



RewardGateway
the employee engagement people

5 Magic Steps to Employee Recognition Programme Success

Innovative ideas to take your programme from zero to hero



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Introduction

Hi there,

I'm Debra Corey, and I've launched employee recognition programmes at a variety of companies of all sizes and in many different industries over the course of my career. It's becoming more and more clear that employee recognition is no longer a "nice-to-have," but a "must have" in organisations who are looking to engage their workforce and embed their company values in new and exciting ways. But where to start? Choosing the right kind of moments of recognition is so important to show that you've been listening to what your employees want, need and enjoy receiving.

This eBook will walk you through the steps needed to launch a top-notch employee recognition programme, including:

- **How to define your employee recognition strategy.**
- **How to make key recognition design decisions.**
- **How to shine a light on your programme to increase engagement.**
- **Effective ways to measure the success of your programmes.**
- **Names and examples of employee recognition programmes.**

We'll look at some of the things we do here at Reward Gateway as employee engagement thought leaders, as well as things I've done throughout my career at other organisations. Now, let's get started...

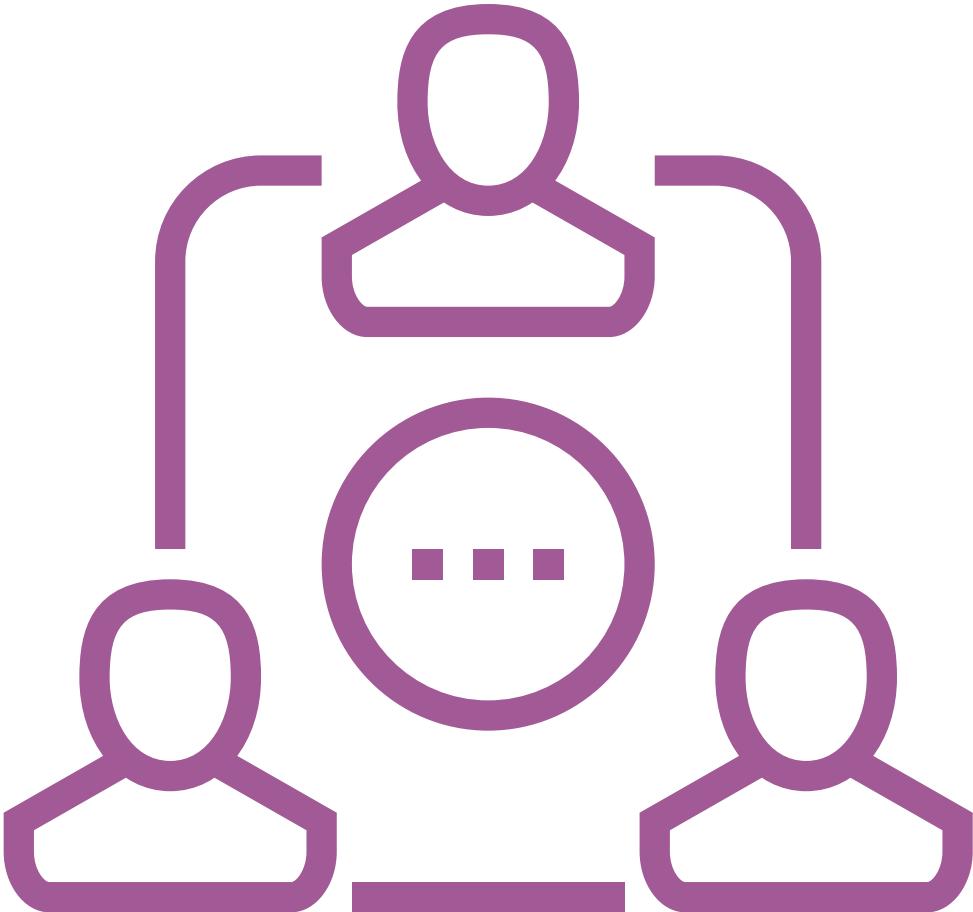


Debra Corey
Reward Gateway Advisor

Set Your Employee

Recognition

Strategy





Start with “Why”

No matter what you’re creating, whether it’s an employee benefits initiative, a new learning platform or a top-notch recognition programme, you should always start your planning by defining your “why.”

As Simon Sinek, author of “Start With Why,” says, “When you start with ‘why’ in everything that you do, you inspire action in a way that ‘what’ doesn’t.”

The key to this is asking yourself: Why am I launching a recognition programme, and what do I really want to achieve with it?

Whenever you’re building something, you want to build with purpose. For instance, if you want to grow a garden, you wouldn’t just plant a bunch of random flowers into the ground, would you? You’d research

the soil, evaluate the sunlight, and create a plan by determining what you’re trying to achieve. Likewise, for your recognition programme, your starting point should always be to create a strategy based on exactly what you want to “grow.” Here are some of the top reasons companies put recognition programmes in place:

- 1. Create a positive work environment.**
- 2. Create a culture of recognition.**
- 3. Motivate high performance.**
- 4. Reinforce certain behaviours.**

So ask yourself, what am I trying to achieve and why? Discover this answer before you move on, so you wind up with a beautiful garden, and not just a field of weeds!

Building employee recognition into your employee engagement strategy

The best companies design jobs in a way which job design, learning and development, and recognition are included right from the start. Employee recognition should be a critical part of your overall employee engagement strategy. We’ve designed a 10-step model called the Engagement Bridge™ to increase employee engagement for more productive, innovative and committed employees. Here’s a glimpse of how recognition fits into that model:



Learn more about the Bridge™ at rg.co/bridge



Did you know...

- **50%** of employees surveyed would leave a company if they weren't regularly thanked and recognised for their efforts.

(Source: Reward Gateway survey, 2017)

- Peer-to-peer recognition is **36%** more likely to have a positive impact on financial results than manager-only recognition.

(Source: SHRM)

- **54%** of employees feel their boss could do more to appreciate them.

(Source: Reward Gateway survey, 2017)

Learn more at rg.co/thankyou

Does your organisation need employee recognition?

I believe that every company, no matter what size or what industry it's in, needs some kind of recognition programme. The good news is that it doesn't have to be expensive. I once saw a company use simple Post-its as a way to recognise their workforce, but it does have to be a priority — 82% of employees surveyed by Gallup say **praise and recognition are leading factors** in helping them improve their job performance. If you don't have a recognition programme, ask yourself, can my company afford not to have 82% of my workforce not at their peak performance?

