

4 WAYS TO LEVERAGE THE POWER OF THANK YOU



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Recently, more and more of my clients have asked me to provide them with the most current advice on how to effectively use recognition efforts to drive excellence with employee engagement. During these consulting engagements, I train their managers on the most meaningful steps for recognition, as well as how to avoid the most common mistakes.

Here are four key takeaways in this regard that you can immediately use in your organization:

1. Appreciate and value “The Power of Thanks.”

Years ago, I wrote a widely-published article that carried the very same title. It featured the following quote from Max De Pree, the son of the founder of furniture maker Herman Miller:

“The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say ‘thank you.’ In between, the leader is a servant.”

Invariably, when groups of employees and individuals feel unappreciated by their manager or organization, half of the time it boils down to a dearth of “thank yous.” As Dan Pink said in his great book on motivation, *Drive*, “there is a desert of ‘thank yous’ out there.” After personally conducting thousands of post employee survey focus groups, I can accurately say that half of the reason that employees don’t hear a “thank you,” “atta boy,” or “atta girl” is that they are reporting to a manager who simply does not care.

Now the other half of the time, managers do care and have every best intention of thanking their employees but forget to do so, largely because they are so busy with other managerial job duties. A tried and true safeguard against making this mistake is to build two hours into your Outlook calendar every week specifically to go recognize great or above average job efforts by your team members. Thus, by institutionalizing it into your calendar, you will never forget about its importance and impact.

2. Give the compliment meaningfulness and purpose.

Instead of just ending your effort on recognition with the words “*thank you*” or “*nice job*,” it is critical to make the extra effort to explain to employees *why* what they did was so special and intrinsically valuable to the organization’s values, mission, and purpose. When you take this additional step, you will actually see employees realize that what they did was linked to a higher cause and therefore special. Experts in the recognition field, like the company [Terryberry](#), believe that this additional step is actually even more impactful than the original “thank you.”

3. Spread the joy and celebration.

According to Jenny Watkins, a key Account Executive at Terryberry, one of the most overlooked aspects of a recognition program is the visibility for achievements that have earned honors. “*Too often, recognition awards are presented to an individual or team, yet few people outside of the recipients hear about it.*” Watkins then elaborated, “*Building visibility multiplies the impact of recognition. It increases the experience for the recipient and the team as a whole when colleagues can add their congratulations. Equally as important, it communicates the culture and values of the group in a powerful and authentic way.*”

4. Recognize the need for consistency.

The famed manager Zig Ziglar once said, “*People often say that motivation does not last. Well, neither does bathing – that is why we recommend it on a daily basis.*” This is spot on advice – simply put, if you or your managers’ recognition efforts are haphazard or inconsistent, they will have little or no impact on increasing employee engagement. As such, the aforementioned best practice of pre-scheduling your recognition in your calendar should be embraced by anyone in a management position.

Engaging your employees through recognition isn’t brain surgery, but it does take consistent effort. Following these four tips will help you show your staff how much they are appreciated.



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Kevin Sheridan is an internationally-recognized Keynote Speaker, a New York Times Best Selling Author, and one of the most sought-after voices in the world on the topic of Employee Engagement. For six years running, he has been honored on Inc. Magazine's top 100 Leadership Speakers in the world, as well as Inc.'s top 100 experts on Employee Engagement. He was also honored to be named to The Employee Engagement Award's Top 101 Global Influencers on Employee Engagement of 2017.

Having spent thirty years as a high-level Human Capital Management consultant, Kevin has helped some of the world's largest corporations rebuild a culture that fosters productive engagement, earning him several distinctive awards and honors. Kevin's premier creation, PEER[®], has been consistently recognized as a long-overdue, industry-changing innovation in the field of Employee Engagement. His first book, *Building a Magnetic Culture*, made six of the best seller lists including The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today. He is also the author of *The Virtual Manager*, which explores how to most effectively manage remote workers.

Kevin received a Master of Business Administration from the **Harvard Business School** in 1988, concentrating his degree in Strategy, Human Resources Management, and Organizational Behavior. He is also a serial entrepreneur, having founded and sold three different companies.

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