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# MAKE THEIR DAY!

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## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION THAT WORKS

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SECOND EDITION,  
REVISED AND EXPANDED

PROVEN WAYS  
TO BOOST  
MORALE,  
PRODUCTIVITY,  
AND PROFITS

**CINDY  
VENTRICE**

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Foreword by Robert Levering, coauthor of *Fortune's*  
annual *100 Best Companies to Work for in America*

An Excerpt From

***Make Their Day!:***  
***Employee Recognition That Works***  
***Second Edition, Revised & Expanded***

by Cindy Ventrice  
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## foreword

For the past quarter century, I've had one of the truly great jobs in journalism. My beat has been the workplace—specifically, great workplaces. It's been my lucky lot to visit and write about companies that employees rave about in a variety of books and magazine articles. For the past half-dozen years, I've worked with my fellow journalist Milton Moskowitz to identify and write about the “100 Best Companies to Work For in America” for *Fortune*.

These companies represent the spectrum of the business world and have ranged from extremely familiar names like Google and Cisco to relative unknowns like Plante & Moran and Griffin Hospital. Regardless of the industry, size, age, or location of the companies, I've noticed that employees of these terrific workplaces invariably talk about how they feel treated as individuals, that they feel respected, that they feel the management recognizes their contributions to the organization.

As I've looked more closely at these companies, I've learned that it is no accident that employees feel so positively about their

employers. Great workplaces are the result of the attitudes and actions of management. At the core, the management of these companies sincerely believes that the employees are the ones who are primarily responsible for the success (or failure) of the enterprise. As a result of this attitude, management sees the need to constantly recognize the value of the employees. They see positive recognition as part of their jobs, not as something that occurs once every five years when it is time to hand out the employee recognition awards.

Even in a bad workplace, it would not be surprising to find an individual manager who is good about showing appreciation toward employees. But how can this happen throughout an organization? This is precisely what *Make Their Day!* is all about—how to make employee recognition part of the fabric of an organization.

It is a great pleasure to recommend this newly revised and expanded version of *Make Their Day!* as this is no ordinary management book. Cindy Ventrice has done her homework. She has looked at a variety of companies and interviewed dozens of managers to look beneath the surface. There are many books on employee recognition, but this one is by far the best. Most books on this subject give examples of best practices in the field—in some cases hundreds of such examples. The idea seems to be that to improve employee recognition, managers should copy the policy or practice used by another organization.

The problem is that each company is unique. Each one has its own distinctive culture and history. What works in one company may completely backfire in another. But the approach of many managers simply ignores this seemingly obvious fact. Imitate what Company A does and you, too, will be successful.

That's where *Make Their Day!* can be so useful. Ventrice's book is full of lots of useful and provocative examples. But she goes beyond merely reciting cases. Using her in-depth interviews with managers at a variety of companies, Ventrice explores the deeper issues involved. Many of the companies she cites have

made our *Fortune* list, and I can testify that she has captured what's special about how these companies recognize employees. She puts her finger on the all-important question of trust. How can you recognize people in such a way that trust is built? She points out that it is a question of relationships, not techniques. She shows that genuinely recognizing people means doing it all the time, not just on special occasions.

This book offers precisely the kind of insights that any manager interested in creating a great workplace should read.

ROBERT LEVERING

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Robert Levering is coauthor of *Fortune's* annual "100 Best Companies to Work For in America" and cofounder of Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute.

## preface

I am excited to be bringing you this completely updated second edition of *Make Their Day!* Because companies are continually changing and evolving, I have updated the stories of the companies featured in the original edition. In some cases, I have retained examples of programs that companies are no longer using because the examples make an important point. With others there have been new developments that I believe will interest you. You will find that there are new examples from organizations such as Best Buy, Cisco, and Google demonstrating important recognition concepts. There are also new stories, insights, tips, and tools throughout that will help you provide the best possible recognition to your team!

I have added two chapters to this edition. The first addresses organizational culture. This chapter will help you, the manager, determine the effect that age, nationality, proximity to you, and even job description have on recognition preferences. The second new chapter addresses fairness. In my work, I have found that fairness is an ever-increasing manager concern that seems in

direct conflict with the ability to individualize and personalize recognition. This chapter will help you provide recognition that is both fair and meaningful.

Most important, this edition zeroes in on what you—the manager, supervisor, or team leader—can do to create an environment where people feel valued. You will be introduced to the concepts of *Make Their Day* recognition and shown how you can apply them to your work situation.

