognition Mastermind Groups* (p. 195) for suggestions of topics that mastermind groups could discuss.

\*\*\*

If you are part of the leadership team in an organization with several managers (such as a school system, larger retailer, government office or health-care

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facility), suggest staff recognition as a topic for an all-managers meeting. What are other managers/leaders doing to recognize individuals and the whole team? Everyone will leave with new ways to recognize staff.

\*\*\*

Add staff recognition to your next staff meeting agenda. Divide staff into groups to brainstorm ways they prefer to be recognized. Ask them to record their ideas on a flip-chart paper and post them around the room. By the end of the meeting, you will know more about how to recognize staff. **Bonus:** Staff will also gain insight into how to provide peer recognition.

\*\*\*

Always be on the lookout for items that could be used to acknowledge staff for their contributions. Maybe it's a small souvenir you discover when traveling. Or it could be a unique gift or a "just-right" thank-you note. When you find an item that would be perfect for a particular staff member, buy it and set it aside until you have a reason to provide this special recognition.

\*\*\*

Step away from your work environment to learn how others recognize staff. While attending a conference, visiting another workplace or during networking events, ask leaders from other organizations, "How do you recognize staff when they do their jobs well?" You may discover novel approaches to recognition that might work for you. Be prepared to share examples of what's working for you. Ideally, everyone will leave these conversations with at least one new way to say thank you.

\*\*\*

What were your greatest staff recognition moments ever? It could be a time when you received recognition, or when the recognition you provided was particularly well-received. What did you learn from those experiences? How can you apply those lessons when you recognize staff in the future?

\*\*\*

If gift cards are in your staff recognition tool kit, consider purchasing them from small businesses, such as independent bookstores, locally owned restaurants or neighbourhood coffee shops. These will help you express your

appreciation and you will also be helping local business that may be struggling to survive.

\*\*\*

**A Final Thought**

You don't need to have a lengthy list of staff recognition techniques. You just need a few. Master them to become effective. Occasionally, refresh how you recognize staff by finding other techniques to add to your staff recognition tool kit.

# Theme #3

## GREAT Staff Recognition: 5 Pieces that Make the Picture of Appreciation and Gratitude Complete

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The acronym GREAT is a reminder that meaningful staff recognition consists of five ingredients: Genuine, Relevant, Explicit, Appropriate and Timely.

Recognition must be inspired by a **Genuine** sense of appreciation for how individuals or teams have contributed and what they have achieved.

After that, add one or more of the other ingredients to strengthen the impact of messages of appreciation and gratitude.

Recognition is **Relevant** when it's rooted in what the organization believes is important, often expressed in its mission statement, values and goals.

Recognition is **Explicit** when it includes specific descriptions of what the recipients did.

Recognition that is **Appropriate** respects the recipients' recognition preferences and reflects their interests.

Recognition will be **Timely** when it is delivered soon after the action that triggers recognition.

The more ingredients you include in a message of appreciation, the greater its impact.

These ingredients are discussed in more detail in the next few pages, with suggestions of ways to make staff recognition GREAT—**Genuine, Relevant, Explicit, Appropriate** and **Timely**. These ingredients are highlighted whenever they are referenced throughout the book.

## Genuine: Ensuring Staff Recognition is Authentic

---

Why can some leaders recognize people in ways staff members value, while attempts by other managers to express gratitude fall flat? Why is it that when some leaders recognize staff it results in a boost to morale, increases engagement and improves retention, while what others do doesn't make a difference?

There is more to it than writing better thank-you notes, giving better gifts or choosing words of praise more wisely.

The value and effectiveness of staff recognition is not determined by what you do, but by *why* you do it, as judged by those being recognized. Recognition must be seen as inspired by a sincere sense of appreciation for what the recipients achieved or how they contributed.

In other words, recognition must be **Genuine**. It is the essential ingredient of meaningful staff recognition.

If recognition is not motivated by a sincere sense of appreciation—if it's not **Genuine**—the suggestions included in this and other books about recognizing staff will not work as you hope. Here are some ways to make it clear that your gratitude is **Genuine**:

Recognize people only when you sincerely believe they deserve to be recognized, not because “it's the thing to do” or because someone said you should recognize staff more (although you probably should).

\*\*\*

Separate positive feedback from the negative, except when conducting performance appraisals, during which both are expected.

\*\*\*

Ensure that your body language and tone of voice are in sync with your words of praise.

\*\*\*

Be emotional. Show that the recognition comes from your heart. Let staff members know how good you feel about what they did.

