

## **Recognition Keeps Staff Happy**

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"Rewarding Employees Goes A Long Way".*

While a little appreciation goes along way, it is often hard to get it.

Managers may say, "Why would I give someone a pat on the back just for doing her job?" Employees may say, "The supervisor always starts his criticism of me with some positive feedback—what a joke!"

It's not easy for some people to receive compliments while others find it hard to give them. This sometimes results in a lack of gratitude and appreciation for a job well done. Psychologically healthy workplaces, however, make employee recognition a "must-do" on both an informal daily basis (a simple thank-you to people for their work) and with formal programs and policies such as recognition ceremonies.

This week we focus on employee recognition as the fourth element necessary to creating a psychologically healthy organization. According to the American Psychological Association, there are five factors that make up a psychologically healthy workplace, including ensuring employee involvement and health and safety, as well as providing staff development and helping personnel balance work, home and life.

Employee recognition is another factor that enables organizations to remain attractive to superior talent, retain staff and promote productivity and profitability.

There are five ways companies can reward employees both individually and collectively for their contributions to the organization:

### **1. Provide Fair Compensation**

While research shows that a decent pay cheque won't keep people glued to miserable jobs, being fairly compensated goes a long way in communicating that they and their work are valued. When people are paid below their value, they may become resentful, which is costly to the organization. What is saved in salaries is lost in productivity. People will give the amount of effort, the level of service and focus to the task according to the amount they are paid. We eventually get what we pay for.

Hence, making sure that people are paid well for their role or position is important in maintaining the health of the organization in the long term.

### **2. Offer Competitive Benefits Packages**

Beware the "comprehensive" benefit package that ultimately provide only a narrow range of benefits due to exclusions, provisos and red tape found in the fine print. Employees, promised a company benefits package, are bound to feel betrayed when they can't get benefits because of a maze of exclusion clauses.

Saving money on benefits packages can backfire when employees think the company failed to follow through on promises made at the beginning of the employment relationship. So make sure employees understand their benefits to avoid disappointment. And new staff should take a close look at the real benefits provided in their packages to make decisions about the company at the outset. Attracting

and retaining personnel can be partially achieved through providing competitive benefits.

### **3. Acknowledge Contributions and Milestones**

Be sure to recognize all the contributions made toward a common goal. The small milestones achieved when working on a project can be overlooked when staff are focused only on the end result. Unfortunately, many may say that they'll celebrate once the report is in or the project is complete. That's a good idea too, but organizations that fail to recognize efforts made along the way may also forget to celebrate the end result.

So, notice the milestones you hit. You can do so in small ways. Hold a meeting looking at the good news so far, mention people by name in front of their peers, thank someone for going the extra mile, provide lunch, or give a gift card.

### **4. Create Performance-based Bonuses and Pay Increases**

Offering people some extra money when the company does well due to their efforts tells them they matter and that the organization is happy to share. Hoarding profits, paying bonuses to a select few or telling people that there is still not enough money for a bonus after a particularly good year will kill enthusiasm. When the rewards are few, staff feel less motivated. Most people cannot tolerate giving less than they know they are capable of, and will leave. Staff who feel taken advantage of may respond by quitting or adjusting their level of commitment to reflect the company's commitment to them.

## **5. Provide Employee Reward and Recognition Ceremonies**

Honouring staff regularly and in a public manner is key. Providing recognition nights or other such occasions signals the company takes employee contributions seriously and will give staff their due. It is important though, to remain aware of the need for daily, informal recognitions and not leave appreciation for one luncheon a year. The value of recognition ceremonies is that they provide a forum for company gratitude, but don't replace the need for constant vigilance when it comes to rewarding and appreciating staff.

Your company may do a great job of recognizing you and your co-workers in the ways we've outlined. If this is the case, consider nominating your company for the British Columbia Psychological Association's, Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award to be given in June 2007. Contact us for an application.

*The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award is sponsored by WorkSafe BC, Vancouver International Airport Authority, the American Psychological Association, the British Columbia Psychological Association, Bruyneel & Co., MinuteMan Press, The UPS Store (Yaletown), BC Human Resources Management Association and Health, Work & Wellness. [www.phwc.ca](http://www.phwc.ca).*

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