Recognition Matters

There are many reasons that an employee enjoys coming to work. Compensation is definitely near the top of the list, but you may be surprised to find that it is not at the very top of many employee's lists. A 2019 Glassdoor survey (https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/mission-culture-survey/) found that company mission and culture matter more than salary. And that was before the pandemic. In 2021, Glassdoor found that toxic work culture was one of the biggest factors in people quitting. That's a big deal!

Recognizing your team in specific ways helps establish a work culture were everyone can make meaningful contribution to the overall mission. It creates a place for each of them on the team that fosters belonging and, ultimately, increases retention rates and creates teams that are more successful in being on mission.

Gallup and WorkHuman recently partnered for a study that showed the following results:

One of the best ways to engage and inspire employees is to recognize them.

In fact:

3.8x	20x	72%
Employees who strongly agree that recognition is an important part of their organization are 3.8 times as likely to strongly agree that they feel connected to their culture.	Employees who receive great recognition are 20 times as likely to be engaged as employees who receive poor recognition.	Among employees who have great recognition experiences, 72% say that performance on "little things" is commonly recognized at their organization.

You can see why it is so important to look for and notice specific successes on your team. Many leaders report they give recognition several times a week and yet employees report there seems to be a disconnect between how leaders think they are giving kudos and how employees report receiving recognition. Maybe the disconnect lies in the way the praise is given. When you are recognizing an employee, be specific and authentic. For example, "nice work on that graphic, Kyle. I appreciate the thoughtfulness you put into its design to complement our company branding. I know that isn't always easy." Generic compliments or recognition that feels either manipulative (to get more work out of you) or insincere will not yield the same engagement from your employees. For example, "way to hit it out of the park, Kyle. Best designer ever. I mean EVER! I just sent two more requests your way because you are the best!" Not authentic.

So whether it's just a shoutout or a gift card to the local coffee shop, pay attention to how your employees perform and learn the "why" to their performance. Then give them the recognition they deserve and desire!

Recognition Matters: Exercise

To that end, imagine for a moment that you are handing out awards. You are going to spend some time thinking about your team.

Although awards should technically be voted on by a more representative group, let's pretend, for the sake of this exercise, that you have the enviable task of assigning all the awards for your co-workers. Go through the list and select 6-8 awards and list the name of the most deserving team member for this honor.

And the award goes to….

Company Values Award: *exemplifying the core AI value of "every person can learn…"*

Up, Up and Away: *team player extraordinaire who consistently goes above and beyond.*

Shoutout Rockstar: *the employee who regularly gets shoutouts from employees and members.*

Rise & Shine: *the early bird who starts the day off with infectious positivity.*

Pocketful of Sunshine: *Brings that little burst of light into all the situations.*

Learning is Power: *Always learning. Always reaching. Always teaching.*

Laughter is Medicine*: Just the right sense of humor for the occasion.*

Encourager: *always helping others succeed.*

Members First: *makes it all about the members. All the time.*

Best Communicator Award: *keeping everyone on the same page*

Best Collab: *perfect fit no matter who they are working with.*

Get 'er done!: *Laser focus and efficient.*