

## Recognition

Merriam Webster defines recognition as the act of accepting that something is true or important. If recognition is to be an effective demonstration of acceptance, it must be:

1. Timely,
2. Appropriate, and
3. Sincere.

If it's not timely, recognition loses its effect. If it's not appropriate, it can feel like too much or too little. Most importantly, if it's not sincere, the act can have the opposite effect and come off as rote, demeaning, or sarcastic. Your employee will know if the praise you give is insincere and in the words of Maya Angelou, "...people will never forget how you made them feel."

On the following pages are some ideas ranging from a simple note of thanks to formal ceremonies you can use to recognize your employees. No matter how you do it, recognition begins with these simple principles.

## Guiding Principles

**Pay Attention** - Noticing when people are doing the right thing increases the probability they will repeat it. Example: "I saw how smoothly you let that student know what they could do to avoid a delay. Thanks for delivering that level of customer service..."

**Inspire Effort** - People who feel appreciated give more to the job than what is merely required. They are ready to give the "discretionary effort" necessary to a healthy organization.

**Reward the Right Things** - If you positively comment on how an effort helps maintain our core values, or facilitates customer service, or helps new staff orient, or cross-trains staff, or builds teamwork, etc. staff will know what is important.

**Personalized Approach** - One size does not fit all. Staff are individuals and respond differently to the same strategy. Ask staff how they want to be recognized.

**Equal Opportunity** - There should be opportunity for all staff to receive recognition--whether for improving performance, for extra effort, for creativity, or for reliably doing their job each day.

**Keep it Positive** - To have the greatest impact, the recognition message needs to be completely positive (coach later!), specific, sincere, and given soon after the effort.

**Enjoy!** - "Fun, joy and sharing go hand-in-glove with world class quality." - Tom Peters. Celebrate individual and unit accomplishments- planned or spontaneously!

**Recognize Leadership** - Give recognition to staff that support a "recognition culture" with their actions and words by publicly noting their contribution, including it in their performance appraisal, inviting them to recognition celebrations, etc.

**Recognize Teamwork** - When the relationship among co-workers is good, recognition enhances work performance.