While focused on the manager, this book is loaded with information that anyone can use. Human resource groups will get ideas on how they can administer more effective programs. Individuals in any role will learn how to recognize their coworkers, their managers and supervisors, and even themselves. Most of the concepts are just as applicable outside work. According to my college intern, “This stuff even works on my roommates!”

A lot has changed in this edition. One thing that hasn’t changed is the amount of money wasted on recognition that doesn’t work. In the first edition, I estimated that every year U.S. companies spend about \$18 billion on recognition and incentives.<sup>1</sup> That number is probably quite conservative. The International Society for Performance Improvement believes it to be closer to \$27 billion for noncash incentives alone!<sup>2</sup> Eighty-nine percent of organizations have some kind of recognition program in place,<sup>3</sup> yet most employees still feel inadequately recognized. According to Gallup research, 65 percent of employees reported receiving no recognition in the previous year.<sup>4</sup>

How is it that we can spend so much and achieve so little? This is the question that led to *Make Their Day!* I wanted to know what would really boost employee recognition satisfaction. My initial research included interviews with hundreds of employees. I asked them to describe examples of meaningful recognition. Since the initial publication, I have conducted additional research. I have been able to better quantify what employees want. I have gathered information as it relates to generation,

location, and years in the workforce. You will find this research, along with lots of new examples from readers and clients. I hope you find this new expanded edition to be a valuable tool for creating an energizing work environment.

CINDY VENTRICE  
SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA,  
MARCH 2009

# Real Results

A new sales manager is given the second-lowest-performing region. He believes that people who feel valued will outperform others and so he decides to make recognition a priority. His first quarter as manager, his team beats its quota. The second quarter they do it again, and at the end of the third quarter . . . well, at the end of the third quarter they are the second-highest-performing region!

*They went from second-lowest-performing  
to second-highest in nine months.*

It is a simple fact: people who feel valued perform at a much higher level. Think about a great manager you've had, one who made you feel valued. What would you have done to make him or her look good? I know the answer. A lot!

An executive leaves one company for another. With him, he takes his "good, solid performers." The new company is built on

a culture of recognition. Once he adapts to their style, he says, “My good, solid performers became stars.”

*His good, solid performers became stars.*

Wouldn't you like to have a few more stars on your team? With a little time and effort to offer meaningful recognition, you will see significant results.

Results that you can see—that is what this book is about. *Make Their Day!* will introduce you to *recognition that works*—recognition that is meaningful, memorable, and boosts morale, productivity, and profits. As you read this book, you will learn simple, effective techniques that you can begin to implement today.

## **Making Recognition a Priority**

I know you're busy. You have to make sure the work gets done. You may even be dealing with hiring freezes, layoffs, mergers and acquisitions, strikes, budget cuts, rising expenses, product defects, missed deadlines, or high turnover among in-demand workers. There's a good chance that, in addition to your managerial duties, you are also an individual contributor. In terms of priorities, if you're like many managers, supervisors, and team leaders, recognition has come dead last. While this may be understandable, it is a big mistake. Managing is easier, not harder, when you make recognition a priority.

## **Don't Put Recognition on Your To-Do List**

After reading the heading for this section, you're probably thinking, “What do you mean, don't put recognition on your to-do

list? If it's not on my to-do list, how can recognition be a priority? Isn't that a contradiction?" No, it isn't. I've seen many managers and supervisors who decided to make recognition a priority. They had the best intentions when they put "recognize employees" on to their to-do lists, and then, as the weeks progressed and pressing matters demanded their attention, they slowly moved recognition farther and farther down the list. Even though their intentions were good, recognition never happened.

You have enough to do already! If you add recognition to your oversized to-do list, there is a good chance that you won't get to it. When you do manage to get to it, you're likely to do it once, check it off, and then forget about it. This isn't the kind of recognition that works.

## **Make Recognition the Header on Your To-Do List**

Recognition isn't something you can do and then check off your list. You need to think of recognition a little differently. Instead of adding recognition to your to-do list, make it *the header*. Find ways to make recognition part of every employee interaction. When you delegate, add a little praise of past accomplishments. When you receive project updates, thank employees for their promptness, thoroughness, or accuracy. When you hold a team meeting to talk about a new challenge, express confidence in the group's ability to meet that challenge. As you complete each item on your to-do list, think about how you can incorporate recognition into it.

