

# Peer-to-Peer Recognition Initiatives



Taking the time to recognize the contributions of employees in the workplace is an important way to build a stronger organizational culture. Employees who feel valued for their contributions are more likely to take ownership in their work and work to support the organization in many different ways.

Generally organizations often show their appreciation of employee contributions in four ways: 1) Financial rewards (including gifts, special events), 2) New responsibilities or Promotions, 3) Non-financial gifts ((such as flexibility or extra time off work) 4) Public recognition (such as awards and acknowledgements). Often these recognitions are selected and bestowed on a recipient based on decisions made by management and human resources. Commonly management or HR may have to base their decisions on limited information and primarily on final results and output. While a useful way to gauge some employee contributions, managers and supervisors or HR may not always be the best way to gauge the full range of contributions of employees.

## Peer-To-Peer Recognition

One way to recognize a range of employee contributions is through peer-to-peer recognition. Sometimes manager miss a tangible and important contribution because they are not around enough to see they day-to-day activities and value an employee brings. Relying too much on performance data can lead to missing important human elements.

For the most part peer-to-peer recognition will provide employees with public and peer acknowledgement and not financial rewards. However, you can tie peer-to-peer into the other recognitions as one piece of the equation.

## Elements of a Peer-To-Peer Recognition Program

1. **Obtain Employee Input:** It is important that employees buy into this 'recognition program' is and one-way to do this is to involve them in the design and development. Begin with a framework but let the employees fill

in the what, where and how is recognized and let them contribute to the what, where and how the recognition is bestowed

2. **Make it Flexible:** Do not limit this program to only a specific time or type of recognition, for example, employee of the month. Help employees identify several different options for recognition, such as 'hardest worker', 'best teammate', 'fastest problem solver' and a host of other options and let them bestow them as they see fit. Then, once or twice a month draw the name of one of the recognized employees and provide a valued reward.
3. **Make it Quick and Simple:** Employees are less likely to participate if the process is cumbersome and full of hoops. Asking employees to write a lengthy submission probably will result in most employees skipping the process. Instead, consider a simple process of voting or nominating and obtaining a seconder.

Voting could involve providing a list of employees and a recognition of the week topic and asking all employees to submit or check off the name of the employee who is most deserving of the acknowledgement that week. This can be offered alone or in combination with asking employees to submit the name of another employee along with a seconder and a brief description of what they are 'recognizing' the co-worker for.

4. **Make it Visible and Transparent:** Throughout the organization, including on the companies social media, via email and in physical locations around the organization (as relevant to your organization) share the acknowledgements and show how they were selected. Allow other employees to not only see others obtaining rewards but allow employees to publicly congratulate their co-workers as a way of building relationships
5. **Make it Equitable:** One way to kill moral is to not ensure equal participation in the opportunity for recognition. Some employees, due to the nature of their jobs or their personality, may not be visible enough to earn recognition from peers without a little engineering. Part-time employees, virtual workers, people in solo teams, individuals with different abilities may be overlooked consistently unless you design some equity into the process. Identify types of acknowledgements that can recognize non-traditional or unconventional contributions and place those into the mix. Plant the seeds by asking public questions that help co-workers see the value in a job done well even if it is not highly visible role.

## **Making it Work**

Take the time to put together a clear policy and procedure document so all employees understand what is required and what is involved. Also ensure that leadership participates in recognizing the value of these peer-to-peer awards by congratulating and acknowledging award winners. While you do want to make sure you have clear expectations you also want encourage employees to have fun with this. Work with employees to design 'rewards' that have value and mean something to the employees. Set a budget and work with a team of employees to find ways to use that budget to show your appreciation.

There is a delicate balance between encouraging employees to work to gain extra rewards and encouraging them to work by thanking them. Listen to your employees and re-evaluate regularly to see what is working and what is not.