

## Developing A Formal Award - What to Consider

When your team decides to create a formal award (e.g. Minister award, Client Service Award) as part of your department's recognition program, this document will be helpful in identifying the various steps to consider.

### Know your Employees

Based on your needs assessment, you will have determined the needs and preferences of your employees. This can be done by analyzing employee survey results, circulating a questionnaire and/or holding focus group sessions. Always keep in mind that your audience is diverse and made up of distinct individuals with varying needs. You need to consider things like how many employees there are in your target audience, who they are, what type of work do they do and what motivates them. One size does not fit all when creating recognition programs

### Know your Business

Based on your needs assessment, you will have determined the department/division's business needs, work environment and culture. This can be done by reviewing business plans, corporate values, performance goals, and/or employee survey results. Although each department has business goals, each division within the department has distinct objectives to consider. You will need to consider both employee behaviours and business needs. Look to addressing particular business objectives or challenges. What goals have not been met? What are the most pressing needs? How can recognition activities provide a means for achieving these goals? Focus on one or two goals that are achievable and measurable.

### Identify your Purpose

\* Communicate the purpose of the award \*

Determine what needs to be accomplished in order to design an award that is effective, meaningful and motivating for your employees. Based on your needs assessment, you will have determined your employee's preferences and your business needs. Keeping these things in mind along with your organization's values will assist you in choosing the theme of your award. Look at strengthening particular behaviours and activities that contribute to business goals. Is the goal to improve morale, attendance, teamwork or turnover? Make a list of expectations for your employee recognition efforts. What is the specific goal of the award? What behaviours do you want to strengthen? What business priority or value do you want reinforced? Make a list of the outcomes you expect from the creation of the award. This will help determine what components to measure in your evaluation stage.

- ★ What are you targeting?  
(performance, values, business objectives, teamwork, pride, safety, client service, etc.)
- ★ What do you want to achieve through this award program?  
(to foster teamwork, to reduce accidents, to recognize those who do not qualify for corporate programs, to improve peer-to-peer recognition, to encourage behaviours that support a key business objective such as excellence in client service, etc.)

### Define award themes

\* Communicate business needs, organizational values \*

Once you have identified your purpose, you can decide on what themes you would like to base your awards on. Each department/division may have different themes based on business needs and employee preferences. It is common to recognize service milestones, however you may want to consider other awards to reinforce a particular value or business priority. Examples of award themes or the types of achievements awards may be based on are:

- ★ Exemplifying Values
- ★ Perfect Attendance
- ★ Exceptional Client Service
- ★ Innovation and Creativity
- ★ Teamwork/player
- ★ Promotes Diversity
- ★ Community Outreach
- ★ Exceptional Leadership
- ★ Positive Attitude
- ★ Promotes Safety and Injury Prevention

- ★ Going Above and Beyond
- ★ Initiative

- ★ Performance Excellence

## Frequency of Awards

Based on the purpose of the award and available resources, the team will need to decide how often awards will be granted. Annually? Quarterly? Different awards may be granted at different frequencies. If the award is meant to be more special, you may want to consider awarding them less frequently (1-2 times/year) and limit the number of awards issued.

## Choose the Award

\* Communicate award type \*

The preferences expressed by your employees in the needs assessment along with the budget will determine what the award will be. The award can be a certificate or a form of merchandise. It can be the same for everyone or recipients may be offered a selection of awards to choose from. It is critical that the award type be appropriate for the contribution/achievement being recognized. The award type should be communicated to participants at the launch of the program. If a prototype is available, you may want to showcase it to build momentum. Remember, monetary awards are not permitted.

## Budget / Resources

The following things are important to consider before proceeding with the award creation:

- ★ Cost of promotional materials
- ★ Potential number of recipients
- ★ Cost of the award
- ★ Presentation format, refreshment and venue costs
- ★ Who will attend the presentation and number of attendees
- ★ Administrative expenses
- ★ Communication expenses
- ★ Who will keep track of submissions? Review submissions?
- ★ Employee resources required to administer the program
- ★ Time involved to administer the program
- ★ Travel expenses for recipients
- ★ Remember, alcohol is not an eligible expense.