How you design your recognition programme will depend on your organisation's culture, values, business goals and the areas you're trying to

improve. I've seen companies look into building recognition programmes for many reasons, including some of these challenges:

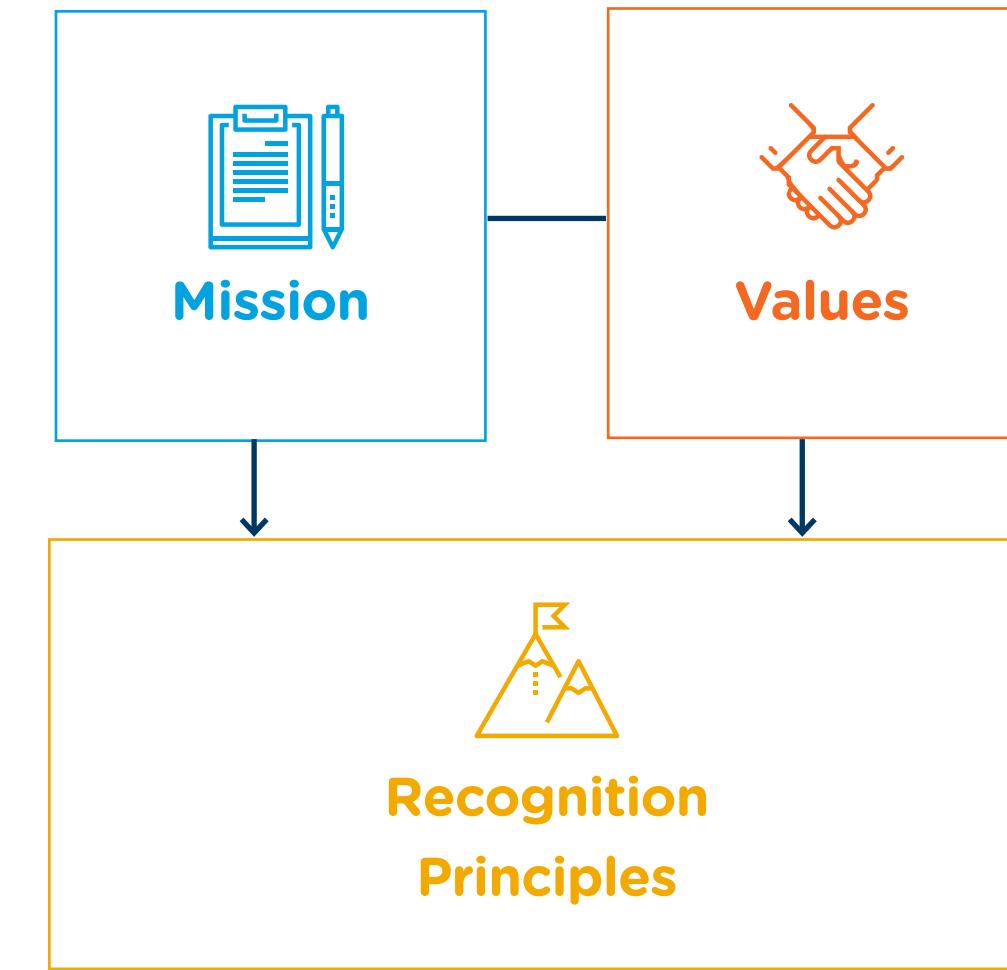
- **Little to no knowledge of an organisation's purpose, mission or values.**
- **Low morale.**
- **Negative view of company culture.**
- **Low overall engagement score.**
- **An increase in unproductive employees.**
- **Little to no collaboration among teams or individual team members.**

By building a programme with purpose, you'll have a better chance of addressing these challenges and introducing positive changes to both your people and your business.

Create your recognition principles

Great, you've answered the critical "why" question, but sorry to say that this doesn't mean you can or should move on to designing your recognition programme. At least, not just yet. You've got one more thing to do first, and that is to create your recognition principles. These help you define your programme, what it stands for, what makes it unique and what it says to your employees and the external marketplace. Finding the right principles will help you create recognition programmes which truly drive and support your "why," aligning with your company's mission, culture and values.

When designing your principles, I always suggest to start with your mission and values to ensure that your principles are strengthening your overall company vision.



Using Reward Gateway as an example, here's how we've designed our mission, values and recognition principles to all fit and work together:

Mission:

Let's make the world a better place to work.

Values:

Love your job

Be human

Delight your customers

Work hard

Own it

Push the boundaries

Speak up

Think global

Recognition Principles:

Fairness

Give all employees the opportunity to recognise and be recognised.

Balance

Provide a range of recognition plans that recognise values in different ways.

Wow

Provide a recognition programme that delights our employees.

Easy

Make recognition plans that are easy to understand and use.

Decide on the Details



Now it's time to roll up your sleeves and make the key decisions about your programme. These are the nitty gritty details that answer the important questions of "what," "who" and "how." It's really important to list as many as possible to make sure you've thought of everything well in advance. Here are some examples:

What?

- How many different recognition plans will you have within your overall programme (e.g. will you have one or create different plans to drive different objectives)?
- What recognition award(s) will be used (e.g. gifts, experiences, cash, or something else entirely)?
- What will you name your programme and individual plans, and how will this align with other HR programmes?

Who?

- Who will be able to send recognition?
- Who will be able to receive recognition?
- Who will administer the programme?

How?

- What system(s) will you use to manage the programme effectively?
- What processes will you put in place to ensure it runs smoothly?
- How and when will you measure the success of the programme?
- What training will be developed and rolled out to ensure the programme is understood?

These decisions will vary by company and by provider as all recognition programmes are built differently. Company needs vary by size, industry, workforce and other factors, so it's important to take the time and think through these questions before moving on to the next step.

Whichever objectives and principles you select, double-check that they align and support your business goals and HR strategy. Finally, make sure you discuss these with your key decision makers and agree on them *before* you begin designing your programme, as you want to ensure everyone has had a chance to contribute as well as set proper expectations.

Decide your “Say” and “Do”

A key part of answering the question “what” is deciding what your recognition programme will “Say” and what it will “Do.”

These are the actual moments of recognition that occur at times or events when you believe you should recognise your employees. They could be based on activities (e.g., joining the company, having a work anniversary or a birthday) or based on actions (e.g., helping a customer, helping a team member or suggesting a new way of doing things), or both.

The “Say”

is the message you want to convey to both the employee being recognised and the broader organisation.



Your “Say” could be...

- **“Congratulations!”**
- **“We appreciate your hard work”**
- **“Thank you”**

The “Do”

is the tangible reward you want to give to help recognise the employee’s activity or action.



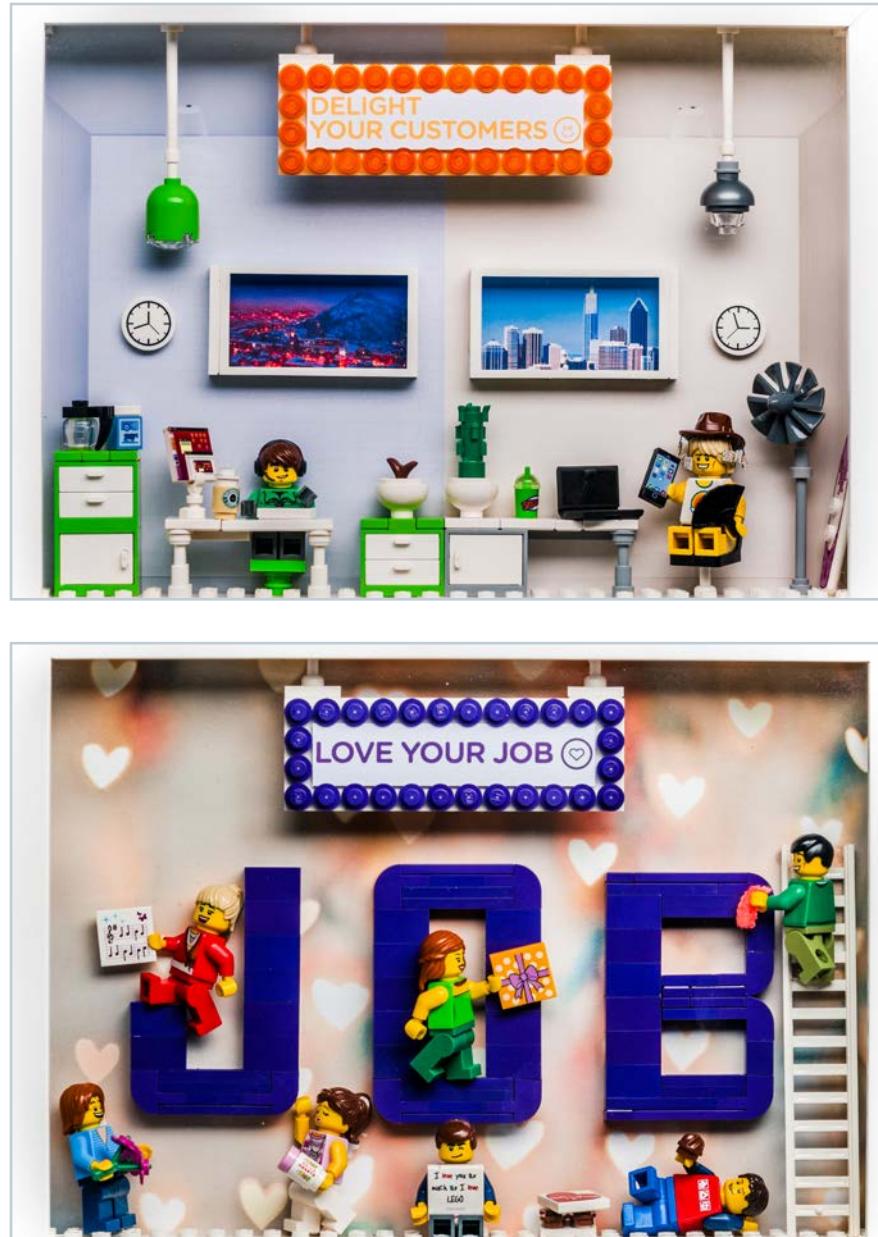
Your “Do” could be...

