

Small Budget, Big Payback: Ten Reasons Why Employee Recognition Works

Bob Lee

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Cindy Ventrice, best-selling author of 'Make Their Day! – Employee Recognition that Works', addresses employee recognition in her latest book, and explains that by making wrong decisions when it comes to recognising your employees you could undermine morale rather than bolster it. Here are ten quick insights into why Cindy believes Employee Recognition works:

1. **Free and Simple:** Cindy's research has shown that when asked what the cost of the most meaningful recognition that they ever received was, 6 out of 10 people said it cost nothing, that it was something free! This could be an employee receiving a verbal 'thank you' or a 'thank you' email from their manager, or their manager keeping them updated & informed on what is happening.
2. **Individual Beats Team:** Cindy looked at Team Vs Individual recognition and found that the most critical dynamic is the relationship between individual employees and their manager. Although team recognition is important and effective, individual recognition is even more so.
3. **One Size Doesn't Fit All:** The same recognition may be accepted differently by different employees depending on their personality and their own individual relationship with that manager. So try to tailor the recognition to the individual – for example, some employees thrive on public recognition and praise, while for others a quiet word of acknowledgement will work best.
4. **Show Employees Their Value:** Employees want to know they are making a contribution, when you as a manager show them that you want them to succeed, they will know they are valued and will feel recognised.
5. **Keep it Simple:** Recognition does not have to be big and pricey to be memorable and meaningful. It is the consistency and regularity with which it is offered that counts because it sends your employees a strong message that they are valued.
6. **Timing is Everything:** Keep your recognition timely – don't wait six months until it's time for the official performance review. When you see it or hear about it, acknowledge it!
7. **Self-Praise is Great Praise:** Encourage your employees to take the initiative and recognise themselves for their accomplishments. When employees control their own recognition, they receive validation for what is most meaningful to them and this increases the possibility that every employee will feel sufficiently recognised.
8. **What Lies Beneath:** Recognition isn't a plaque; it's the meaning behind the plaque. It isn't all about perks and special benefits. It boils down to basic respect, such as being open with them or providing the best possible working environment for them with the resources they need to do their jobs.

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9. **Make Recognition a Priority:** Even when you're busy, don't leave recognition until last - that would be a big mistake. Managing is easier, not harder, when you make recognition a priority.
10. **Foster a Recognition Culture:** Connect with every employee – have a chat and let them know that you know something about them. This is powerful because employees, especially in larger organisations, don't expect personal attention from senior leaders, and so they will feel valued.

Remember - recognition is a work in progress and has many long term benefits, including improved engagement and productivity, so it's definitely worth your effort.

About Cindy Ventrice

Throughout her career, best-selling author Cindy Ventrice has had a chance to observe and learn, firsthand, about employee loyalty and motivation. She began to see a correlation between project success and the way employees are treated, and eventually developed a project management course that focused less on scheduling and resource management and more on the cooperative and collaborative elements of effective project management. Slowly, she moved away from technology-based solutions and towards people-based solutions, creating a variety of workshops solidly grounded in basic business operations. She looks at how companies can manoeuvre through the risks associated with organisational change, and how managers can get employees excited about improving customer service.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Lee".

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If you would like more information on the many practical ways in which the Great Place to Work® Institute can help your organisation to develop lasting competitive advantage through building a high-trust culture please contact me, or any member of the team, at:

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Reference: 'Make Their Day! – Employee Recognition that Works', Cindy Ventrice (Berrett-Koehler, 2009)

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