

Great Performances by Great Staff Deserve GREAT Recognition



A COLLECTION OF SIMPLE AND INEXPENSIVE STAFF RECOGNITION TIPS FROM NELSON SCOTT

Recognition Tips

- It often seems that meetings are called only when things are not going well to ask, *"What went wrong? Why is production down?"* Instead of only meeting to discuss bad news, call everyone together when things are going well. *"What did we do that increased customer satisfaction levels? What can we do to continue this trend? How can we support each other as we continue to improve?"*
- Provide a book in the reception area where visitors, customers, and staff can write positive things about your organization and those who work there.
- Recognize those who show up on time for staff meetings by entering their names in a draw for an extended coffee or lunch break.
- Invite customers to let you know when staff members or departments provide exceptional service. Create and display special comment cards to seek this input. When you receive a comment card praising an individual staff member or department, pass the comments on to the employee or team after adding your words of praise and encouragement to it.
- Keep a supply of thank-you notes where you see them frequently through the day. Whenever you see them, ask yourself, *"Who deserves to be thanked?"*
- Carry a supply of thank-you notes in your briefcase. Whenever you have a few minutes, such as when waiting for an appointment or on an airplane, use that time to write notes of appreciation to staff members who deserve them.
- Not only is the pen mightier than the sword, it can also have greater impact than the word processor or e-mail. A simple, handwritten note of appreciation appears more sincere than the most superbly crafted letter that was prepared on a computer screen. Tip: use blue, green, or purple ink. Black ink can create the impression that the notes have been printed or photocopied. And we all remember what red ink meant when we were in school!
- A Post-It® note with a few appreciative words stuck to a report or computer screen can be a powerful recognition tool. Keep a supply on your desk or in your pocket so you can provide spontaneous appreciation. Considering using a colour or design that is unique in your organization and is used only to provide positive feedback.

What makes Staff Recognition GREAT?

Staff Recognition must be:

GENUINE – The person who expresses appreciation must genuinely believe...and the recipient must know...that recognition is warranted. Recognition that is insincere, given because it is the "thing to do", or offered to an undeserving recipient is meaningless. The practice of providing recognition for reasons that are not genuine can be more damaging than providing no recognition at all.

Staff Recognition should be:

RELEVANT – Relevant recognition relates to what the organization says is important in its vision, mission statement, values, and goals. It also reflects behaviours that are key to employees' on-the-job success. Recognizing employees for doing the right things well reinforces for them and others which behaviours are expected and valued.

EXPLICIT – Don't leave the recipient confused. The reason behind the recognition must be clear: exactly what did he or she do that deserved to be recognized? When recognition is specific, it highlights for the recipient and others what behaviours are expected of them.

APPROPRIATE – A "one-size-fits-all" approach to recognition does not work. Believing that it does is a formula for recognition that is valued by some, but inappropriate for others. Some people love to be praised in public, while others want to be acknowledged privately. Some value trophies and certificates, while others want nothing more than to hear a few kind words or to receive a simple, handwritten thank-you note. Getting to know staff as individuals enables a supervisor or co-worker to personalize recognition and to make it appropriate for each recipient.

TIMELY – Just as happens with a glass of cola left standing for too long, recognition delayed too long becomes flat. The shorter the time between observing or becoming aware of a behaviour and acknowledging it, the stronger the message of appreciation. Deserving behaviours should be acknowledged within hours or days of the event, not weeks or months later. The effectiveness of recognition diminishes over time.

- Write a letter of appreciation to a staff member's family. Describe the importance of what she does for the company. Note a time when the staff member worked late to complete a significant project or travelled on company business. Express thanks for their support of their parent, spouse, or child. When people have family support, they are more able to focus on their work.
- After a staff member has presented a successful training session, collect the positive comments from the evaluations, paste them on a sheet, laminate them, and present them to the seminar leader after adding a few positive comments of your own.
- Maintain a scrapbook of positive newspaper and magazine articles about your business or organization. Place it where staff and visitors can read it. The success of your organization is based on the efforts of your staff.
- Create a "Wall of Success" in your office where you post good news about staff: letters from happy customers, positive news about work or personal accomplishments, and certificates of achievement. Add a "Wall of Success" to your website or Intranet.
- When talking about a project, credit staff members whose ideas and suggestions proved key to its successful completion.

