

## **Ensuring Executive Recognition Has High Impact**

*by Sandy Geroux*

There are many ways to make a workplace rewarding, but rewards and recognition must come in a multitude of ways, at planned and spontaneous times... and from expected and unexpected sources.

Many researchers are asking the question, “*Which is better: recognition from peers or recognition from leaders?*” The answer is that both are important, but they differ in a couple of important aspects.

Employees usually report feeling much better when recognized by peers. Why? First, since peers know what each other are doing on a day-to-day basis, when they say “thank you,” the impact is much more meaningful because it is more specific and personal. The person receiving the recognition knows it is heartfelt and based on real actions and impacts. This principle also applies to direct supervisors who work closely with employees and know their specific actions.

In contrast, what often happens with executive level recognition is that even though employees appreciate executives taking the time to recognize them, the praise is perfunctory or vague. Employees don’t know if the executive is really aware of what they did and their impact on the organization, or if the leader is just reading from a “script.”

This situation can be corrected by keeping in mind that when managers and executives *do* thank employees, it must be for specific accomplishments about which the executive has fairly detailed knowledge.

**To state it more clearly: if you can’t say something specific and meaningful, don’t say anything at all.**

Recognition from executives *can be* much more meaningful if done right because it is heartfelt. But it is also much more meaningful for another important reason. Because it is so unusual for detailed employee actions to come to the attention of high-level executives who have much “bigger issues” to think about on a daily basis, it means much more when busy executives take the time and effort to personally thank an individual employee for a particular effort. Employees feel more valued and important to the success of the organization because their actions were worthy of being brought to the attention of a highly-ranked executive.

An added benefit is that this can have a tremendous “ripple” effect of gratitude and engagement. Once meaningful recognition is received by an executive, any *aware* employee must realize that their actions were brought to the executive’s attention by someone else. If the executive was sensitive enough to let the employee know who brought it to their attention (usually the employee’s supervisor or manager), the employee feels gratitude toward the person responsible for doing so. This selfless act of recognition strengthens the bond between supervisor and employee, further increasing engagement and loyalty.

How do you handle rewards and recognition in your organization? Do you freely offer praise, and encourage workers to give spontaneous peer recognition to each other? Do executives take the time to find out what's really going on and then offer true, heartfelt gratitude for outstanding employee actions?

If not, take a look at how you can foster a culture that is more forthcoming with recognition. If so, keep it up and look for ways to ramp it up to the level of WOW in order to create higher employee engagement and loyalty.

*National speaker and author Sandy Geroux presents motivational programs on achieving breakthrough performance in the areas of employee engagement, customer service and leadership topics to help you turn your workplace into a WOWplace. Get free tips and information on her availability to speak to your associates, at [www.thewowplace.com](http://www.thewowplace.com), subscribing to her blog at [www.wowplace.com](http://www.wowplace.com), or e-mailing her at [sandy@thewowplace.com](mailto:sandy@thewowplace.com).*

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