## Selection Criteria

\* Communicate selection criteria \*

For each award theme, a clear set of criteria needs to be identified. Employees need to know the specific requirements – what they need to do to receive an award. Awards should recognize performance and behaviours that positively contribute to department goals, objectives and values. Criteria should be very clear, simple to follow and widely communicated. Ensure that any nomination process includes a fair evaluation of submissions against the specified award criteria.

## Eligibility

\*Communicate who is eligible for the award\*

It should be clearly identified who is eligible to receive an award. Can all full-time, part-time, casual, students, DM's and contract staff receive awards? Can community partners receive awards? Is there a limit to how often an individual and/or team can receive an award? Are team members eligible to receive an award? Is the award granted department-wide or within a division? Each department should tailor eligibility criteria to its specific environment.

## Nomination Process

\* Communicate contact information, access to nomination forms, etc. \*

Develop and communicate an official nomination form. The nomination form should be accessible by all and may need to be provided in varying formats (i.e. via e-mail, hard copy, via internet) Forms should be flexible enough to request standard information while providing space for comments that support the nomination in more detail. Forms should

also be easy to follow and not so labour intensive that employees can't be bothered to complete them. Outline who is eligible to nominate (employees, clients, supervisors), whether or not an endorsement signature is required and if there are any supporting materials that may be required. Clearly outline the nomination deadline date and time, and provide a contact name to respond to questions, concerns and receive feedback.

## Establish a Selection Committee

The structure and size of the selection committee will be determined by the recognition team. Ensure again that the selection committee is representative of the employee participants. Will the recognition team serve as the selection committee? Will an external panel be used? How will members be selected? Will the member's identities be revealed? A Terms of Reference will be valuable in identifying member composition, roles and responsibilities, term of membership, etc.. Does the selection committee make the final decision? The committee should be provided with a standard evaluation form for consistency and accountability when evaluating submissions. The evaluation system should also be clearly understood by all participants. Talk through scenarios such as; what to do if there is a tie?

## Award Presentation

The award presentation style should also be communicated to participants at the start of the award process. It is critical that the award presentation style be appropriate for the contribution/achievement being recognized. Recipients should be asked whether or not they prefer public or private praise. The presenter of the awards should have some personal connection to the recipient. Choose a location that is convenient for recipients. Recipients who are required to travel, should have their expenses paid.

Examples of award presentations:

- ★ Breakfast, luncheon or dinner
- ★ Boardroom, restaurant, banquet hall – onsite vs. offsite
- ★ Casual, office setting, formal
- ★ Combined with another event - staff meeting, business plan launch, long service ceremony)

Examples of award types:

- ★ Certificate, Plaque
- ★ Trophy
- ★ Merchandise
- ★ Pin

## Communication

As identified throughout this document, communication is essential in every phase of the award process. The purpose and results of the award process should be clearly communicated. There should be a clear link between what employee's are being recognized for and the department's/division's priorities and values. Make sure your front line supervisors understand the program and support it.

You may want to engage interest and build momentum for the award by developing creative promotional materials, a catchy theme or brand. Have a kick-off to provide full details about the program, criteria, awards and target audience. Have materials available at the launch to build momentum and excitement. Showcase your award prototype. Ensure that regional offices are included in the kick-off, by sending materials to their offices. Use promotional materials to remind and reenergize participation. Provide status update via the web or e-mail, or through displays/bulletin boards.

Recipients can be communicated through an e-mail from the DM, at a regular staff meeting, in a division newsletter, on an office bulletin board, on the department/corporate website, or a local newspaper. The type of communication will be dependent on recipient preferences, budget and purpose of the award. Communicating recipients of recognition awards is a way to reinforce and re-energize the awards program, to publicly acknowledge the great work of employees and to communicate success.

## Award Presentation

Ensure that the presentation style matches the significance of the award or action being recognized. Make the presentation to the employee worthy of the reason you are recognizing them. You may choose a formal or informal setting. Take the opportunity to let employees know what their individual achievements or team accomplishments are and the type of awards available. It is important to consider the recipients preferred mode of recognition. One-on-one or in a public setting. Employees may be shy or introverted and may be uncomfortable with public recognition, some do not like a fuss and of course others are more than okay with public acknowledgement.

## Program Evaluation

It is important to measure the success of your program. Ask for feedback from all employee levels. Distribute a survey or hold focus groups, during a program or after it's first round of activity. Employee assessment surveys are valuable prior to, during and after a program. Following up with employees makes them know they are being listened to.