- **eCards**
- **Financial award**
- **Posting their photo on the recognition wall**

Let's put it together...

Action or Activity	The “Say”	The “Do”
A colleague is navigating a challenging conversation and demonstrating company values to overcome objections.	Let them know what a great job they did in handling conflict at work.	Send them a values-based eCard.
An employee helps a customer solve a really tricky problem.	Congratulate them openly in the team huddle.	The manager gives the employee a monetary award.
A team spends the entire night working together to organise a launch party for the company.	Let them know how much you appreciate their hard work and how much it will help make the launch a success.	Treat the team to a night out on the town.

Of course, these examples are just the start of what your “Say” and “Do” approach might include. You may be surprised to hear a “Say” is sufficient for many actions or activities. Often we think we need to “Do” something in every situation, but in reality, employees appreciate the “Say” just as much, if not more, than the “Do.” The key here is to be sure you make your employees feel recognised and appreciated, creating happy memories at the same time. The added benefit for your organisation is that the employee’s happy memory and experience is now forever connected to your company, increasing your employee’s overall positive perspective.



Match your brand and other initiatives. At Reward Gateway, we have an entire set of values-driven eCards that playfully reflect all our values.



Continuous recognition helps boost your “Say” and “Do”

By making your “Say” and “Do” moments more frequent, you can make continuous recognition a core part of your company culture.

50% of employees surveyed would leave a company if they weren't regularly thanked and recognised for their efforts

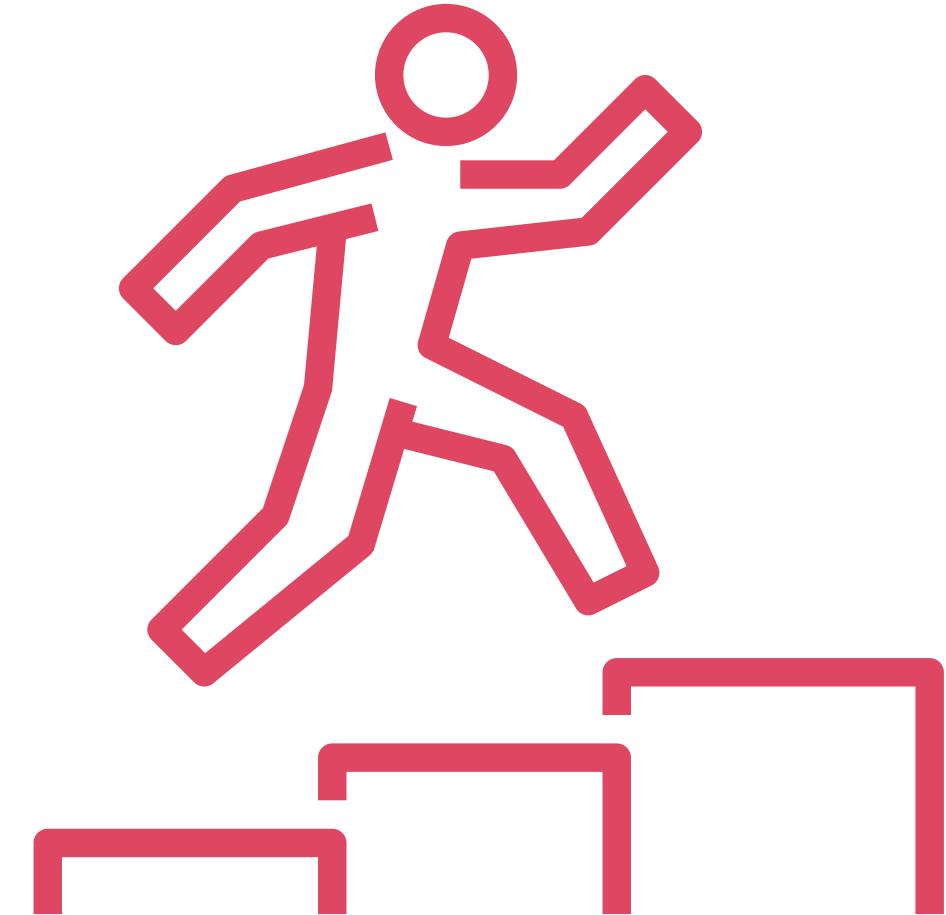
rg.co/thankyou

At Reward Gateway, our suite of continuous recognition tools help you boost your number of “Say” and “Do” moments. These tools include peer-to-peer eCards that can be customised to match your brand and other objectives, monetary awards that have a finite pot of money attached so you can figure out how to budget appropriately, and the ability to nominate others at your company for whatever award or recognition action you feel is appropriate.

