



# AGAINST THE CURRENT

STAND OUT IN A SEA OF LEADERS

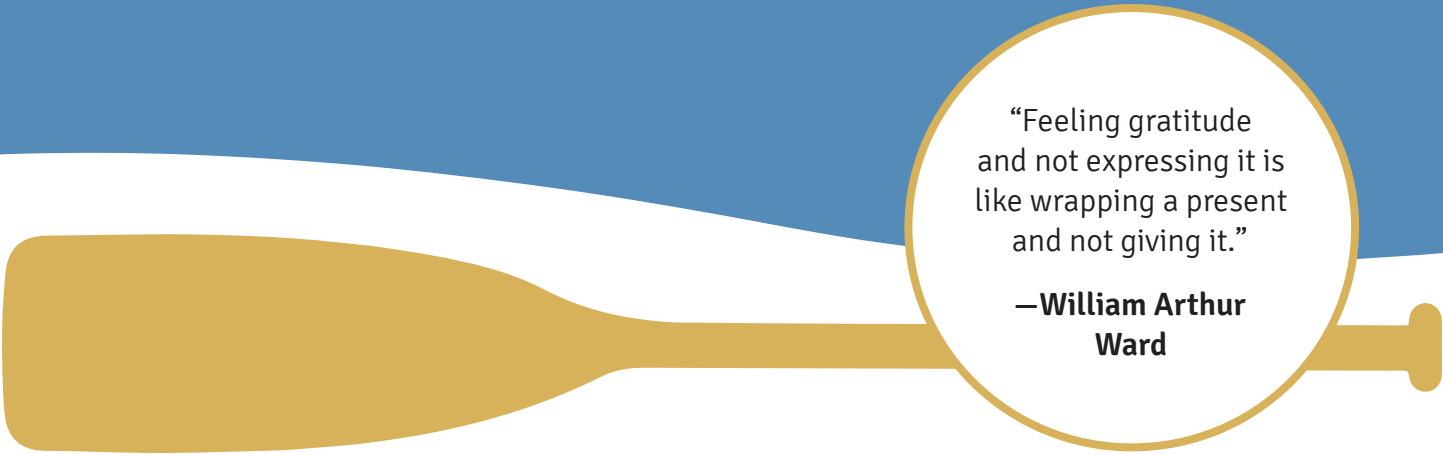
*Recognition &  
Appreciation*

*Upstream*  
HR Strategies

# Recognition & Appreciation

AS WE CELEBRATE WORLD GRATITUDE MONTH IT'S A PERFECT TIME TO EXPLORE ONE OF THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT—RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION.

Most managers support the notion that recognizing and appreciating others is important. We realize that recognition and appreciation can improve productivity, engagement, retention, and even customer satisfaction. But we often underestimate the impact of our words and actions on others in the workplace.



“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

—William Arthur Ward

O.C. Tanner studied recognition in a white paper entitled: [Performance: Accelerated](#). This 10-year, 200,000-person study confirmed the connection between recognition, appreciation and business results. Perhaps more importantly, it revealed a disconnect between the perception and reality of appreciation at work.

While more than half of managers believe they do a good job of appreciating their teams, only 17% of employees agree. 65% of North Americans report that they weren't recognized even once last year, and 79% of employees who quit their jobs claim that a lack of appreciation was a major reason for leaving.

75% of organizations have a formal recognition program. Why, then, do so many employees feel unappreciated? Because recognition and appreciation are not synonymous. If you really want to create a culture of engagement, loyalty, and high performance on your team, it's important to understand the distinction.

Is there a difference between recognition and appreciation? Harvard Business Review says, “Yes.” **Recognition**, they say, “is about giving positive feedback based on results or performance.”

**Appreciation**, on the other hand, “is about acknowledging a person's inherent value.” Brené Brown expands this definition, adding that “appreciation is about making others feel seen, valued and heard.”

Though the majority of companies have a formal recognition program, recognition is often focused on performance and “above and beyond” results. Most employees are fortunate to receive this type of formal recognition once or twice a year.

To enhance employee engagement, managers must supplement formal performance recognition with more frequent, genuine, and meaningful appreciation that makes employees feel seen, valued, and heard throughout the year. **We've got to reach beyond recognition and create memorable moments.**

# Reach Beyond Recognition

“In simple terms, recognition is about what people do; appreciation is about who they are.”

—Mike Robbins, Harvard Business Review

## DON'T STOP AT RECOGNIZING RESULTS!

Make employees feel seen, valued, and heard by celebrating values, behaviors, personal milestones, and ideas, in addition to performance.

### RECOGNIZE PERFORMANCE

- Meeting or exceeding a goal
- Completing a project
- Improving a process
- Delivering a project milestone



What other performance milestones might you recognize? Record your ideas below.

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### APPRECIATE VALUES AND BEHAVIORS

- Role modeling company values
- Helping a coworker
- Sharing knowledge
- Acting as an ally to a colleague



What other values or behaviors might you recognize? Record your ideas below.

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### CELEBRATE PERSONAL MILESTONES

- New role or promotion
- Service anniversary
- Certification
- Birthday
- Wedding
- Baby



What other personal milestones might you recognize? Record your ideas below.

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### GIVE OTHERS A VOICE

- Ask for idea, opinions, and advice
- Involve others in decision-making
- Welcome debate and dissent
- Reward those who have the courage to speak up or challenge the status quo



What other actions can you take to give others a voice? Record your ideas below.