### ***Make Your Job Easier!***

Make recognition the header on your list, and you will find your job gets easier. There are hundreds of small things you can do to

provide the recognition your employees crave without putting a greater strain on your time, things that positively affect the work environment because they provide the right kind of recognition. With the right recognition, you will find employees more willing to tackle problems on their own instead of bringing them to you to solve. With the right recognition, employees will show more concern about quality and reputation. With the right recognition, employees will be more willing to pitch in when things get difficult. Morale will go up. Absenteeism will go down. And your job will get easier.

Recognition that works does this: it energizes and revitalizes the workplace. It creates a loyal, motivated, and productive workforce. And a loyal, motivated, and productive workforce makes your job as a manager easier.

### **Recognition That Works, Works!**

Recognition that works, *works*—even in the most challenging situations. Nothing demonstrates this quite as well as the story of Remedy Support Services that was featured in the first edition of this book.

In August 2001, Peregrine Systems purchased competitor Remedy Corporation. While managers at Remedy were hopeful that the purchase would help them expand their operations and increase market share, they still faced typical merger issues: concerns about possible layoffs, culture changes, product direction, and the priorities of the parent company—challenges that many managers are very familiar with. During the next eight months, Peregrine Systems endured the same financial setbacks as most of the technology industry and suffered through the seemingly inevitable layoffs.

This was only the beginning of the challenges that Remedy faced as part of Peregrine Systems. Peregrine announced it had misstated revenue during the past two years, and the CEO and CFO resigned.<sup>1</sup> Remedy was restructured, and 5 percent of the workforce was laid off. Peregrine stock continued a steady decline; class action stockholder lawsuits accumulated; and by the time Remedy had been part of Peregrine Systems for ten months, Peregrine stock had been delisted from NASDAQ.<sup>2</sup> Just over twelve months after it was acquired by Peregrine Systems, Remedy was sold to BMC Software.

Talk about a whirlwind of turmoil and change! Given the circumstances, it's easy to imagine employee morale would be at an all-time low. How could managers possibly keep employees productive under these conditions? Yet during the tumultuous ten-month period from purchase to delisting, Remedy Support Service maintained employee morale and improved customer satisfaction ratings while continuing to grow its revenue stream!<sup>3</sup>

Mike Little, then VP of Worldwide Professional Services and Support, said the company survived and even thrived because the managerial staff set big goals, listened to employees, and showed their appreciation. As you will discover as you read this book, these three things are keys to offering meaningful and memorable recognition.

### *Visible Signs of Recognition*

To bring employees through this crisis, Remedy Support Services used many forms of recognition. Pirate ships constructed by each of Remedy's support groups offered a reminder of a friendly competition to be the best support team. Some managers gave out stickers for perfect customer surveys, and employees displayed the stickers outside their cubicles. One employee was proud of a toy SUV his manager had presented him in recognition of his good

work. Managers worked hard to find fun and creative ways to improve performance and show employees they were valued.

Managers also held Employee Appreciation Days where they washed employees' cars, prepared them food, played games, and dressed up in costumes. According to employees, Employee Appreciation Days isn't an event the organization simply puts on; it's something the managers do for them. When I met with employees, they were getting ready to celebrate Employee Appreciation Days. Because of budget cutbacks, little discretionary money was available. Many employees told me that instead of eliminating the celebration, managers chose to pay for it out of their own pockets. The gesture wasn't lost on the employees. It meant a lot to them.

### *Invisible Recognition*

Many companies try friendly competitions, prizes, and events with little or no success. These things only worked for Remedy because managers offered another kind of recognition as well—recognition that you might not even notice at first glance.

When I toured Remedy with Mike Little, he introduced me to many of the hundred-plus employees in support services. During those introductions, I discovered he knew everyone's name, how long each had been with the company, and where they had worked before. There was an easy camaraderie between Little and the unit's employees. It was apparent that one way he recognized employee value was by staying in touch with and caring about every individual.

Here is another example of this more subtle form of recognition. One of Remedy's tenets is "Hire the best and then trust them." There is a lot of recognition in that statement *if managers really believe it*. Remedy managers proved they meant it when Peregrine Systems required a

second round of layoffs. These managers refused to follow outlined procedures. During the first round, they had followed protocol: personnel followed laid-off employees to their desks, waited while they packed up their belongings, and then escorted them out of the building. Following this first round of layoffs, managers asked themselves, “Where is the trust in doing it this way?” They hated the message their actions sent.

During the second round, they handled it differently. They allowed employees to spend as much time as they liked packing up their things and saying their good-byes. No one followed them around, and no one restricted their access. Some employees finished quickly, and others spent the entire day. Several thanked their managers for allowing them to leave in this manner. The way the managers handled the layoff was a small gesture, but it meant a lot to employees—both those who stayed and those who left.

