



PEER

TO



PEER

THE WHITE PAPER
THAT CLEARS UP
GRAY AREAS ABOUT
PEER-TO-PEER
RECOGNITION.

BAUDVILLE[®]
THE PLACE FOR DAILY RECOGNITION

INTRODUCTION

The economic climate has challenged many workplaces. Instead of attracting and retaining employees with plush benefits and luxurious vacation incentives, companies have been forced to cut staff along with budgets. The U.S. unemployment rate reached 9.7%, and employees and companies alike have struggled to boost both the bottom line and morale.

While economic concerns have affected everyone, morale has especially taken a nose dive in organizations where layoffs have occurred. Employees have experienced extra stress from personal financial strain and added job responsibilities, causing a negative impact on job loyalty and satisfaction. A Career Builder survey found 47% of workers took on additional responsibilities following layoffs, and according to Robert Half International and Career Builder, 55% of employees plan to make a career change or go back to school when the economy recovers.

Many managers and executives mistakenly believe that a steady paycheck is enough to satisfy employees during these times. Management that fails to change this mentality runs the risk of losing half their staff when the economy turns around.

In today's tough economic times, many companies lacked communication about company decisions and impending changes. In addition, many organizations cancelled all employee recognition programs and events for the year. The result was a workplace void of communication about performance, contributions and individual employee value.

Organizations dedicated to retaining key talent can adopt simple communication strategies to improve employee relations. A peer-to-peer recognition program can be one of those strategies. These programs typically use low-cost tools and accommodate the challenges of over-worked managers and limited budgets. By giving the ability to recognize to all employees and using low cost tools, peer-to-peer recognition can improve productivity, engagement and camaraderie.

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Peer-to-peer recognition is the genuine expressions of appreciation exchanged between co-workers. Many employee recognition programs give managers the exclusive responsibility and ability to recognize employees. However, with extra responsibilities thrust upon them and teams that are too large to effectively manage, peer-to-peer recognition can be a welcome way to introduce more positive communication into the workplace.

Peer-to-peer recognition programs come in a variety of forms and designs. The standard peer-to-peer program gives public recognition either through a paper-based or electronic medium. When peers want to recognize or thank a co-worker, they write a personal note and post it to a bulletin board for others to see. Peer-to-peer programs can also take place directly between individuals in the form of e-cards or paper note cards.

Using a peer-to-peer recognition program can take pressure off managers and make recognition a regular occurrence. Managers are overburdened with additional work responsibilities and large teams that they cannot manage effectively. According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States, the manager to employee ratio is 1 to 10. However, research suggests that effective teams have only 5-7 members, and motivation diminishes in larger teams as social loafing, putting forth less effort in group situations, is more likely to occur.

Similarly, the Gallup Organization has found that in productive and engaged workplaces, employees receive recognition every seven days. As a result of overburdened managers, employees do not receive regular communication and feedback about their performance. Peer-to-peer recognition, on the other hand, empowers every team member to be involved in the communication process. Team members often have a better understanding of the contributions and talents of individual employees since they interact on a more frequent and personal basis.

Peer recognition often takes center stage due to its effectiveness. At the annual Academy Awards, winners often thank “the academy” in acceptance speeches. The academy is a group of peers in the entertainment industry who vote for the winners. The peer nominated structure is what makes winning an Oscar such a prestigious achievement. While your peer-to-peer recognition program may not garner the same international reputation as the Oscars, it will undoubtedly earn a parallel level of excitement for your culture and organization as peers are given the ability to publicly recognize each other’s accomplishments.



Empowering employees to take ownership of recognition can provide a great return on investment for organizations. Peer-to-peer recognition programs can be easily created, are relatively inexpensive and impact a greater number of employees. The results are hard to ignore as the regular positive communication between employees can improve trust and relationships in the workplace.

IMPACTS CULTURE

The Gallup Organization's Twelve Elements of Great Managing emphasize the importance of strong peer relationships in its tenth element, "I have a best friend at work." Peer-to-peer recognition won't create best friends out of your entire staff, but it can contribute to a more positive culture, improved relationships and retention rate. Giving and receiving recognition has positive intrinsic benefits and creates a work environment that employees are proud to belong to.

LOYALTY & JOB SATISFACTION

Employees who feel a sense of attachment and closeness to their team or company are less likely to leave the organization. Gallup research shows when a sense of affiliation exists in a team, employees are driven to do positive things for the business that they otherwise may not do. Positive communication between peers contributes to the conditions under which such relationships thrive, and positive employee relationships bring benefit to the organization in terms of employee loyalty and retention. "Many studies have shown that social connections with coworkers are a strong predictor – some would say the single predictor – of job satisfaction," said Robert D. Putnam, author of Bowling Alone.

CAMARADERIE

The Great Place to Work Institute, which compiles the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For in America list, has a model of what makes a successful work environment. One element is camaraderie. Camaraderie is nurtured when employees are comfortable being themselves; workplaces are fun, friendly and welcoming; and strong sense of team or community is evident. Peer-to-peer recognition triggers these qualities and work culture through the regular expressions of appreciation and praise.

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ROBERT D. PUTNAM

HOW CAN YOU MAKE PEER-TO-PEER RECOGNITION WORK?

A peer-to-peer recognition program can benefit an organization in many ways. By increasing the number of individuals who have the ability to recognize, the number of occurrences of recognition will increase. The quality of recognition will also improve since it will be given by individuals who witness the behavior first hand.

The regular positive communication passed between teammates will improve trust and relationships, leading to higher productivity, engagement and camaraderie. To start a peer-to-peer recognition program, follow these guidelines:

- **Team Training.** Model the positive communication you hope to get from your team by defining peer-to-peer recognition and why you're doing it. Demonstrate how recognition in the program should reinforce behaviors that contribute to goals or demonstrate values. Address the issue of fairness in the program. Assure employees that the intended purpose of the program is for recognition to take place among worthy recipients and not to occur purely between friends.
- **Accessible Tools.** One of the most important elements of peer-to-peer recognition is making easy-to-use tools accessible for everyone. Because the value in peer-to-peer recognition comes from a personal accolade from a colleague, the recognition vehicle or tool can be low cost. Have a paper-based tool, like note cards, post-its, or certificates, and stress the value of a well written note.
- **Measurement.** Recognition makes people feel warm and fuzzy inside, but don't forget it also contributes to the bottom line. Administer a job satisfaction survey among your team before the program and at regular intervals once it's launched. Since job satisfaction is related to improved retention, the return on investment of peer-to-peer recognition is easily visible.
- **Manager Involvement.** Managers should still be actively involved in peer-to-peer recognition and play an important role in program celebration. Managers should reinforce the program by reading notes aloud in team meetings or arranging a team reward after achieving 100% program participation. Don't forget that even recognition programs deserve a little recognition!

**DAY-TO-DAY
RECOGNITION
SERVES AS
COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN
MANAGERS,
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PEERS.**

ABOUT BAUDVILLE

Baudville, the place for daily recognition, continues to be the leading innovator in day-to-day recognition solutions. Baudville's day-to-day recognition solutions appeal to today's increasingly diverse workforce with contemporary designs and relevant messaging, motivating and engaging workplaces world-wide. Baudville has been declared one of the best companies to work for in its area and strives to create the ultimate work experience for its employees.