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Spot Recognition: Why Do It?

David Sturt

A staggering 65% of employees report that they have not received any positive recognition from their employers in the past 12 months and are leaving their jobs because of it. Research shows managers realize employee recognition is important and that they should do it more often. It is also becoming clearer that praise and recognition are vital to a company's long-term success. If managers do not know how to use recognition to engage employees, they will lose their top talent.

What is Spot Recognition? Recognition is not just the softer, unexpected side of business anymore; it is an essential part of good management and can be easily implemented into everyday occasions. It can be as simple as a kind word, a thank-you card, or a small food gift. Recognition is most effective when it's frequent, specific, and timely. These types of smaller and continuous recognition moments, also known as spot recognition, can be integrated into a larger recognition strategy to more effectively acknowledge employees for their great work.

Employees who are confident their work will be noticed and appreciated will be more inclined to put in extra effort and take initiative. This means increased productivity for teams and organizations. Managers are coming to learn that a little thanks can go a long way in motivating and retaining employees.


Spot recognition can be applied when an employee or team goes above and beyond the call of duty by working late, coming up with innovative ideas and giving exceptional customer service. When one or more of these events happens, a manager should acknowledge it by stopping by to say thanks, writing a note, or sending a gift. For bigger accomplishments, a manager could send a food basket or a larger gift to the person or team.

Spot recognition doesn't have to be expensive. Although managers often worry about the cost of incorporating spot recognition into their management style, they are surprised as the money already spent on unplanned extras, such as lunches, breakfast bagels, balloons, and gift cards. By tracking these minor expenses over a predefined time period, managers learn that implementing and adhering to a recognition budget actually saves money and allows for more efficient and effective day-to-day recognition.

Recognizing and appreciating employees is simple. Here are some tips to strengthen your workplace morale:

- **Be immediate.** The closer the recognition to the actual performance, the better. Do not let too much time pass between the accomplishment and recognition or the employee won't connect the two events.
- **Be specific.** Compliment specific behaviors that reinforce company key values. General praise is rarely motivating. Spell it out by telling the employee precisely what they did to earn your thanks and why it is important to your organization.
- **Share praise.** Often recognition comes from the top down; however, recognition that means the most often comes from peers who best understand the circumstances surrounding the employee's performance. Invite peers, managers, and supervisors and allow them to comment during a recognition presentation.

It is everyone's responsibility to show appreciation: managers to employees, employees to managers, peer-to-peer, and anyone interested in showing appreciation. Research shows the more appreciated employees feel in their work, the more they feel free to suggest new ideas and processes, focus on client and team satisfaction, and become more engaged. Engaged



employees will not only love coming to work but will bring their heart and mind to the job each day.

Recognition can be implemented every day in many ways. [Use your imagination and ask your employees.]

Research shows employees often work harder when recognized for contributing and, in turn, increase business profitability. Spot recognition helps engage staff by setting a clear guiding vision, making employees feel valued throughout the year, and providing a sense of visibility and connection to corporate values and goals. By continuously recognizing employees, everyone wins – the manager, the employee, and the company.