

The Magic Wand of Recognition
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What if there was a foolproof way that you could increase employee engagement, and boost revenues with only a few simple steps? In this current economic climate, managers cannot afford to overlook any opportunity to increase the value or to enrich the culture of their companies.

In their book, The Carrot Principle, authors Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton (Free Press, 2009) posit that beyond the basic tenets of leadership, employee recognition is the key to an eager and engaged workforce. They do recognize the importance of management tasks such as goal setting, communication, trust, and accountability, but they go on to say, “great management is born when recognition is added to the other characteristics of leadership.”

Gostick and Elton describe the basic four of leadership:

- Goal Setting - define the purpose, tie to an end result, leaders infuse work with meaning and purpose.
- Communications - tell the people! Communicate the goals on different levels: verbal, non-verbal, by actions and example.
- Trust-building Relationships - employees will respond if they believe you have their best interests at heart.
- Accountability - recognizing people’s responsibility for their action - both successes and mistakes.

Adding recognition to each of these acts as an accelerant:

- Recognition accelerates reaching a goal. It creates excitement and people will duplicate those rewarded actions.
- Communication - one on one! It doesn’t have to be long or elaborate.
- Trust - sharing credit feels both personal and professional.
- Accountability - not just negative. Recognize the positive.

Many managers are initially hesitant to implement a recognition program; the authors found that up to 74% of managers find it difficult to support these ideas. However, through their research, time and again they found that putting such a program into place, adding recognition of both a job well done and room for improvement, can dramatically affect business results.

What Gostick and Elton define as a “Carrot Culture” is pretty simple overall: a culture where employees are valued and appreciated for their performance, which in turn creates passion and improved performance among the workers. And how do you create a culture like this? Step one is to find out where your company’s culture currently is, and how far you have to go to reach Carrot Culture. Research needs to measure both employee satisfaction and engagement.

So direct this focus to your own company. Are your employees performing to the best of their potential? Do your managers provide comprehensive leadership? Sicora Consulting, Inc. can evaluate all aspects of leadership, analyze both people and processes, to provide increased return and myriad growth opportunities.

Identifying that “the most difficult portion of the recognition process is choosing a form of recognition that taps an employee’s motivation triggers.” Gostick and Elton offer 125 ideas for recognition in their concluding chapter. There are many creative and random ideas given; enjoy this small sample of them and perhaps one will prompt some ideas to fit your business.

1. What makes your employees tick? Why not ask? Ask each employee to list the values that guide his or her daily decisions. During a private meeting, discuss how these lists compare with – and contrast to – the company mission and value statements.
2. As a reward, bring in a fortune-teller to tell positive fortunes that relate to your core work goals.
3. Are people getting hot under the collar? Call in an ice cream truck to cool things down. When employees hear the music playing, invite them all to go get an ice cream on you. They won’t be able to stop smiling.
4. Take a lesson from the Boy Scouts. Be prepared. Carry gift cards to your peoples’ favorite restaurants wherever you go. When you spot someone doing something in keeping with your company or team values, stop and recognize her on the spot with something she’ll value.
5. Hire a celebrity impersonator to leave a congratulatory voice-mail message on an employee’s phone. Choose a celebrity whom the employee idolizes. If possible, plan it so the message is received first thing in the morning.
6. Make a commitment to call people by name and say good morning to them every day. It shows you see them as individuals, not just faces in a crowd.
7. Don’t forget that the correct ratio to preserve employee morale, motivation, and commitment is five compliments for every one criticism. A friend of ours in the military once noted, “It takes a whole lot of ‘Atta-boys’ to make up for just one ‘I’m disappointed.’”
8. Once every seven days. That’s how often day-to-day praise and recognition need to happen to build a committed, trusting workforce. As it turns out, it’s also how often we usually fill our cars with gas. So here’s an idea: each time you fill your gas tank, make it a point that same day to fuel initiative and creativity among your people with personal, sincere recognition.
9. Make a star performer the star of your next company video. Even better, use this person in your next print ad.
10. When you promote someone, make it public. Gather the group together to celebrate the achievement. Take the time to explain what behaviors got the employee there, and express appreciation.

Clearly, recognition is a significant part of successfully managing, and incorporating a recognition program into your regular management routine has been proven to have results above and beyond many people’s expectations. In what areas of your business could a recognition program improve your bottom line? Sicora Consulting can evaluate your leadership team and the processes of your business to add value to your company. Contact Sicora Consulting, Inc. for a free Insights Discovery profile, typically a \$745 value:

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