Build Your Employee

Recognition

Programme



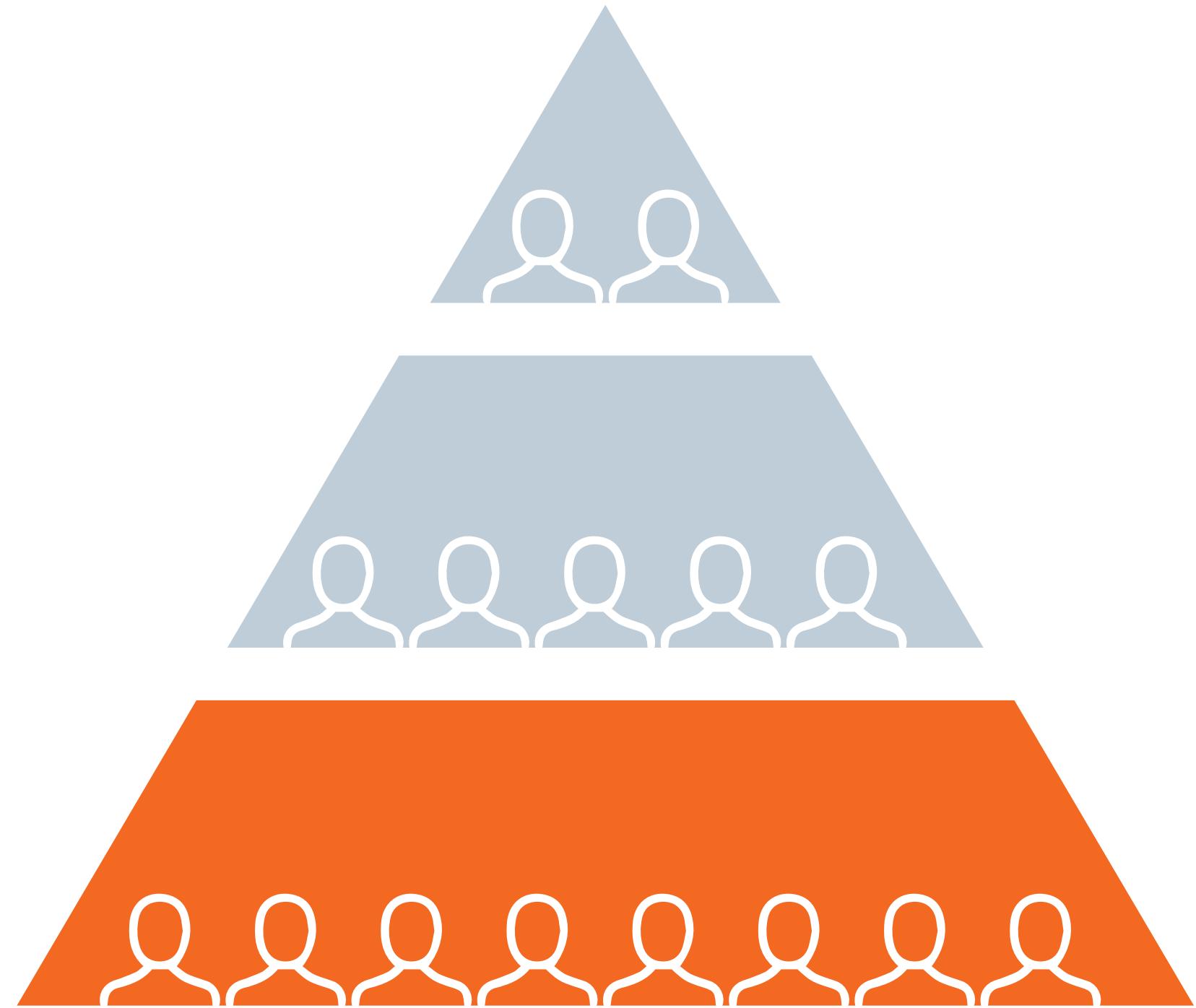
Each organisation has its own strategy, so building your employee recognition programme will similarly depend on a variety of factors including your size, demographic, budget, etc. Some programmes will be very straightforward, with one recognition plan, while others may have multiple recognition plans.

The Recognition Pyramid approach

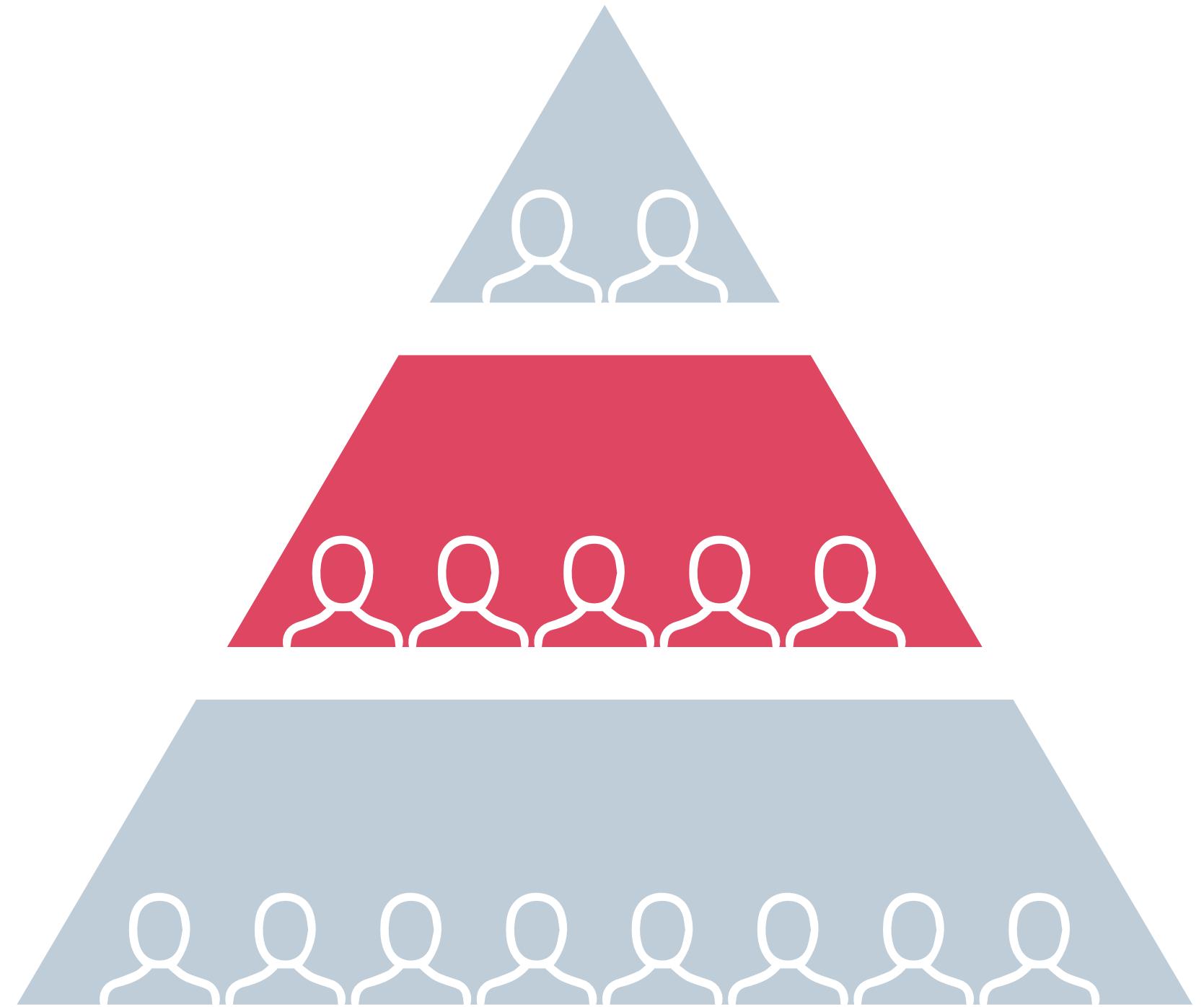
The next question you're probably asking yourself is, "how do you decide how many plans to include in your overall programme?" An approach I've used in the past is a recognition "pyramid," which is a simple model to visualise who your recognition programme reaches within your organisation. Here's how to build one:



The Recognition Pyramid approach

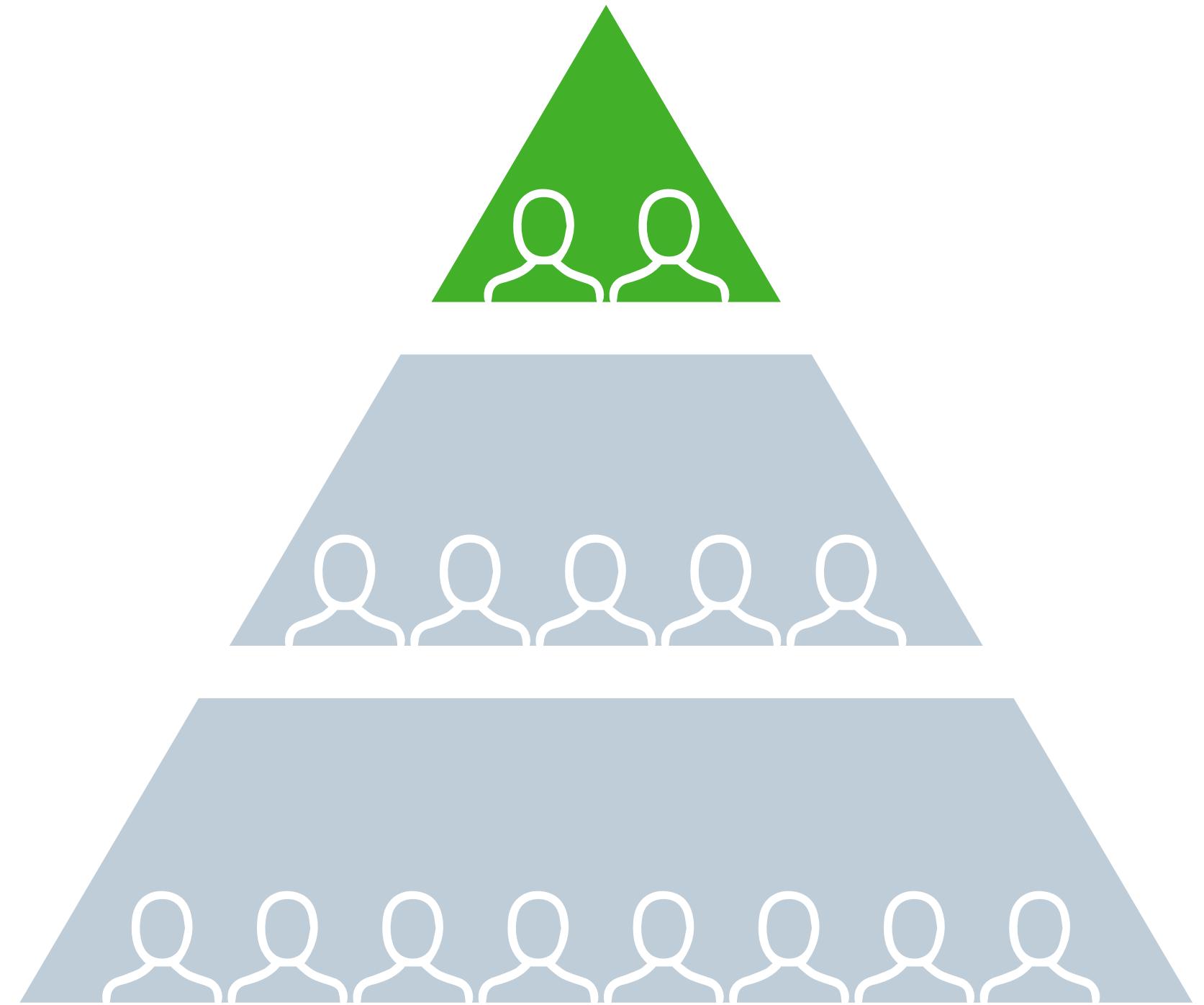


The **bottom section** of the pyramid, the widest part, is for what I call “anyone” and “anytime” recognition, so it touches the most employees and happens the most frequently. Many companies use this for plans that recognise all employees, and a common solution is peer-to-peer eCards (digital greeting cards you can send to anyone, at anytime). My colleagues at Reward Gateway can customise them to embed your brand, values and messaging to make recognition easy, and more frequent.



The **middle section** (you can have more than one!) of the pyramid is where you begin narrowing or reducing the number of employees who are recognised. This is often done as a way to highlight and recognise those employees whose actions and accomplishments have pushed the boundaries and/or they have gone above and beyond with their performance.

For this section, there are two common plans — manager awards and monthly/quarterly awards. An example of the latter is when we used to host quarterly “Thank You” awards, in which employees would nominate their peers, a selection panel would choose the winners and then we’d announce them at all-staff business meetings.



The **top section**, the narrowest section of the pyramid, is where your recognition programme awards the best of the best, recognising exceptional performance. The most common plans for this are employee of the year programmes or a CEO/leadership award.

There is no right or wrong number of plans, however, I suggest concentrating on all three kinds of tiers. If you focus only on the top tier, you may be missing out on the opportunity to recognise more of your staff and, ultimately, improve engagement. One other tip is to make sure each section of the pyramid is clearly defined as well as how it differs from the others, or you risk confusion, misuse and even disengagement.



To learn more about the pyramid and how to build your own, visit rg.co/pyramid for other examples.

What's in a name?

One of the most important decisions you can make is **the name of your programme**. The name will determine your overall brand and theme of the recognition programme, and, of course, this is the name your employees will use over and over again as they engage with the programme. Here are a few tips I've picked up to make sure your name will lead you to success:

1. Create meaning

by asking yourself if the name relates back to the programme and if it's something your employees will engage with. For instance, one of the most popular names I've seen is "Star" because it immediately brings up the image of someone standing in the limelight for their achievements.

2. Make your name stand out

with an interesting (but easy to remember) word or phrase that will cut through the clutter of their inbox or other announcements, and will look fabulous on your engagement platform.

3. Keep the name simple

by making sure it can be easily pronounced and understood. Also keep in mind that not all words mean the same thing in all places, so this is especially important if you have a global workforce.

4. Think beyond the "now"

by selecting a name that can stand the test of time and be more evergreen.

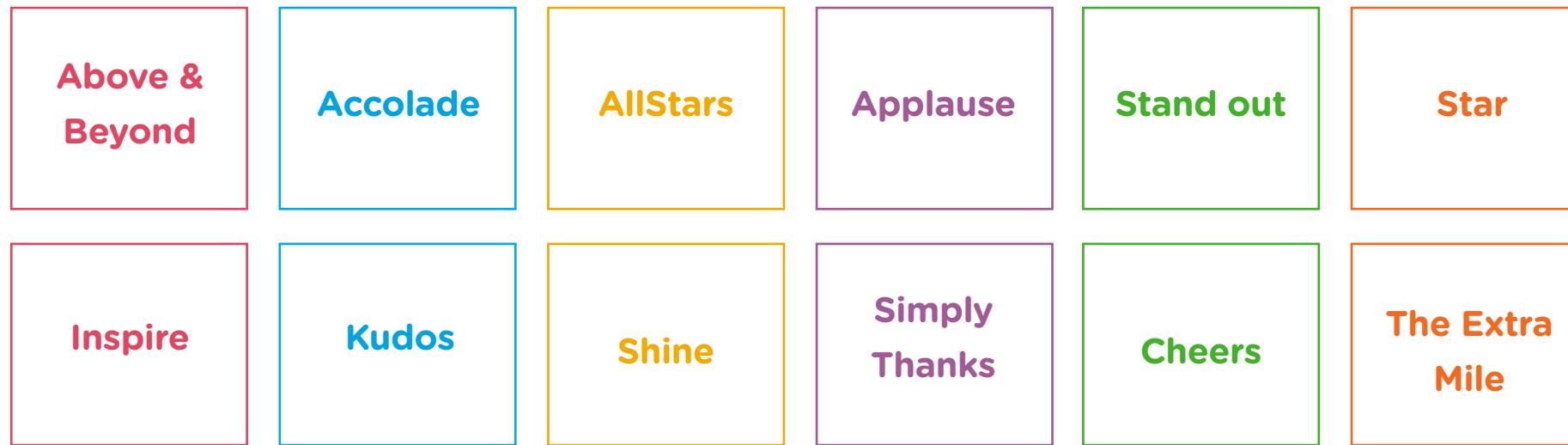
5. Consider involving employees to help you name the programme

by creating some extra buzz leading up to the launch and give employees a sense of ownership from the start by inviting individuals or teams to help come up with the name.