Managers at Remedy built recognition into every action and reaction. It was the header on their to-do list, and it made all the difference to employees. It is the reason why, in the face of unbelievable turmoil, Remedy Support Services consistently improved customer satisfaction and increased revenue. As you read the chapters that follow, you will learn why the people in your workplace consider the kinds of recognition that Remedy offered to be so important.

### *Proven Techniques*

Throughout this book, you will learn about organizations that have demonstrated their ability to offer effective recognition. These organizations, as a whole, experience lower turnover and higher productivity and profitability than their industry averages. This point bears repeating: When employees give high ratings to the

recognition they receive, their organizations typically have lower turnover and higher productivity and profitability than other organizations in the same industry! During economic downturns, these organizations lay off fewer employees; and, when they do have to reduce their workforce, employee morale is far more resilient.

The firms that make *Fortune* magazine's annual list of the "100 Best Companies to Work For" provide great examples of organizations that offer many forms of effective recognition. According to Robert Levering, who along with Milton Moskowitz oversees *Fortune*'s Best Companies project, "No company can have a great place to work without having good ways to show appreciation to employees." Not only do the companies on the list do a good job of offering the kind of recognition employees value, but these companies also receive tremendous payback for their efforts. Levering and Moskowitz's research reveals the following:

- Industry by industry, the companies on the list have 50 percent less turnover than their counterparts.
- Publicly traded companies on the list average a 15 to 25 percent greater return for investors than the S&P 500 over three-, five-, and ten-year periods.

The *Make Their Day!* philosophy is based on proven techniques. Each organization, department, manager, or supervisor highlighted in this book will help you understand what it takes to create meaningful recognition.

In the chapters that follow, you will learn how to create meaningful and memorable recognition that improves employee commitment to your organization. You will learn how to offer recognition that works and begin to look at recognition differently. You will train yourself to see what the recipient sees, looking past superficial symbols and focusing on what really matters. In the process, you will reduce your workload, improve productivity, and create a workplace where people love to work.

PART

1

**Employees  
Want to Love  
Their Work**

# Recognition That Works

“Please, not another T-shirt!”

“I resent the money that’s spent to purchase doodads. It could be spent much more wisely.”

“Certificates of appreciation? I hate the damn things.”

I assume this isn’t the reaction you expect from recognition. Yet, if you depend on your organization to fulfill your employees’ need for recognition, there is a good chance that your employees would express similar opinions.

According to a former employee of one technology company:

“Our company offered the Terrific Employee Award. Everyone thought it was a cheesy name. People didn’t know why they were being awarded. It became a joke. The CEO never got involved. No one but HR took it seriously. They solicited employees for nominations and got so few responses they eventually gave up and selected someone themselves. The awards were gift certificates. They were nice, but without meaning.”

## Missing the Mark

When you think of recognition, what comes to mind? Do you think of raises, bonuses, stock awards, gift certificates, parties, prizes, and plaques? Many managers view these things as recognition, but they are wrong. Employees see it differently.

*According to employees, 57 percent of the most meaningful recognition is free!*

That's right: in an international survey in 2007, I found that 57 percent of the most meaningful recognition doesn't even cost a dollar!

Like the person in the last example, employees are looking for meaning, *not things*. They see tangible awards as a vehicle for *delivering* recognition, but they don't regard the awards themselves *as* recognition. They're much more interested in the underlying message behind the reward.

Your employees are strong believers in the old saying "It's the thought that counts." For awards to count as recognition, your employees need to see acknowledgment of their specific accomplishments and sincere appreciation of their personal value to the organization. The following examples will illustrate why recognition often misses the mark.

### Perks Aren't Recognition

The director of a small nonprofit agency hosts a dinner on a Friday night for employees and volunteers. Everyone has a great time and goes back to work the following Monday feeling refreshed and energized. The director planned this event as a form of recognition. Although it was fun and boosted morale, it wasn't recognition; it was a perk—a little something extra.

To add an element of recognition, the director can announce that the dinner is a way of thanking the group for something they have accomplished; for example, “We served ten thousand clients this year, and we couldn’t have done it without your help.” She can include an after-dinner presentation during which she tells detailed stories about the specific ways in which employees and volunteers helped accomplish this feat. Her message will provide the recognition.

