

Franklin Square Hospital: Where Recognition & Reward Speak Volumes

The event was the Quarterly Management Retreat, and the session topic “Retention through Recognition.” When Rosalind “Roz” Jeffries, a management consultant and speaker who specializes in recognition linked to retention, took center stage, she knew she had a friendly audience. As a Human Resources professional in the field of healthcare for many years, Roz shares a passion with Franklin Square for recognizing the contributions of employees. Testament to that fact, the hospital has a dedicated Reward & Recognition Team, whose members were in attendance at the retreat along with hospital’s management team, including physicians and the president of the hospital. By their attendance, the senior leadership sent a strong message—that recognition is a valuable management competency embedded in the hospital’s culture.

Recognition 101: Building the Foundation

If the audience was hoping to take away a list of ideas for recognizing employees, they got that and something even better—a method for generating ideas that are *guaranteed to work* because they come directly from the employees themselves! Within the first 30 minutes of the session, the group had generated over 100 ideas for recognizing the accomplishments of their staff. And most of them cost nothing to implement!

That strategy is part of what Roz calls Recognition 101—building the foundation of your recognition effort. And it gives managers the tools they need for recognizing their “Steady Eddies” (sometimes called “B” players)—that 90 percent of employees who do their jobs day in day out, but don’t get the recognition or rewards the “Shining Stars” receive. By gathering data directly from their employees, managers get answers to questions like “How do I recognize my staff?” and “What behaviors deserve recognition?”

Formal recognition programs, with “Employee of the Month” awards, bonuses and the like, generally touch only the top 5 percent, the superstars. “Don’t stop doing these things,” Roz cautions, “but expand your recognition effort to include your whole workforce.” Recognition can make the difference between retaining employees and losing them, so it makes sense to focus on the segment where recognition can have the greatest impact—the Steady Eddies. They’re key to your workforce of the future, where the number of jobs in the next 6 years is predicted to far exceed the number of employees available to fill them.

In the Eye of the Beholder

If you're one of those managers who brings in Danish in the morning, orders pizza on Fridays or celebrates the birthdays of all your employees, great! But don't think your employees will see all that as recognition, says Roz. "When everyone gets the same perks, they become more of an expectation than recognition." True or not, that perception is employee reality.

As great managers, though, you can change their perception without cutting out the food! By putting a personal stamp on your recognition effort, you'll make your employees feel more valued and appreciated. Research shows that 7 out of 10 employees respond to being recognized for a job well done. And while bonuses and gift certificates are important to employees, what tends to motivate them to perform at higher levels is thoughtful, timely and personal recognition of their efforts.

A Changing Workforce

Today, for the first time ever, we have four generations together in the workplace. Not only are their work habits vastly different, so are the ways they like to be managed. For Generations X and Y, it's important to encourage skill development, give them feedback quickly and offer them hot projects—they like to have fun at work, and they're focused on results. Finally, show them you appreciate their efforts by recognizing them as often as possible.

From Traditionalists and Baby Boomers to Gen Xers and Yers, all the generations respond to and benefit from being recognized. It's the method and delivery that make the difference. Below are some proven recognition ideas that can have a critical impact on 90 percent of your staff.

Top Ten Ways to Recognize Your "Steady Eddies":

1. Handwrite a thank-you card that links their behavior to their performance.
2. Take time to explain "why we do things."
3. Take time to LISTEN to them.
4. Offer feedback quickly and make it specific.
5. Acknowledge their non-work priorities.
6. Keep them in the know through continual two-way communication.
7. Involve them in the decision-making process.
8. Put them in charge of a "something"—a project, a special event, a team, etc.

9. Give them a chance to grow and develop.
10. Recognize their baby steps—“small wins” can lead to big achievements.

Viewing Employee Satisfaction Data through a New Lens

For many managers, publication of Employee Satisfaction Survey results is an event to be dreaded or even feared. But as great managers, you should look forward to seeing your results, because they contain a wealth of information about what your employees want to be recognized for and how they want to be recognized. With practice, you can look at your own employee data through a new recognition-oriented lens to get a more accurate picture of how your employees feel and what you can do to make those moments that make employees feel valuable and appreciated have great staying power.

Ultimately, these “recognition moments” affect the results of the annual Employee Satisfaction Survey as well. When managers make recognition an active part of their daily management strategy, the percentage will rise for ESS statements like “My supervisor does a good job of keeping me informed.” It’s all part of the awesome power of recognition, and you can harness it with a simple thank-you.

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