I've seen dozens of names over the years, but here are some that I find can be easily relatable in organisations of all shapes and sizes:

Recognition Programme Names

Make sure your employee recognition programme name has impact. Examples include:



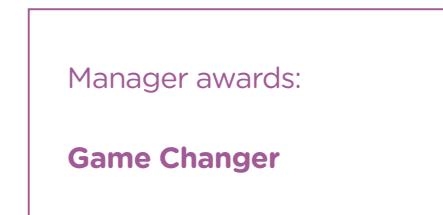
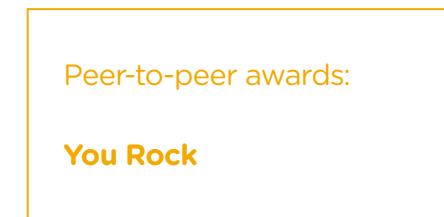
Adding MORE to your recognition programme

In the latest revamp of Reward Gateway's own recognition programme, we chose the name **MORE! — Moments of Recognition Everyday.**

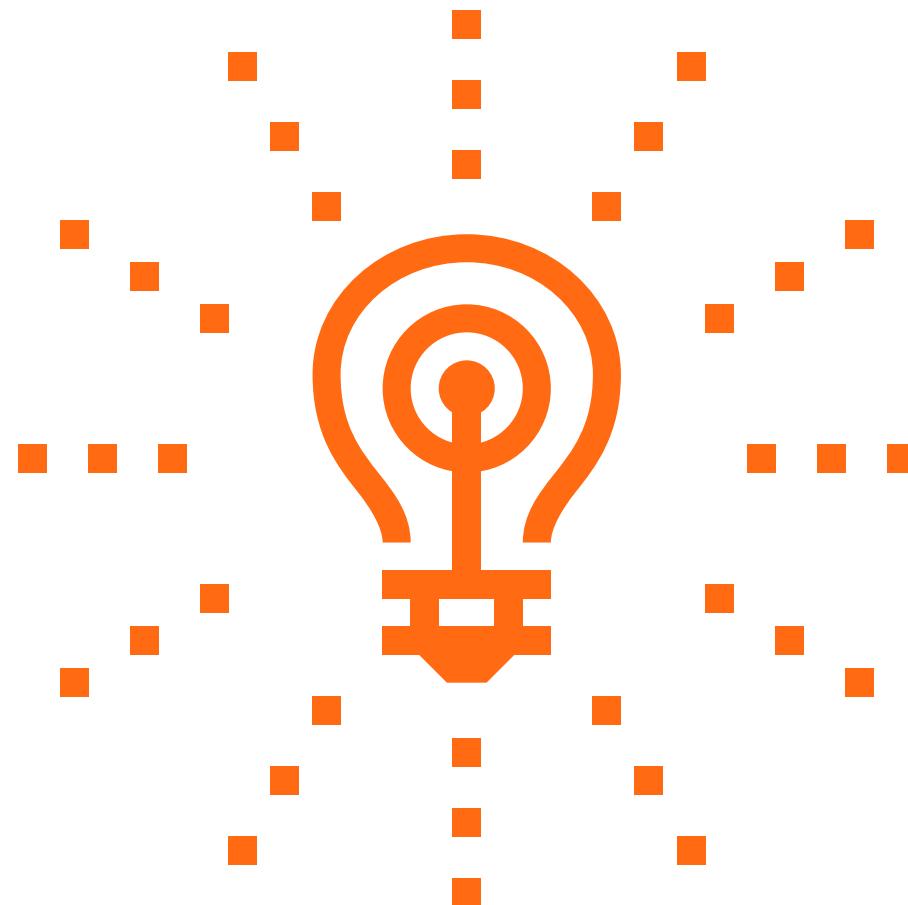


The acronym MORE! sums up what we're trying to do, give more recognition. The individual words represent our aim to create recognition moments, which we believe are a key part of recognition, and to do it continually.

The new recognition programme includes:



Shine a Spotlight on Your Plan



Now that you've developed your world-class recognition programme, it's time to put the spotlight on recognition. Publicise your programme with special spotlights that tell employees how great it is and how to use it, and add extra spotlights on those who are being recognised (if appropriate for your organisation). After all, they've done something worth recognising, so get out there and shout about it!

Here are a few particularly special spotlights to get you thinking...



Launch with impact

As the expression goes, "You only get one chance to make a first impression!" That's definitely true when it comes to launching your recognition programme

— this will be your biggest opportunity to show employees how engaging and exciting your programme will be.

To create some buzz, you could launch it with a fun video, create a teaser or countdown campaign, go on a recognition roadshow or do desk drops of branded material so it's always on view. The bigger the impact your recognition programme has from the start, the more it will be remembered and used throughout your company on an ongoing basis.



Keep it alive

Your recognition programme, like all your people initiatives, should never be a "set it and forget it" play. You need to keep your programme fresh, and a great way

to do this is to shine a constant spotlight on it in new and different ways.

Here are a couple ways to do that:

- **Create a video montage of recognition moments.**
- **Post an interview with a recognition recipient.**
- **Run a value-of-the-month campaign to get employees talking and recognising each other based on the value.**
- **Create a competition to see who can send or receive the most recognition during a period of time.**

You can even use a recognition leaderboard to encourage a little friendly competition among employees. Whatever you do, find ways to keep it fresh and alive at your company.

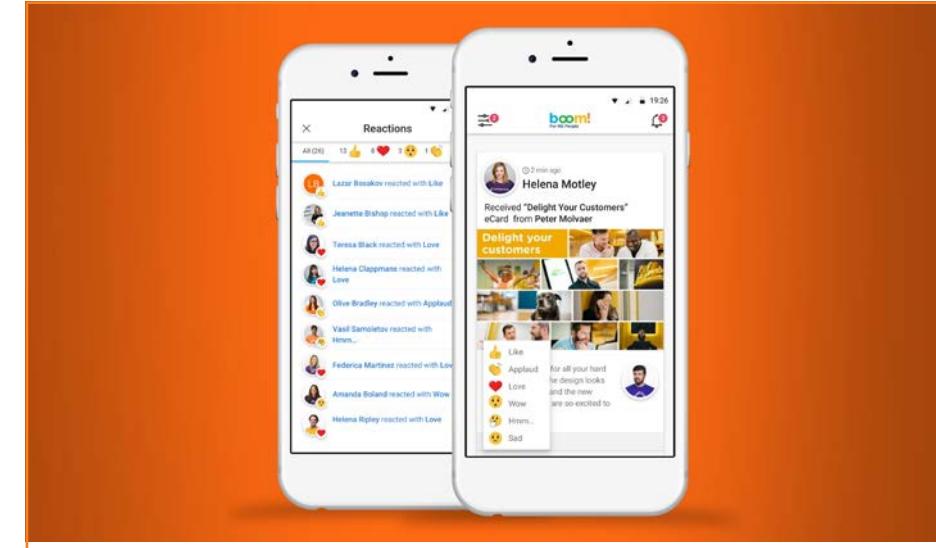
Get social

Everything we do these days is social, so why not consider adding a social aspect to your recognition programme? At Reward Gateway, we use what we call the “Wow Wall,” which is part of our employee recognition platform.