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\*\*\*

Be consistent. Recognize what deserves to be recognized, no matter who did it, when or where. Never recognize what doesn't warrant recognition just because you feel bad that Joe has not been recognized recently. Wait and watch. His turn will come.

\*\*\*

Keep it short and simple. The long, flowery presentations can seem artificial.

\*\*\*

### **A Final Thought**

Provide honest feedback. When someone screws up, tell them. When they succeed, tell them. This will make both types of feedback more believable.

## Relevant: Making Staff Recognition Strategic

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*“Values are not just words, values are what we live by. They’re about the causes that we champion and the people we fight for.”*

– John Kerry

Effective staff recognition begins with knowing what to recognize.

Staff members want to know what is expected of them. When staff understand what you expect—and when you want it done—they are more likely to do what you want them to do. Staff will be more engaged and work harder when they feel that what they do makes a difference.

The place to begin is with the documents that define the purpose of your organization. **Relevant** recognition links what staff members do to the organization’s mission statement, values and goals.

Seventy-seven per cent of employees surveyed by the Society for Human Resource Management in 2015 said that having a clear understanding of their organization’s vision and mission was important to their job satisfaction and engagement.

Once created, mission statements, visions and goals are often lost in the general busy-ness of the workplace, never again to be read or discussed. Out of sight and out of mind, these documents that were meant to provide guidance become as irrelevant as a map tucked into a backpack that is not taken out and studied before a hiker ventures into the woods.

Recognition is a strategic tool that makes mission statements, values and goals **Relevant** to staff members every day. Use **Relevant** staff recognition to focus everyone on what’s important:

Review your mission statement, values and goals. List behaviours that will move your organization closer to these outcomes. Share your list. Talk to staff about what’s on the list. Praise people when you see them exhibiting these behaviours.

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\*\*\*

Involve others in defining what your organization's values look like in practice. Brainstorm with your leadership team to identify behaviours that reflect those values. What does "compassion," "innovation" or "risk-taking" look like? Ask staff to describe how they can reflect values such as "customer service excellence," "teamwork," "collaboration," etc., by what they do. Recognize staff for these behaviours when they occur.

\*\*\*

When recognizing staff, explain how their contributions fit into the bigger picture. Remind them that what they do well is important because of how it reflects their organization's purpose. It helps the organization fulfil its mission and meet its goals and it satisfies the needs of customers. Emphasize that a teacher's action in the classroom contributed to student learning, or that a warehouse employee's effort resulted in orders being filled quickly, which created satisfied customers. What they do makes a difference!

\*\*\*

Find reasons to recognize staff members by choosing just one value to focus on for a week. Observing behaviours reflecting that week's value should trigger recognition (but don't ignore other recognition-worthy actions when you witness them). When the week is over, assess what happened. Did you discover evidence of the value in action? How did you link recognition of what the staff member did to the value? Did you have opportunities to discuss the importance of the value? What value will you focus on next week?

\*\*\*

Staff members may not always understand why they are being assigned specific tasks. Whenever possible, connect work assignments to the organization's mission statement, values and goals. Be clear about what each person is expected to do and how assigned tasks fit into the big picture.

\*\*\*

Use recognition to show staff members that what they do makes a difference and is valued. People want to feel that they are doing meaningful work.

\*\*\*

Reread your mission and values statements. Ask yourself: “Am I recognizing staff—or punishing them—for risk-taking, innovation, honesty, exceeding customer expectations, teamwork, continuous learning, etc.?” If “innovation” is one of your values, recognize those who find better ways to complete tasks associated with their work assignment.

\*\*\*

Searching for reasons to recognize staff? Begin by asking yourself this question and answering it: “What do I want to see more of?” When you see staff members doing something on your list, you know it’s time to recognize them.

\*\*\*

Use more inclusive language (“we/us/our” versus “the company”) when linking recognition to the organization’s mission statement, values and goals. E.g. “The way you resolved that complaint demonstrated your commitment to *our* (not ‘the company’s’) value of providing excellent customer service.”

\*\*\*

**What’s Being Recognized:  
Looking Busy or Being Productive?**

Sometimes it’s difficult to tell. Some people can look busy, without really achieving anything. Managers who fail to focus on the results that staff members achieve often praise people for busy-ness because it can be easier to see than outcomes. Recognition should acknowledge staff for doing what’s important—efforts that reflect the values of the organization and help it achieve its goals.

During one-on-one meetings, highlight how each staff member’s work contributes to the team or organization fulfilling its purpose, as expressed in the mission statement, values and goals. Ensure recognition is **Relevant** by linking the reasons for recognizing the staff member back to those foundation documents.