### **Bonuses Aren’t Recognition**

The owner of an insurance agency gives holiday bonuses. They come in handy when employees head out to do their last-minute shopping. Employees appreciate the bonus but don’t see it as recognition. They expect it and feel entitled to it. Many have already budgeted for it, and if it is less than they anticipated, employees are resentful. If the bonus is more than was expected, they’re pleasantly surprised but figure they must have earned it.

The owner of the agency thinks the bonuses are a form of recognition, but employees don’t agree. To provide recognition, the owner needs to tie the bonuses to an achievement. But that isn’t enough. He also needs to state that the bonuses are his way of showing appreciation: “Our customer service ratings are up 10 percent over last year. That increase has helped us better position ourselves in the market. I know we couldn’t have done it without all of your hard work, and I want to show my appreciation by giving each of you this bonus.” Without the tie-in and the statement of appreciation, the bonus is just another way in which employees get paid.

### **Plaques and Awards Aren't Recognition**

Each month in a staff meeting, the manager of a city public works department presents one employee with a plaque and a gift certificate. As she hands out the awards, she explains that the recipient is "doing a good job" and is a "great employee." She believes she is recognizing employees, but employees in her department have no idea what it takes to get the award. This public award is supposed to be recognition, but these employees see it as favoritism and feel even less recognized. If employees, including the recipients, don't understand why recognition is given, then recognition hasn't taken place.

If this manager establishes criteria for the award such as excellence in customer service or cost cutting, and then describes what the recipient did to earn the award, then the award will provide recognition.

### **Incentives Aren't Recognition**

A manufacturer sets up a quota system for assemblers: when they reach a certain level, they will receive a \$100 gift certificate. As assemblers reach their quota, they find their certificate tucked in their pay envelope. Their supervisor thinks the certificates are recognition, but they aren't. They are incentives. They tell employees, "If you do this, you will get that." Used properly, incentives can motivate people to do more, but there really isn't much recognition built in.

The line supervisor can easily add an element of recognition to the incentive. If he hand-delivers the certificate, personally congratulates the recipient, and offers appreciation for a job well done, then the incentive will have recognition value.

There's a lot you can do that will make people feel recognized, but first you have to be clear about what recognition *isn't*. It isn't perks, bonuses, plaques and awards, or incentives. While these things aren't recognition, they can be a highly valued part of the recognition experience. They can serve as excellent concrete reminders of the recognition you offer.

An employee who does customer support offers the following example:

“I was given a tough customer to assist. The underlying message was ‘We don’t entrust really important relationships to just anybody. We believe in you. You have proven yourself.’ After I was successful, they let me pick from a catalog of gifts. The opportunity was the recognition, but the mixer I selected reminds me of it—every time I walk into the kitchen.”

Don't make the mistake of thinking that the awards are the recognition. If you do, you will fall into a common trap: assuming that all you need to make recognition work is a new award. Focus only on the tangible award, and recognition will most likely fail. Focus on the *meaning* behind the award, and employees will receive recognition that works.

This isn't to say that looking for new award ideas doesn't have value. It's always a good idea to come up with new and creative ways to show recognition. Many excellent books are filled with great recognition ideas. Two that I would recommend are *1001 Ways to Reward Employees* by Bob Nelson and *301 Ways to Have Fun at Work* by Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes. Nothing is wrong with getting ideas. In fact, the *Make Their Day* website offers a free weekly tip subscription that will provide you with lots of new ideas. By all means, get creative.

Remember, *57 percent of surveyed employees said the most meaningful recognition was free!* Eighty-eight percent said it cost under \$100. What makes recognition meaningful isn't the award; it is the meaning behind the award.

**Before you give an award ask yourself a few questions:**

- What achievement does the award recognize?
- How are the recipients selected?
- When and how are awards presented?
- What can I do to make sure that the award provides recognition?

## What Makes Recognition Work

Simple, thoughtful gestures are what employees tell me make their day. Here are some examples:

- ☑ A souvenir from your vacation
- ☑ Remembering the details of an employee's project
- ☑ A thank-you e-mail
- ☑ A handwritten note

The hundreds of stories that I've heard confirm that recognition doesn't have to be big and splashy to be memorable and meaningful. What stands out in employees' minds is recognition that is memorable because of the consistency and regularity with which it is offered, sometimes because it is clever and unique, but most often because it sends a strong message that they are valued.

**rec·og·ni·tion** (rĕkə'g-nĭsh'ən) *n.* 1. the act of seeing or identifying. 2. the perception of something as existing or true. 3. the acknowledgment of something as valid or entitled to consideration.