The way it works is that every time a colleague receives an eCard, it's automatically showcased to the rest of the company (if they choose to), and employees can like or comment on the recognition gesture, similar to the interactions on other social media platforms. Employees love it, and it helps us achieve the objectives of our programme.

Incorporating features you see on social media puts the spotlight on the person being recognised, giving your entire workforce the opportunity to celebrate together and it subtly encourages your employees to recognise each other, as they're constantly reminded that you have a recognition programme.

As your recognition programme evolves, your spotlights will as well. The most important thing to remember is not to let it fade away, as you want recognition to remain a critical part of engaging your employees. That won't happen if no one knows about it!



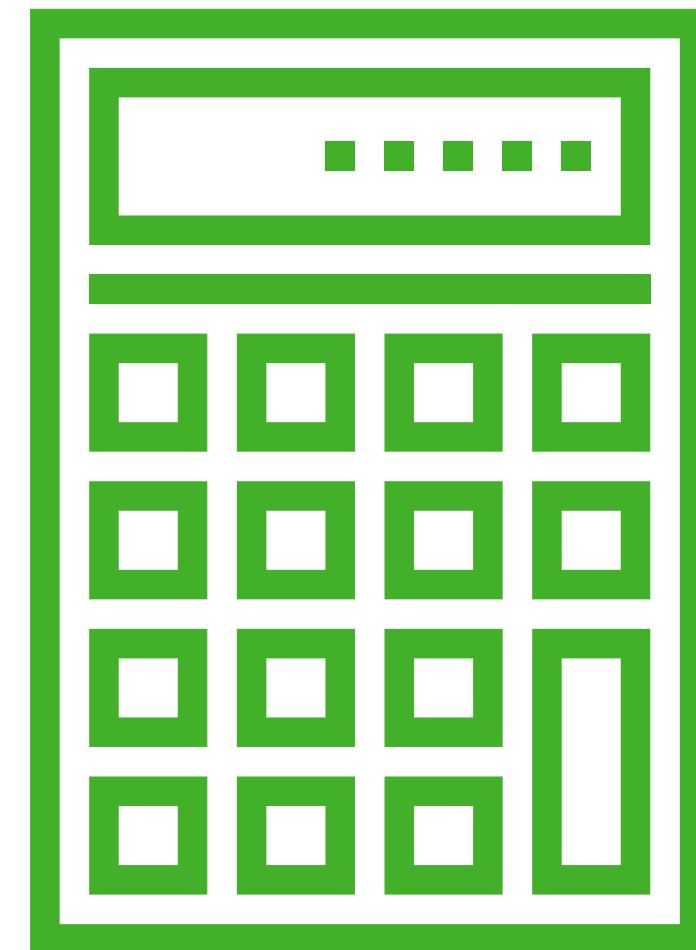
Connect+

Great news travels fast

Go mobile with the Connect+ app

Introduce your people to an on-the-go employee recognition app with a social recognition wall and company blogs right at their fingertips. Send, comment and react to eCards right from the app. Plus managers can deliver on-the-spot recognition, even during their daily commute!

Measure Your ROI

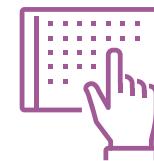


As part of your process, I'm sure you'll spend time talking to your leadership team and part of that discussion will inevitably be measuring the ROI (return on investment) on your programme. To successfully do this, you need to pull from your original strategy and show that your programme has accomplished the goals you've set out to achieve, and how. If you're working with a prospective provider, that provider may be able to give you examples of how their product worked for others or data points that will help prove your ROI.

Many companies paint this picture by reporting on changes in **retention**, **profit**, **customer satisfaction** and/or **employee engagement**, showing how they've increased as an indirect result of their recognition programme. These are common business ROIs, and ones that business leaders will

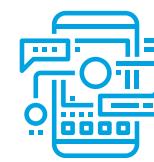
easily relate to and understand.

You may wish to measure other ROIs directly related to your recognition programme, such as the following:



Programme usage

This measures interaction with the programme and individual plans. It could include the number of eCards sent, the number of award nominations made, the amount of clicks on recognition stories, etc.



Social activity

This also measures interaction with the programme and plans, but is specific to social interaction. It could include the number of likes or comments

employees are receiving or giving.



Anecdotes

Never underestimate the power of a great story. Report specific stories and examples that highlight the value your programme and plans are having with your workforce. These demonstrate the value of investment (VOI), as you won't have a hard measurement.

The key here is to select the right picture based on the right measurements, so that your business leaders will see the connection between your programme and changes in these measurements. Make sure to test these with your leaders before measuring, so that you get it right from the start and don't spend time and resources preparing reports that serve no purpose.

The business impact of strategic recognition

Bringing recognition into your employee engagement efforts is a must — we've finally understood that, I hope! Thoughtful recognition is a powerful way to show appreciation, help employees learn from each other and help your team focus on "the wins." When you get good at recognising those who do their job well or go above and beyond their role, employees benefit in many ways.

Strategic recognition helps create the environment for more engagement because people are getting what they crave.

 **Respect**

 **Purpose**

 **Relationships**

Here's how recognition ties into giving employees more Respect, Purpose and Relationships at work:

Feel more respected	<p>"I was really working hard on that project and put in some extra time outside of work. I'm really proud that my efforts were evident to others and that they see the impact of what I do."</p>
Can more clearly see the purpose and importance of their work	<p>"I was surprised to get recognised for how I handled that customer interaction. I didn't realise the customer was so connected in the community. It means a lot to see how my actions might have a real impact on how someone talks about our company!"</p>
Build better relationships with others	<p>"It was so nice of Steve to notice the extra effort I gave in that meeting. I don't work with him a lot, but I will keep an eye out for more opportunities to help his team."</p>

The ripple effect of strategic recognition

Yet, the impact of recognition is much bigger than on just the individual.

Recognising people for the work they do is part of building a strong, healthy workplace. And employee recognition is powerful. It has the potential to inspire people to adopt new ways of doing things, it helps foster a culture of appreciation and gratitude and it can also help your organisation reach its desired goals and objectives.

Strategic recognition is when you show appreciation for a success that helped improve the employee or customer experience and that can be tied to your company's values, purpose or objectives.

Just because we're being strategic doesn't mean we have to be boring. Rather, think about how adding a little bit more beyond the "thank you" can turn a nice message into one that has a meaningful impact on your team and your company as a whole.

Don't worry...writing the perfect strategic recognition message is easy! It only involves three steps. And once you get into the habit of doing it, you won't think twice the next time you go to acknowledge someone for doing a good job.

1. Tell the action

It sounds simple because it is. What specific actions did the person do? Tell the story in a couple of sentences. It doesn't need to be a novel, just enough information

so people who may not work with that individual every day know what happened.

Telling the action ensures that others on your team will be more informed of great work and the types of actions they can do to deliver on your company's mission, purpose and values. Being specific also makes sure that the recognition is genuine, focused on merit and doesn't feel like favoritism.



Helpful tip: Think about telling the story in a way that a new employee can clearly understand what they would do in a similar situation.

2. Connect to an area of focus or company value

Employee recognition is a great opportunity to tie employee actions to your company's values, goals, mission or purpose. This helps people on your team make the connection between what they do every day with the big picture of your organisation's priorities and objectives.

