

Prevention c+olumn

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Recognition among co-workers: How to contribute to creating a pleasant working environment

According to a major global survey,¹ **only 20% of employees** say that they receive adequate recognition.

A fundamental change in relationships at work has taken place in recent years. Requirements in terms of personal investment are getting higher all the time: We are “connected” to work, even when we are not there.

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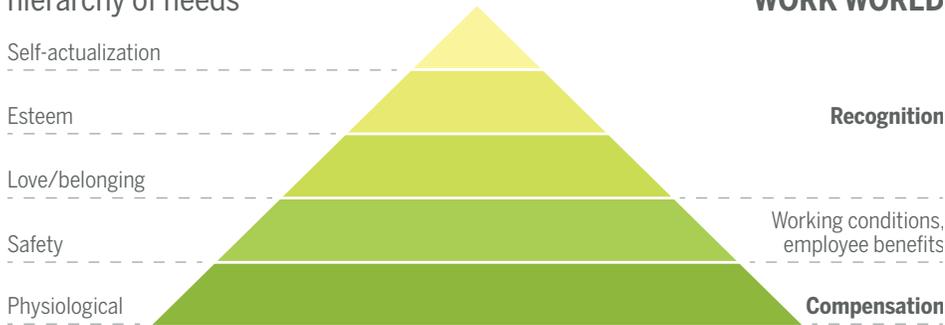


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Given the quality-of-life sacrifices we have made, we nowadays expect more in return than a simple pay cheque. Maslow would say that if money allows you to meet the basic needs in the hierarchy of needs, recognition is what generates motivation and engagement and allows the needs of love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization to be met.

MASLOW'S hierarchy of needs



Source of diagram: Brun, J.P. and Laval, C. 2019. *The Power of Recognition at Work*. Montreal. Rideau Recognition.

Not only do we expect to be compensated for the work that we do, but we also need to receive recognition based on the amount of time we invest. That's why, in this day and age, it is no longer possible to overlook an element as important as recognition.

In this regard, despite the key role that recognition in the workplace seems to play, a major global survey¹ has revealed that only 20% of employees say that they receive adequate recognition. If you do not consider yourself to be among them, you should know that the lack of recognition has an impact on you... and your co-workers, as well! ■



Recognition: EVERYONE'S job!

Managers play an important role in creating a culture of recognition, but they can't do it all themselves. Each person has a part to play. What can you do to contribute to making your company a place where people feel recognized and enjoy working there? Here are a few thoughts.

ADD A PERSONAL TOUCH

The more personal the recognition, the more it is appreciated. The holidays will soon be upon us. One year, if you're someone who doesn't like to cook, you may have unwrapped a delightfully wrapped gift, only to discover a mixer! Some people will say that it's the thought that counts. Yet, the intention never has as much impact as obtaining something we really wanted.

Observe your colleagues. What do they like? What sorts of compliments do each person particularly like to receive? Some might prefer to receive recognition for their performance, while others might like it if someone remarked on their positive attitude or asked for their opinion regarding a problem.

Also, while the feeling of recognition is specific to each person, the generation to which each person belongs also has an impact on personal preferences. In general, baby boomers like it when someone praises them for their loyalty and relies on their expertise, while millennials are gratified when they are made to feel like they have an important place on the team.

In summary, recognition is subjective and singular. The more personalized it is, the more points you will score!

IMPACTS OF A LACK OF RECOGNITION IN THE WORKPLACE

IN ANY GIVEN YEAR, 1 IN 5 PEOPLE IN CANADA WILL PERSONALLY EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM OR ILLNESS.²

The many studies on the lack of recognition in the workplace demonstrate the numerous impacts this lack of recognition has on the physical and mental health of workers: **psychological distress, loss of motivation, increased risk of substance abuse, irritability, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, risk of illness, decreased creativity.** For that reason, in recent years, more attention has been paid to aspects (such as recognition) which impact the level of enjoyment at work.

In fact, a BCG Group study³ involving 200,000 workers demonstrated that appreciation for your work and good relationships with colleagues were at the top of the list of job happiness ranking factors.