Look up *recognize* and *recognition* in any dictionary, and you will find definitions that use words like *see*, *identify*, and *acknowledge*. These words are at the core of how employees define recog-

dition. One man told me, “I’d be happy if I thought anyone here even knew I existed.” Most employees don’t feel anywhere near this level of dissatisfaction, but his comment does show the extreme of what it means to feel completely unrecognized.

Another told me about how much more productive she was when she had the cubicle outside her manager’s office. She emphasized that she wasn’t intimidated, just visible.

Employees want to be seen—sometimes literally. When anyone higher up the organizational ladder greets an employee by name in the hallway, typically that employee will view the greeting as a form of recognition. Why? Because these are the people who employees most want to be seen by because they have the most influence over their careers.

Employees also want their accomplishments identified and acknowledged. When coworkers, internal customers, managers,

**How well do you see employees? Here is a visibility quiz for you:**

Imagine a senior manager stops by during your team meeting. Could you, if asked, introduce each individual in the room by providing the following information?

- Name
- Length of time with the company
- Role on the team
- Special strengths
- Current project and why it is important

If you don’t have all of this information right on the tip of your tongue, work on it. Great leaders really know the people on their teams.

and supervisors provide specific details about the value of an employee's contribution, they provide recognition that works at its most fundamental level.

## The Elements of Recognition

Recognition that works has four basic elements: praise, thanks, opportunity, and respect. Every successful gesture of recognition includes at least one of these four basic elements and is typically a combination of more than one. If you don't include at least one of the elements, you aren't giving recognition. You're giving an incentive, prize, gift, or plaque, but not recognition that works. Let's look at each element separately.

### *Praise*

Employees want to hear you say, "Hey, you accomplished something important." They want you to acknowledge their progress. They want you to notice what they do right.

**Here are three tips for offering praise:**

- Be clear and concise about what you are praising.
- Make the praise proportional to the accomplishment. Don't exaggerate or overdo it.
- Keep it timely. Don't wait six months for the performance review. When you see it or hear about it, praise it.

You can praise employees publicly or privately. Be aware that while every employee wants praise, not all employees want pub-

lic praise. It's up to you to learn each employee's preference. For more on this topic, see Chapter 12.

### ***Thanks***

A sincere thank-you is a highly valued form of recognition that works. Some managers think there is no need to thank a person who is doing his or her job. It's true that you don't *have* to thank each employee, but if someone's efforts make your job easier, then thank that person. Everyone responds to heartfelt appreciation. Employees will work many times harder for managers who express their gratitude. Offer a sincere thank-you, and you will make significant progress in improving morale and productivity.

To make sure that your thank-you has the desired effect, describe why the person is being thanked. Be specific, accurate, clear, and concise.

Remember: the simplest and frequently most desired form of recognition is a simple expression of gratitude.

### ***Put It in Writing***

While you're at it, think about providing your praise and appreciation in the form of a handwritten note. People tell me they hang on to these for years and pull them out when they need a boost. Talk about a great return on the time you have to invest in writing the note!

### ***Opportunity***

At first glance, opportunity doesn't appear to be an element of recognition, but it's actually a very important element of recognition that works. Over half of the examples of meaningful recognition that I

have heard include this element. Give your employees new opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way and learn new skills, provide them with more freedom in how the work gets done, and they will be committed to you and your department's success.

**Consider these opportunity tips:**

- Learn about employees' workplace aspirations.
- Assess their ability and desire to work effectively with little supervision.
- Coach them on what they need to do to achieve their goals.
- Offer learning opportunities that will help them reach those goals.
- Increase their freedom in incremental stages as they demonstrate their ability to work well on their own.

The results will be happy, productive employees who never want to leave!

### ***Respect***

Respect is an often overlooked element of recognition. In reality, it is the most crucial element. You've heard the phrase "You must be present to win." Well, respect must be present for recognition to take place.

Consider employee needs as you make decisions, and you recognize employee value. Stop and listen, make allowances for personal crises, get to know something about each person who works with you, and you show respect.

Focusing on respect along with praise, thanks, and opportunity means that you'll be offering meaningful, memorable recognition that boosts morale and productivity.

## TAKING ACTION

Here are a few things you can do to ensure that you offer recognition that works:

- Make sure employees feel like you are seeing and acknowledging them. Look for ways to simplify. You don't have to be clever—just sincere.
- Assess all tangible awards for recognition potential. Just because the incentives, perks, and celebrations aren't in and of themselves recognition doesn't mean you can't add an element of recognition to make them more meaningful.
- Continue reading for more ways to make their day!

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