It's key to "walk the talk," especially as a leader. Connecting the recognition message to the values, purpose, etc., demonstrates that those important pieces of your business are top of mind for you too! As you lead by example, people on your team will adopt the practice and soon enough, that link between the values and day-to-day actions will become easier to see.

3. Explain the impact

This step is about the result of the action. Why was it important and how did it affect your team, your customers or the company as a whole? Again, get specific - if you only report on what happened, you miss out on the appreciation piece that influences engagement and creates an inspiring moment.

While the benefit of the action may seem obvious to you, it may not be to others, especially if they are not on the same team or in the same department.



Helpful tip: You may even want to consider what would have been the impact if the person did not do what they did.

To truly see the strategic impact of employee recognition, it's key to embed it in your company culture. Let's use a simple analogy. Think about skipping a stone across a pond... each time the rock touches the water a series of tiny waves ripple away from the impact point.

When you recognise someone for doing their job well, the same thing happens. The initial impact (on the person you recognise) spreads as the others in your organisation read about the recognition. That ripple spreads even more when your team starts to build the actions into their day-to-day work, which can have a real impact on your team's (or company's) goals and objectives.

As more people get on board with making recognition a habit - a part of your work culture (the "way we do things around here") - the ripple effect spreads throughout the organisation.

Creating a culture of continuous recognition leads to:

Increased engagement and productivity:	The more employees feel the benefits above, the more likely they are to give their best efforts to support the company, creating an environment for improving employee engagement. This leads to improvements in countless areas, for example, faster problemsolving, fewer mistakes, more innovation, less stress and improved well-being to name a few.
Reductions in unwanted turnover:	When top performers feel that their work is appreciated, they are less likely to look elsewhere for a job. As recognition becomes an integral part of your employee engagement efforts, you'll see more and more people who are willing to stay even if offered a similar job elsewhere.
Increased focus on the most important goals:	When the whole team (and leaders) are talking about and acknowledging actions that made an impact by writing a strategic recognition message, employees are reminded about the goals that the company is focused on. These reminders do a lot to drive the results that are most important to the company.

The right kind of employee reward and recognition programme can make a big impact. Think about how you can incorporate strategic recogniton to boost and round out your company's employee engagement efforts.

A look at the Reward Gateway reward and recognition programme

Our own suite of recognition and reward features (yes, we like to put the recognition *before* the reward!) helps you showcase achievements across your team and employees with meaningful moments of recognition, while embedding recognition within your company culture with on-the-spot tools accessible anytime, anywhere.

What's more, our recognition tools help connect your people to your purpose, mission and values by highlighting the behaviours that drive your business forward. Here's a look into what we offer:



Peer-to-peer employee recognition

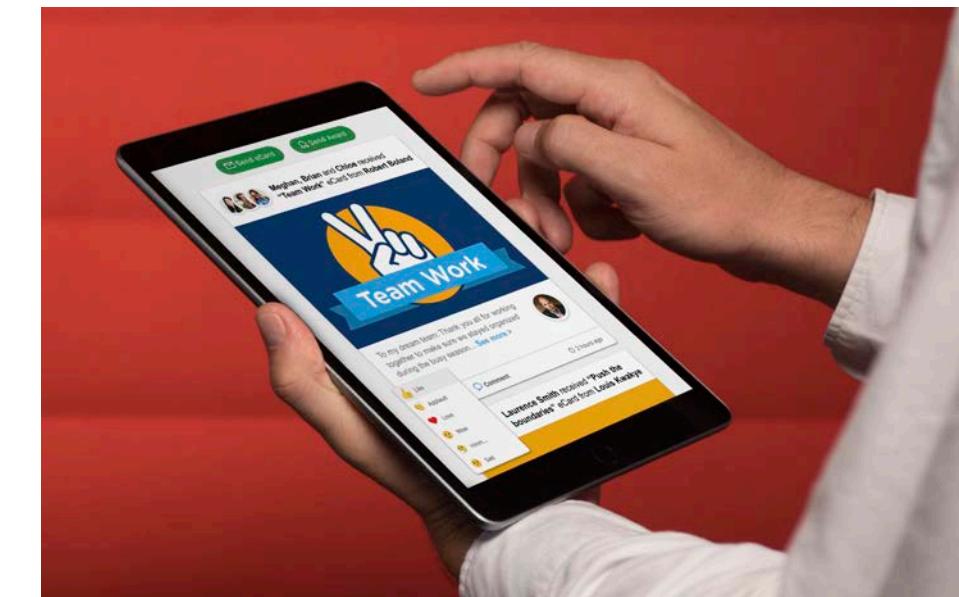
Our peer-to-peer employee recognition programme offers tailored eCards to fit every organisation's unique goals and brand. Anyone can send or receive moments of recognition to showcase moments of values-driven behaviour, celebrate a big (or small!) win or welcome new team members on board.



Social recognition

Employee recognition is most effective when others can share in that special moment, and

that's easy to do with social recognition. Plus eCards and other rewards are displayed on a real-time feed of moments of recognition, where employees can interact with eCards and other awards by reacting with an emoji, commenting to lend support or tagging others to extend the conversation.





Instant award delivery

Empower managers with dedicated budgets to recognise their top performers with rewards redeemable at hundreds of national retailers, from everyday purchases to entertainment, travel, fashion and beyond. It'll be a reward your employees will actually *want* to use. Plus, recipients can redeem their reward on the spot, anytime and anywhere, thanks to a smartphone and tablet-friendly design that they can shop with.



Peer-to-peer nominations

Do you hold a peer-to-peer company award programme such as Employee of the Month? Make it easy to manage and approve through our employee reward and recognition programme. Use creative solutions to celebrate employee wins and milestones which reflect the unique culture and business challenges your company faces, across all levels.



Custom awards

Whether it's for a service milestone or anything else, just send us a list of who you'd like to reward and watch your employees smile when they receive a company-branded, personalised email, congratulating them on their achievement.



See your culture in action with real-time, actionable analytics

As part of the R&R solution, the SmartInsights Employee Engagement Analytics Engine from Reward Gateway provides highly visual and intuitive dashboards that put clear and easy-to-understand data into the hands of HR leaders and managers in real-time. Dynamic analytics give insight into key indicators, such as overall employee engagement, recognition activity and social responses that can impact important business metrics, such as employee turnover or customer satisfaction.

Learn more at rg.co/analyticsuk.





Conclusion

I hope this guide has demonstrated the steps involved in launching an employee recognition programme as part of your reward and recognition strategy. Remember that every organisation is unique and has different needs and capabilities, so the biggest tip I have is to customise your programme for what's right for your business, and for your people.

As global leaders in employee engagement technology, including our employee recognition tools, Reward Gateway can help you on your path to building a world-class employee recognition programme. You'll receive a dedicated Implementation Team and a Client Success Manager to help you with ongoing strategy and communication. Plus, we offer 24/7 support on our helpdesk for you — and your employees

— to keep things running smoothly. Employee recognition and our other products are powered by a centralised hub tailored to your organisation, making it easy to communicate recognition initiatives and drive high levels of engagement.

For more advice on how to successfully execute your employee recognition programme, discover more tips and inspirational stories on the Reward Gateway blog of engagement experts.

To better engagement (and more recognition!).



Debra Corey

Reward Gateway Advisor



Employee recognition and our other products are powered by a centralised hub tailored to your organisation, giving your employees better access to employee recognition tools.

If you're interested in learning more about any of Reward Gateway's recognition and engagement products to help attract, retain and engage your people, we'd love to help you get started.

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