\*\*\*

It’s difficult for staff to understand what behaviours are **Relevant** if they do not know or understand the organization’s purpose. Take time regularly to review its mission statement, values and goals and to discuss what they mean in a day-to-day context. Follow up by highlighting the connection between

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behaviours you are recognizing and the mission statement, value or goal when you recognize a staff member.

\*\*\*

Create a “Core Values” award to be presented to staff members who act in ways that reflect the organization’s purpose and values.

\*\*\*

What should a job well done look like? You could answer this question yourself, or you could involve staff in defining what excellent work is. They know. Develop a consensus of which behaviours are **Relevant** to the team’s success. Make a list and publish it. It will help staff better understand what is expected of them and the behaviours for which they will be recognized. Whenever you witness these behaviours, recognize the person or group that’s responsible.

\*\*\*

When you recognize staff in public and highlight the link between what people did and your organization’s values and goals, you are reminding both the recipients and those who witness the recognition about your organization’s purpose and what it believes is important. This helps focus everyone on what matters.

\*\*\*

Create notepads with a checklist of the organization’s values. Whenever you see behaviour that relates to one of the values, check it off and write a brief description of what you saw the person do, before handing the note to them.

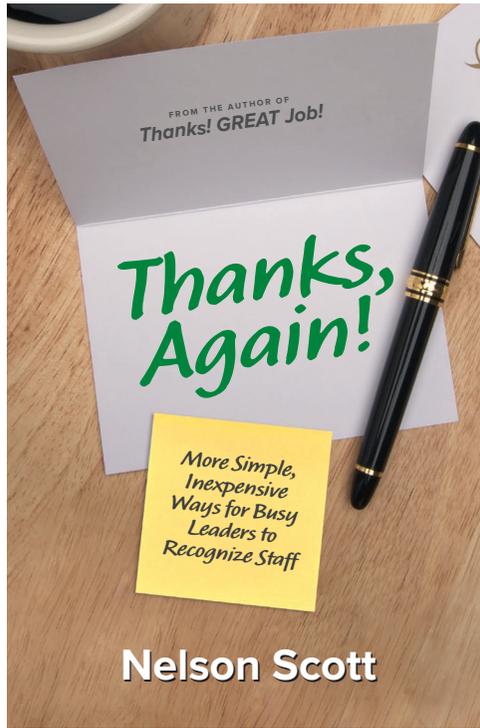
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When assigning tasks, encourage staff to ask questions. That ensures they have all they need to know to understand your expectations. The result will be a job well done and another reason to recognize staff.

\*\*\*

### **A Final Thought**

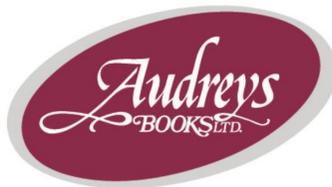
Phrase to praise: “What you did is important because . . .”



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# Thanks, Again!

By Nelson Scott

**MORE SIMPLE, INEXPENSIVE WAYS FOR BUSY LEADERS TO RECOGNIZE STAFF**

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Believing in the power of staff recognition means you stand out from most managers and supervisors. Research by Gallup and Workhuman found that four of every five leaders said that staff recognition was not a priority to them, and roughly two thirds said they had no budget for staff recognition. This book bolsters your belief in recognition and helps you:

- Provide recognition that staff members will value, even if your time is limited and your budget is tight
- Fill your staff recognition tool kit with simple, inexpensive ways to express appreciation for what people achieve and how they contribute
- Replace staff recognition practices that have grown stale

Thanks, Again! brims with easy and affordable ways to recognize staff while creating a workplace where people feel they belong, are valued, and appreciated for what they do. Meaningful staff recognition boosts morale, increases engagement and improves retention.

To get you started swiftly, Thanks, Again! is organized into 30 easily navigated themes, each one including a brief introduction and relevant, immediately useable tips for recognizing staff. Or, head directly to the bonus section for more than 100 other low-cost, high value ways to strengthen your expressions of gratitude, right away.

Grab a pen and start highlighting the ideas you could adopt or adapt for your workplace. Your staff will feel appreciated and it will make you feel good, too!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For more than 20 years, Nelson Scott has been researching, writing and speaking at conventions and conferences about the value of staff recognition and ways to express appreciation in the workplace.

He is a member of Recognition Professionals International and a former president of the Edmonton chapter of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers.

He has penned two previous books: Thanks! GREAT Job! Improve Retention, Boost Morale and Increase Engagement with High-Value, Low-Cost Staff Recognition (2011), and 13 Reasons Managers are “Unlucky” When Making Hiring Decisions (2012).

Nelson is often found in a coffee shop near his home in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where the energy of strangers fuels his writing.



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