

## Ask the experts: How does client or employee recognition affect business success?

Good leaders harness the power of appreciation to drive business success



**BUSINESS  
VANCOUVER**

July 31, 2012

**Janet Helm | Owner, Janet Helm**

In dealing with senior executives across North America, I have found that successful leaders understand the power of appreciation and include it in their business strategy.

Recognition empowers people because it shows them their contributions are appreciated and will be recognized, and that results in employees who feel valued and are motivated and productive. Your company's culture is how people are treated and how things are done both internally and with clients. Recognition is showing publicly or privately that you value their contributions and appreciate your customers' loyalty.

Successful recognition:

- is specific: rather than telling someone he or she has done a good job, describe the task and successful outcome. The employee will know how he or she has specifically helped your company or organization achieve a goal.
- is genuine: reflect your company's values in your choice of a well-selected gift. Save the mass-produced items for promotional giveaways. For example, companies including Coca-Cola have worked with us to design a tartan with their signature colours. Using tartan, with its symbolism of unity, family and membership, for customized gifts reflects many corporations' sincere appreciation and distinct corporate culture.
- can be simple: sometimes it's the small things that count. Have a supply of thank-you cards on hand for when you want to send a quick note of appreciation.

Not sure if your recognition is motivating, inspiring, showing your genuine appreciation? Then ask! Create a questionnaire that asks what is important to them.

**Laura Hansen | Owner and President, Image Group Inc.**

I'm going to change the question to "Why is recognition critical to the success of every business?"

As president, my job is to support and encourage my staff and my clients in every way I can. In our day-to-day scramble to quote on business, execute rush orders and complete projects, we hope that our employees will fall into line and our customers will be there for us again and again. We ask for non-stop loyalty. Sure, we can come through for them with paycheques for employees and on-time delivery for customers, but in this world where text and email win over face-to-face conversations and contact, it's easy for the people we depend upon to feel underappreciated.

Recognizing the support of your customers and your employees is not just a nice thing to do, it's crucial to keeping your business successful. Sometimes that's as simple as a thank-you in a public forum for going above and beyond in writing a proposal, putting in a million extra hours to deliver on time, every time, or serving our critical clients above and beyond.

Image Group has a formal brag session every sales meeting; we have a masseuse come in monthly; we give away Canucks tickets; we have dinner parties, bingo nights. I'll accept any opportunity to recognize my team for truly outstanding work. They are amazing.

People want recognition— that their work is meaningful, that they are meaningful, that someone noticed.

My business is able to help people formally recognize the efforts of others. Monetary recognition is important, but I love that people can look at an item we provided and be transported to that beautiful time when they did something meaningful and someone noticed and said "thank you."

**Christian Codrington | Senior Manager, Operations, BC Human Resources Association**

Many employees want and need more money. However, praise and commendation from supervisors, managers and leaders consistently outpace financial reward as a motivator for employee performance.

It is encouraging to see the improvements that many businesses are making in this area. As an example, the owner of a small chain of restaurants ties reward to his business strategy by first establishing the goals for his business, such as opening a new location within the year or increasing sales by a certain percentage. He then shares those goals with his team and asks how everyone can contribute. He works diligently throughout the year to recognize and acknowledge the behaviours that contribute to those goals in ways that are consistent with the culture of his business. The results?

His restaurant has grown from a single location to eight, and he has employees that have remained in his employment since inception, which is remarkable in the food service sector.

A few easy steps to ensure recognition drives results, reduces employee turnover and increases engagement include:

- develop a variety of ways to recognize your team, as one size will not fit all;
- identify which behaviours and results link to your organizational goals and will be recognized;
- be consistent when recognizing staff and be careful not to play favourites;
- recognize achievements in a timely manner; and
- be transparent so that all staff know the reason behind the recognition of an employee or team.

Recognition drives employee engagement, which in turn will contribute to a successful enterprise. It takes some effort, but the returns will be worth it.

Tags: human resources, employee, The Coca-Cola Company, British Columbia Human Resources Management Association, management