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- Place an advertisement in a local newspaper that proclaims: "Here are 213 reasons that ABC Corporation is successful" followed by a list of all 213 of your employees.
- Provide every employee with a special memo pad to be used to write notes of appreciation to co-workers. When a co-worker (or a supervisor) contributes to the employee's success or makes his job easier, encourage the employee to take a minute to express his feelings in writing.
- Whenever an individual or team achieves something special, that's the right time to get together for a brief celebration. Have a prearranged signal (ringing a bell, blowing a whistle, a special PA announcement) that lets everyone know it's time to get together for a *special* meeting.
- Designate appreciation weeks for specific groups of workers: secretaries, nurses, teachers, receptionists, cashiers, custodians, etc. Encourage co-workers to do special things for people in the group being honoured.
- Release staff from their regular duties to take on community projects that are both important to the company as well as relating to the skills and interests of those who are involved.
- Invite employees to describe what they appreciate about each of their co-workers. Collect and type these comments, then give them to the appropriate staff members.
- Let the person most responsible for the completion of a successful project make a brief presentation about it to the Board of Directors or the management committee.
- Invite "stars" to accompany you to high-level meetings. This will introduce them to your bosses. Have them attend future meetings in your place.
- Write a letter to your boss describing how an employee has contributed to the success of the organization. Send a copy to the employee.
- Let your boss know about employees' contributions. Encourage him to send handwritten notes to your stars, invite them to lunch, or just drop by for a visit.
- Most organizations collect empty drink containers for recycling. Invite a different employee each month to select a charity which will receive the proceeds when the containers are "cashed in".
- Get to know each employee's interests. Surprise him with a special calendar or another small gift that reflects his interest in sailing, cats, cooking, or another hobby he may have.
- Bookstore displays often feature staff picks, including the name of the employee recommending the book. These displays show confidence in the opinions of staff. How you can use this idea? Invite your staff to make recommendations to your customers about your products or services.
- Create a book that describes employees' best achievements of the past year, including the employees' photos. Place it in a public area where staff and visitors can read it.
- After a staff member has presented a successful training session, collect the positive comments from the evaluations, paste them on a sheet, laminate them, and present them to the seminar leader after adding a few positive comments of your own.
- Stories in company newsletters can be more than just facts. Quote staff members who are involved. It makes the stories more interesting to the readers and shows the importance you place on staff members' words.
- Inscribe a personal message of appreciation on a travel mug and present it to the deserving employee.
- When celebrating the successful end of a team's project, invite those who provided background assistance to join the celebration such as: support staff who gathered material or scheduled meetings; other departments or outside vendors who supplied information or materials needed to complete the project. The invitation to join the celebration may be a welcome surprise for those whose contributions often go unnoticed.
- Recognition does not have to end when you are "on the road". Practise your recognition skills while travelling. When you get great service in a restaurant, when you check in to your hotel, or during your flight, say thank you. Remember those back at the office. Let them know they are appreciated with a phone call, e-mail, voice mail message, fax, postcard, or thank-you note.
- Why do you appreciate particular staff members? Make a list of the top ten reasons for each person. During a designated week (Professional Assistants Week, Teacher Appreciation Week, Nurses Week, etc.), send daily e-mails to each person in the group with two of the reasons on your list. By the end of the week, everyone will have a top ten list of why they are appreciated.
- When we empower staff to make decisions in the best interest of customers, we are demonstrating our belief that they can exercise good judgment.

Recognition with a Smile

Recognition doesn't always have to be serious and formal. It doesn't always have to take the form of a letter of thanks, a certificate of appreciation, or a plaque for the wall. Sometimes we can find an appropriate gift can convey a message of thanks or appreciation with a little humour:

- Gardening gloves for someone who "lends a hand".
- A package of microwave popcorn for "popping into action".
- A bottle of water for those who "helped us keep our heads above water" during a busy time.
- A toy giraffe for an employee who was prepared to "stick his neck out" (take a risk).
- A plant when a staff member's contributions "helped the organization grow".
- A puzzle for someone who has become "an important piece of our organization".
- Tickets to a sporting event or concert "for being a ticket to our success".
- A calculator for the newcomer who is "a great addition to our staff".
- A highlighter for a time when working with someone "was a highlight".

Whatever you use to say thank you, be sure to include a specific description of what the recipient did that you appreciate.

Introducing Nelson Scott

During his presentations, Nelson challenges participants to examine their current practices and identify how they could hire and recognize staff, conduct meetings, and serve customers more effectively.

A full-time consultant and speaker since 1995, Nelson has informed and inspired public and private sector audiences across Western Canada. He is a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers, the International Federation for Professional Speakers, and the National Association for Employee Recognition.