

Excuses for Not Giving Recognition

There are many reasons why managers and supervisors do not recognize employees on a regular basis. When attempting to get buy-in for your recognition programs and activities, you may hear various reasons why recognition is not extended in the workplace. Here are the most common excuses you may hear, with some suggestions on how to respond:

I don't believe in rewarding people for just doing their jobs

Recognition is acknowledgement, noticing someone's good work and is a tool for reinforcing the types of behaviours you would like to see repeated. Recognition is a motivator and a means for achieving business objectives.

I don't have time

If recognition is important to you, you will find the time. The type of recognition that has the most impact in the workplace is informal, day-to-day recognition of employee contributions. How much time does it take to say thank you? Employees who receive regular recognition are ultimately more engaged and engaged employees make a manager's job easier. Not everyone needs to be acknowledged everyday, but try saying thank you or acknowledging at least one thing each day.

It becomes meaningless if done too often

It is often insincerity and not quantity that tends to devalue a recognition activity. Once employees start getting recognized, they will expect more recognition - this is a good thing. When recognition is provided on a regular basis, employees stay and provide better service.

People don't care about it all that much

More people care than don't care. Employee survey results indicate that employees feel that recognition from their manager and being valued for their work is very important to them.

Why should I recognize others?

Employees are our most valuable resource and should be treated as such. Recognition also makes business sense - recognition is a tool that can be used by managers to reinforce positive behaviours and performance, to provide more supportive work environments, to improve employee engagement and to achieve business goals. Recognizing employees translates into higher quality service. Recognizing employees for their contributions and achievements is the right thing to do.

It's not my job

It's everyone's job to support an environment where people are acknowledged and appreciated. Managers and supervisors however are in the best position to recognize employees. Receiving feedback from one's immediate supervisor or manager is the most motivating for employees. As a manager/supervisor of others, you are responsible through the performance management system to review employee performance, coach employees, support employees in achieving their objectives and recognizing and supporting them for good performance.

I don't want to play favourites

This is a valid concern that can be alleviated by developing programs with clear and well-communicated criteria. Being consistent in recognizing employees based on clear criteria and based on behaviours that contribute to the organization's values and business priorities will send out a message of fairness and consistency.

Also, some managers may feel that recognizing everyone as a group is the solution for not leaving someone out. This is not the best approach as you may end up over or under

recognizing certain individuals. This can be either de-motivating or misleading. Instead, try making a list of all your employees and take the time to recognize each of them individually for specific behaviours, ensuring that everyone is receiving some form of recognition over time. In this manner, no one will feel left out. Eventually, day-to-day recognition will become more natural and effective.

I don't want to get too familiar with my employees.

Managers may feel that if they are too supportive or friendly with their employees that it will be more difficult to discipline them when needed. To the contrary, employees will not work as hard for managers that come across as unappreciative or unfriendly. Research shows that people work best for managers who seem to care about them and are attentive to their needs.

Employees may ask for more money.

The opposite is true as generally, workplace studies indicate that employees who are satisfied with their job and are appreciated for their work, are more likely to stay and are less likely to ask for more money.



Managers and employees differ significantly in what they perceive as the most rewarding aspects of employees' jobs. Ask most managers what his or her employees want from their jobs, and you'll probably get a list of items heavy on financial incentives such as increased pay bonuses, promotions, and so on. Ask most employees what they really want from their jobs, and you'll likely get very different answers

Although most people come to work because of money, they don't work just for money. The money employees are paid is compensation. Recognition goes above and beyond compensation to get the best effort from them. Motivators differ significantly from employee to employee and it is up to managers/supervisors to get to know employees and the types of things that motivate them. Money is a basic need, but is not a motivator.

The 1001 Rewards & Recognition Fieldbook, Written by Bob Nelson. 2003, Workman Publishing
The 24-Carrot Manager, Written by Adrian Gostick & Chester Elton. 2002, Gibbs Smith Publisher