



MAKING A CASE FOR RECOGNITION

The second-floor ballroom at the Ft. McNair “O” Club was filled, despite the sunny Autumn day that beckoned outside. For many, it was the first day back at work after a four-day holiday weekend, and the Training Officers Conference (TOC) members seemed ready to network, enjoy the buffet and focus on the meeting’s speaker. Roz Jeffries, president of Performance Enhancement Group—PEG—took the podium, and for over an hour, had people listening, laughing and learning about using recognition in the workplace.

Roz’s presentation, “Recognition: A Management Competency,” was tailor-made for this group of training professionals, and they were an appreciative audience. One could see “light bulbs” going off throughout the room as she tossed out easy-to-use, no-cost suggestions for recognizing all employees at all levels in the workplace.

Roz noted that recognition is a learned skill—one that can and should be taught to *all* levels of managers. As proof of the need for this, major corporations like IBM and DuPont are now integrating recognition training into their supervisory development programs.

The “Top 10 Takeaways” from her presentation were:

1. *Why employees leave jobs:* Over 75 percent leave as the result of poor managers, not for better pay.
2. *The importance of recognition in the workplace:* Research shows recognition is directly linked to ***Employee Satisfaction, Retention and Productivity***.
3. *Results of the Human Capital Survey—the BAD News:* Less than half the Government workforce are satisfied with the recognition they receive, and more than one-third are considering leaving.
4. *Results of the Human Capital Survey—the GOOD News:* Many of the questions from the survey are effective forms of recognition, like #18 (“Supervisors/team leaders in my work unit encourage my development at work”), #34 (“Creativity and innovation are rewarded”) and #54 (“I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things”).

5. *Whom to recognize:* Everyone! “Shining Stars,” “Steady Eddies” and “Problem Children” all need and deserve recognition. The challenge is in making the recognition “fit” the person.
6. *The critical 90 percent of your workforce:* “Steady Eddies,” sometimes known as “B Players,” are the ones who go to work, do their jobs and then go home. They’re also the ones who keep their departments afloat and on course, and they should be where managers spend most of their recognition efforts.
7. *How different generations accept recognition:* Beware! Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Yers all respond differently to recognition. What works with one group won’t necessarily work with the others.
8. *When to give recognition:* Often! Become a broken record when it comes to recognition, and practice, so it becomes natural and comfortable.
9. *How to find out how employees want to be recognized:* Ask them! Your best, most reliable information comes directly from them.
10. *The role of email in recognition:* Face-to-face works best; email is a good reinforcement.

Clearly, Roz had as much fun as the audience, especially when everyone reached under their chairs to find a surprise that reinforced her message of recognition: turtles with rotating heads to thank people for “sticking their necks out” to practice recognition; light bulb-shaped stress relievers, illustrating that recognition is a great idea; and clappers to “applaud” employees. But when she compared the variety of employees to the small boxes of mixed chocolates that were under many of the chairs—“some employees are ‘nutty,’ some are ‘smooth’ and some are ‘filled with surprises’”—there was a collective laugh of agreement.

No doubt, Roz had won her case for making recognition a management requirement instead of an option.