**incentive marketing association**

ima
: acknowledge
: appreciate
: award
: achieve

## Incentive & Engagement Solution Providers

The workplace has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last few years. Organizations need to win the hearts and minds of employees by providing positive employee experiences where employees feel inspired to do their best work. A positive employee experience should be conceptualized as an impactful and powerful – and ultimately human – experience; one in which employees, over time, can invest more of their whole selves in the workplace.

The human era embodies a time when work has the potential to be a more rewarding experience for employees. Seeing firsthand how this battle for employees' hearts and minds is played out daily through their workplace experiences, organizations are quickly reexamining their employees' experiences at work as a path to improved job performance and sustained competitive advantage.

A human workplace allows business leaders to make significant progress regarding top-of-mind issues like retention, culture and employee happiness – all while improving the bottom live. And a key element of achieving a human workplace, through positive employee experiences, lies in social recognition. An important finding outlined in the 2016 Employee Recognition Survey, published by Globoforce and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Foundation, is that social recognition programs tied to organizational values can outperform other programs in terms of delivering a return on investment, reinforcing corporate values and maintaining a strong employer brand.

When it comes to achieving a more human workplace through the power of social recognition, it's important for organizations to consider the following.

### INVEST PROPERLY IN VALUES-BASED RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

The Employee Recognition Survey from Globoforce and SHRM, which surveyed nearly 800 HR leaders, indicates that organizations that dedicate 1 percent or more of payroll to values-based rewards and recognition are more likely to perceive greater impacts on retention and financial outcomes. Additionally, HR leaders with values-based recognition programs in place are 3.5 times more likely to say their program helps HR professionals attract new job candidates, and two times more likely to help retain employees (88 percent vs. 44 percent).

In contrast, companies that do not invest in values-based recognition are five times more likely to rate their recognition program as poor, compared to companies that spend 1 percent or more.

The survey further shows that nearly half (46 percent) of organizations cite employee retention as a top workforce management challenge, while 36 percent see employee engagement as a challenge. In 2016, 60 percent of organizations maintained some form of a values-based recognition program, a 50 percent increase from just four years earlier. Another 88 percent of organizations with values-based recognition programs in place felt they were getting a strong return on investment in the form of employee retention and performance.

### TIE SOCIAL RECOGNITION BACK TO A COMPANY'S VALUES AND GOALS

A recent Employee Experience Index from Globoforce's WorkHuman Research Institute and the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute emphasizes that employee experience, which measures an employee's senses of belonging, purpose, achievement, happiness and vigor, is directly tied to a company's organizational values and goals. In fact, only 29 percent of employees who said their work was consistent with organizational values reported a positive employee experience, compared to 80 percent when employees' work was consistent with a company's core values.

The challenge many companies face today is how to make core company values practicable. Considering

social recognition is designed with awards that specifically map back to each value, it integrates those ideals into employees' everyday thoughts and actions. Ultimately, giving and receiving visible recognition throughout an organization helps establish connections between employees, while also reinforcing behaviors that drive the culture of an organization.

### EMPOWER EMPLOYEES TO RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER

While managers play a prominent role in employees' performance and growth, the reality is an employee's colleagues are often more knowledgeable about their fellow employees' contributions, behaviors and achievements than senior leaders. That's why it's important to provide employees with the power to recognize, praise and appreciate one another in meaningful ways. According to the Employee Experience Index, 83 percent of employees report a positive employee experience when they feel recognized through awards and other means for the good work they do.

Fostering coworker relationships is one way to empower employees to recognize each other. In fact, when those relationships are present in the workplace, employees report a much more positive employee experience than when that support is absent (77 percent compared to 35 percent). Coworker relationships start with common connections and similarities between colleagues, but can be amplified through company outings and social events, and even company-wide celebrations. Years of service anniversaries, for example, offer the opportunity for an entire company to take part in celebrating their colleagues' contributions, creating powerful moments of inspiration, gratitude and recognition.

Organizations should also strive to build a culture of learning and growth by crowdsourcing performance feedback and conducting regular check-ins, as opposed to just the traditional annual review. By widening the performance

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review circle from a one-dimensional, manager-only conversation into a company-wide celebration, companies can significantly enhance the frequency of employee recognition and help encourage peers to recognize a colleague for their achievements. The 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends report indicates that 83 percent of companies that redesigned their performance management process saw an increase in the quality of conversations between employees and managers. Performance management is now about establishing a company-wide dialogue designed to bring out the best in each employee. That's why new best practices should encourage more human-focused interactions that ultimately help create a community of growth, collaboration and inclusion.

## ENABLE EMPLOYEES TO RECOGNIZE IN THE MOMENT AND ACROSS THE GLOBE

As managers and team members increasingly travel and work remotely, there is often a time gap following a recognition moment. The result is a squandered opportunity to reinforce the desired behaviors and employee performance that enhance and transform a company's culture. By utilizing mobile social recognition solutions, managers and peers can give, receive, approve and redeem recognition awards – anywhere and anytime – thereby ensuring strong performance and desired behaviors never get missed or remembered incorrectly. Through recognition that is timely, values-driven and open to all employees, companies can build more connected and fully engaged workforces.

Realizing employee engagement through strategic recognition efforts holds the potential to be the next opportunity for significant return on investment. Further guidelines for addressing the needs of a multigenerational workforce include:

- **Make it matter** – Help employees see the meaning and purpose in

their work by uniting them behind the company vision and inciting passion to achieve company objectives

- **Reward frequently** and in a timely manner – Make sure the recognition moment closely follows the act that is being recognized to ensure the act is top-of-mind

- **Give the reward of choice** – Cater to the demographic of a global, multigenerational workforce and their unique needs by letting them invest in their local communities with broad, local choice

- **Involve everyone** – Move beyond traditional elitist programs that only target the top 10 percent to involve up to 90 percent of employees in a culture of recognition

- **Measure results to ensure success** – When measured appropriately, recognition can reveal patterns of behaviors and understanding of company values and objectives.

## MEASURE THE ROI OF RECOGNITION

Feedback and recognition of performance are critical to positive employee experiences, as well as opportunities for professional development and growth. The Employee Experience Index shows that 83 percent of employees who receive recognition for their performance, and 80 percent of those who receive feedback, report a positive employee experience, compared to 38 and 41 percent, respectively, of employees who did not.

Additionally, employees who feel their ideas and suggestions matter are more than twice as likely to report a positive employee experience than those who don't (83 percent vs. 34 percent). A similar pattern emerges among employees when given the freedom to decide how to do their work (79 percent vs. 42 percent).

Recognition not only significantly improves engagement, but also creates a more human culture.

Employees' attitudes toward change and optimism for the future correlate with both recognition efforts and efforts to build a more human workplace. Employees trust colleagues most, but it is trust for leaders that most impacts culture.

Employees feel that a human workplace is best comprised of three elements: respect for people as individuals; caring about employees' well-being; and recognizing and appreciating all employees. Though much work remains to be done in achieving a global human workplace, research shows that a human workplace has a strong impact on employee well-being and important metrics such as engagement and intent to stay.

Social recognition creates a groundswell of positivity throughout an organization, which researchers have found to be a central driver of performance. When employees' inner work lives are positive, they will be most driven in terms of creativity and productivity, prompting strong business ROI for their organizations.

## CONCLUSION

Organizations that focus on frequent, values-based social recognition can in turn create a direct impact on employees' engagement, positivity, motivation and overall happiness. The result is a unified, human work culture that gives organizations the competitive edge to be successful in today's evolving business climate.

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