HAPPINESS ON THE JOB: RANKING 26 FACTORS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Appreciation for your work | 6. Learning and career development |
| 2. Good relationships with colleagues | 7. Job security |
| 3. Good work-life balance | 8. Attractive fixed salary |
| 4. Good relationships with superiors | 9. Interesting job content |
| 5. Company's financial stability | 10. Company values |

Source of the table: Rainer Stack, Carsten von der Linden, Mike Booker and Andrea Strohmayr. 2014. *Decoding Global Talent. 200,000 Survey Responses on Global Mobility and Employment Preferences*. BCG 23 Perspectives. Online: <https://www.bcg.com/fr-ca/publications/2014/people-organization-human-resources-decoding-global-talent.aspx>. Accessed on September 23, 2019. ■

SWITCH THINGS UP!

The high performance world in which we live prompts us to congratulate people on their achievements, yet many other aspects of a person's work also merit attention. Whether it's the person's attitude, engagement, energy or efficiency, there are many opportunities for recognition.

A few ideas to inspire you:

- Introduce a colleague to a client, mentioning his or her qualities.
- Ask an experienced employee to mentor you.
- Offer help without waiting for someone to ask you.
- Propose a toast to congratulate a new employee on his or her progress.
- Share your meal with a hard-working colleague who never has time to cook.



KEEP IT SIMPLE

We often think first about gifts... and how much money things cost. Yet, the most effective forms of recognition are often the simplest and the least costly. There's no need to have a specific budget!

A few simple ideas that cost nothing:

- Have lunch with a new co-worker and take an interest in him or her.
- Offer some flowers or vegetables from your garden.
- Show interest in a cause that's important to one of your co-workers.
- Give a shout out on social media to a colleague for a personal accomplishment (marathon, award, etc.).
- Leave a little note of appreciation on the car windshield of someone who helped you with something during the day.

The simpler the better. The easier it is for you, the more likely you will be to do it, and that's what's most important.

CREATE TEAM RITUALS

Rituals contribute to building a feeling of belonging and group recognition. With everyone's busy schedule, it's best to make rituals an official part of the agenda. If not, the desire and intention might not be acted on.

Possible team rituals:

- When someone has a birthday, have a box where everyone can drop a little note.
- Create a symbolic trophy that can be awarded to colleagues for special accomplishments.
- Have monthly potluck lunches with the team.

WHY SHOULD I **do that?**

Beyond what you can “do” to show recognition, a large part of the effort has more to do with what you “are.”

It is sometimes said that certain people make more of an impression when they enter a room, while others make more of an impression when they leave. Which type of person are you?

According to the principle of psychological reciprocity, people instinctively tend to return to others the emotions they generate in them. We are likely to be nicer and more generous to people who are nice and generous to us, and we are likely to be sparing with compliments toward people who act that way with us.

The more you show recognition to your co-workers, the more likely they will be to show you recognition in return. What goes around, comes around! ■

In conclusion

In closing, remember that a working environment in which everyone feels valued and appreciated is everyone's responsibility. The more you contribute to creating this group culture, the less you and your colleagues will feel the impacts of a lack of recognition. Do you want to be a good or bad influence on your team? It's good to have an intention, but it's even better to carry it out! ■

1. TINYpulse. 2015. 2015 Best Industry Ranking Report: Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Across Industries. Online: https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/443262/file-2351881988-pdf/TINYpulse_2015_Best_Industry_Ranking_Report.pdf?t=1443461723397. Accessed on October 13, 2019.

2. Mental Health Commission of Canada. 2016. National Standard. Excerpt from <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace/national-standard>.

3. Rainer Stack, Carsten von der Linden, Mike Booker and Andrea Strohmayer. 2014. *Decoding Global Talent, 200,000 Survey Responses on Global Mobility and Employment Preferences*. BCG 23 Perspectives. Online: <https://www.bcg.com/fr-ca/publications/2014/people-organization-human-resources-decoding-global-talent.aspx>. Accessed on September 23, 2019.