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## RESOURCE

Dare to Disagree  
Ted Talk





# Create Memorable Moments

68% OF EMPLOYEES FEEL THAT THE RECOGNITION THEY RECEIVE IS AN EMPTY GESTURE because it's unspecific, impersonal, or untimely. To maximize the impact of your efforts and create memorable moments, make sure that your recognition and appreciation are specific, personalized, and timely.

Tip

To make positive feedback most meaningful, be sure to include:

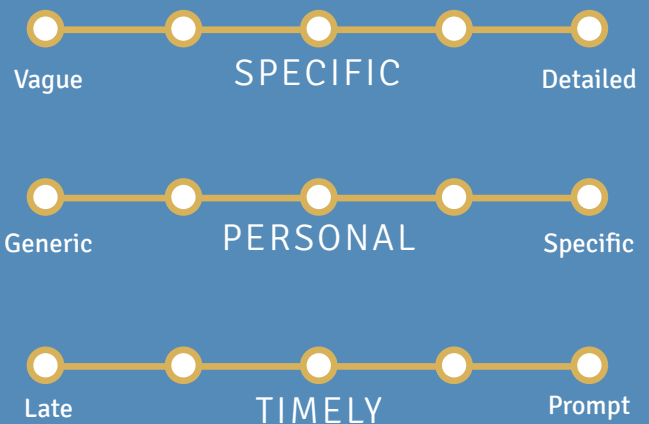
1. The specific action or behavior being acknowledged. What exactly did the person do? When? How?
2. The impact of their action or behavior. How did their contribution impact individual, team, or organizational success?

 DON'T	 DO
<b>SPECIFIC</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Thanks for all you do”</li> <li>• “Thanks for your leadership”</li> <li>• “You’re the best</li> <li>• “You’re a rockstar”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat recognition as <b>positive feedback</b>—articulate specific actions and impact.</li> <li>• “You demonstrated humility when you changed course based on others’ input. You found the best possible solution, delighted our client, and set us up for repeat business.”</li> </ul>
<b>PERSONAL</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send recognition without a follow-up interaction</li> <li>• Send blanket thanks for team efforts</li> <li>• Limit yourself to one type of recognition or appreciation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompany every recognition or appreciation gesture with a personal interaction.</li> <li>• Acknowledge team success along with each team member’s specific contributions.</li> <li>• Customize recognition and appreciation to the recipient’s primary <a href="#">Language of Appreciation</a>.</li> <li>• Discover your team members’ Language of Appreciation with this <a href="#">preference assessment</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>TIMELY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait to recognize someone</li> <li>• “Save up” recognition or appreciation for year-end</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer recognition and appreciation <b>in the moment</b> to acknowledge and reinforce performance, behaviors, personal milestones and ideas...as they happen.</li> </ul>

## Reflection

HOW WOULD YOU RATE the specificity, personalization, and timeliness of the recognition and appreciation you give?

Where will you focus your efforts to ensure that you are creating memorable moments?



# My Appreciation Plan

## HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR TEAM MEMBERS FEEL SEEN, VALUED AND HEARD—NOW AND THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

Here are some ideas to get you started! Mark the actions that resonate most with you and set an appreciation goal for yourself. For each member of your team, aim for 1-2 small gestures per week and 1 larger gesture per month.



### WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

- Send a [Greeting of Gratitude](#) to an individual or team (details on page 6)
- Call someone after a meeting with specific positive feedback
- Copy a manager/next level manager on a recognition email
- Offer reassurance after a challenging day

### ACTS OF SERVICE

- Remind someone to take a break when they've been working hard
- Bring or deliver dinner to home when someone has had a tough week
- Offer to cover a call or task for someone who's been working long hours
- Pick up a coffee for someone when you run out to get yourself one
- Support flexible hours to help juggle family commitments

### QUALITY TIME

- Offer to brainstorm with an employee who is facing challenge
- Coordinate travel plans with a team member
- Spend time getting to know the employee's interests and passions
- Gather the team for lunch or happy hour to celebrate a group success
- Host a team building event (face-to-face or virtual - see below for ideas)

### GIFTS

- Buy a book related to an accomplishment or idea
- Give a certificate to a favorite restaurant
- Send the employee to a training or conference
- Host a party to celebrate a life event (baby shower, wedding shower, certification, etc.)
- Give tickets to an event that aligns with personal interests (ball game, concert, etc.)

### VOICE & EXPOSURE

- Ask for a team member's opinion on a strategic matter
- Facilitate a team debate to help make a critical decision
- Ask an employee to teach you something you may not know
- Arrange an opportunity to present to or meet with a senior leader
- Host a "Shark Tank" contest to surface strategy or process improvement ideas

### VIRTUAL TEAM EVENTS

Team building is certainly more challenging in today's hybrid world but it's not impossible! Here are a few of our favorite virtual event options.

- Arrange a virtual pizza party with [Pizza Time](#)
- Host a skill building event with [SkillPop](#)
- Hold a team cooking event with [FoodLaLa](#)
- Have some fun with a [The Comedian Company](#)
- Plan a virtual scavenger hunt with [Watson Adventures](#)
- Explore additional virtual team events with [Weve](#)



## Tip

**Generate more discussion and debate in team meetings with these questions and phrases:**

This meeting is intended to be an open dialog and debate. Please dare to disagree. It will help us find the best answer

What would you decide if you were in my shoes?

If you had to change 1 thing about this decision, what would that be?

What's the biggest risk with this plan?  
The greatest untapped opportunity?

Let's spend 10 minutes playing devil's advocate on this topic

GREETINGS OF

# gratitude

Want to thank someone at work but don't know what to say? We've got the perfect words! We've written an endless supply of specific and heartfelt thanks that cover every workplace occasion. Just search, personalize and send.

*No creative writing skills required*

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