

Informal Recognition

Informal recognition activities or acknowledgement of day-to-day accomplishments in the workplace are encouraged as a means of providing a supportive work environment where employees feel valued. Although informal in nature, this type of recognition should acknowledge positive employee behaviour and performance and be linked to corporate and/or department values, goals and objectives.

Spontaneous gestures of appreciation can be delivered by anyone, to anyone, at anytime throughout the work-day. Informal recognition can be delivered face to face or through a written note, it can be extended laterally between colleagues; top-down from a senior leader to an employee; or bottom-up from an employee to his/her supervisor. Recognition in this format is easy to deliver and can be done at little or no cost to departments. All employees have a part to play in employee recognition. However, what managers do or say has the greatest impact on employee motivation and overall job satisfaction.

Recognition is not just about receiving a gift or award. What is important to employees is being appreciated for their work, being kept informed about things that affect them, and having a manager who takes the time to listen to them. Taking the time to provide day-to-day or spontaneous recognition that is specific to an individual's or team's behaviour and/or performance is meaningful, motivating and memorable.

Recognition does not need to be fancy to be effective, it does however need to be straightforward and direct. It is important to note that just saying thank you for doing a great job may be too ambiguous. Employees need to know what they are being thanked for. For example, "Thank you for helping me complete this report on time, you really know the meaning of teamwork!" or "Thank you for handling that difficult customer, I know it wasn't easy but you provided excellent customer service." In this manner, employees know what they are being thanked for and how their contribution has made a difference. Alternatively, by being specific and deliberate about employee recognition, managers can use recognition as a tool to positively reinforce the types of behaviours they would like to see repeated – behaviours that contribute to team goals and objectives.¹

Small gestures make a big difference in making someone feel valued and appreciated. Refer to the [Recognition Quality Criteria](#) when you are recognizing a colleague, to ensure that it is sincere, specific, timely and creative. The more you know about your co-worker's interests and preferences, the better you will be able to ensure that your recognition gesture is meaningful and appreciated.

As a manager, taking the time to personally acknowledge someone can be a great motivator. It is not necessary to recognize every employee every day, but it is a good practice to at least try to recognize one thing each day. Make a habit of recognizing and appreciating employees around you, by [Incorporating Recognition in Everyday Interactions](#).

"The best way to get any new behaviour started is to plan for it to happen. Planning does not need to be elaborate or formal. A good approach to giving recognition is to use the [Who, What, Where, When, and How Format](#)."² This format allows you to systematically think recognition through and ultimately do a better job at providing consistent and constructive feedback to employees.



¹ Ventrice, Cindy. "Make Their Day! Employee Recognition That Works". San Francisco. Berret-Koehler Publishers Inc. 2003.

¹ The 1001 Rewards & Recognition Fieldbook, Written by Bob Nelson. 2003, Workman Publishing

Recognition is a simple way for managers to:

- ★ reinforce behaviours and performance they would like to see repeated thereby facilitating the achievement of business goals and objectives.
- ★ provide feedback and coaching, thereby supporting performance management processes
- ★ motivate and engage employees
- ★ bring out the best in their employees by showing them they are appreciated and valued
- ★ remind employees of their individual impact on the division, department, organization and the public good.

“A personal note of thank you, or a written thank you from one’s manager for a job well done” were ranked by employees as the top two incentives in a study of potential workplace motivators by *Dr. Gerald Graham, professor at Wichita State University*. Employee’s are most affected and feel most valued when supervisors recognize and acknowledge their efforts one on one.