IDEAS TO KICK-START WORKPLACE RECOGNITION AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

March 2019
IDEAS INTO ACTION

The County is committed to building a culture of engagement and well-being for its employees. To find out how we’re doing, the County launched its first ever Employee Engagement & Well-Being Survey in the fall of 2018. Based on the results, the County is focused on growth opportunities in the following areas for 2019:

1. **In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.**
2. **There is someone at work who encourages my development.**

This guide offers ideas, activities, and tools designed to boost workplace recognition/praise and encourage employee development. The activities can be used in a variety of settings and can be customized to reflect your department’s needs and goals. Many of the activities are short, and they can be initiated as one-to-one conversations or team development opportunities.

We hope these ideas give you a kick-start, and we hope you’ll share your good ideas for future iterations of this guide!

“A focus on employee engagement has the potential to dramatically improve how an organization and a team operate.”

Gallup
RECOGNITION AND PRAISE

Employee Engagement and Well-Being Survey Question:
In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

Best Practices
Recognition or praise means employees need to know that others acknowledge and value their best efforts.

The most effective managers promote a recognition-rich environment with praise coming from every direction and with everyone knowing how others like to receive recognition. They do this by incorporating the following behaviors into their management style and approach:

- Praise individuals for doing good work.
- Recognize employees for achieving their goals.
- When you praise your employees, emphasize why the recognized act was important.
- Recognize team member’s individual talents and strengths.
- Recognize outstanding customer service when you see people on other teams or in other departments performing it.
- Introduce a unique way to facilitate and encourage individualized recognition.
- Learn how each team member likes to receive praise, and tailor an approach to meet everyone’s recognition needs.
- Encourage your employees to recognize one another and their partners on different teams or in different departments.
- Make recognition an agenda item at regularly scheduled meetings.
- Be an advocate for your employees by promoting their areas of competence and expertise.

Consider using the 50/30/20 Rule to create a culture of recognition and praise in your work units.

The recommended mix is:
- 50% recognition/praise coming from the manager,
- 30% coming from peers, and
- 20% coming from the organization.
Meetings and Staff Retreats

At your next meeting or staff retreat, build time into the agenda for activities that support employee well-being, along with recognizing the accomplishments of teams or individual staff members. Your Wellness Champion can assist with planning or implementing these activities.

Program Spotlight

- Showcase 1-2 programs within the department at your next all-staff meeting.
- Allow teams to share what they do each day, their accomplishments, and/or current projects. Offer an opportunity for positive peer recognition.

Gratitude Moments

- Allocate time in your agenda for a Gratitude Moment such as “3 Good Things.” Take a few minutes for employees to jot down three things they are grateful for and then ask them to share with the group.
- Offer an opportunity for employees to express gratitude to someone they appreciate.
- Provide index cards, or blank greeting cards, and pens and take 10 minutes to write a gratitude note.

Three Shining Moments

- Ask employees to look back over their careers and identify three events, activities, accomplishments, collaborations, or moments of recognition/praise by others that were shining or important to them.
- Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups and take 10 minutes for employees to jot down ideas before asking them to share their “shining moments.” In the larger group, encourage each person to share one “shining moment.”
- Listen reflectively and thank employees for their contributions.

**Tips:**
- Let employees know in advance when this activity will be introduced at a meeting, so they have time to think about their three shining work moments.
- Let employees write their moments on a star cutout. Post the cutouts in a public area or near your office to emphasize the significance of the team’s collective contributions.

Find Time for Active Movement

- Make time to include an “Instant Recess,” or an active break during meetings that last an hour or more.
- Include a stretch break during your meeting or retreat.
- Schedule a walk/talk or standing meeting when possible.

**Tip:**
- Contact your Wellness Champion or the Employee Wellness Division at wellness@ewd.sccgov.org to request a demonstration or activity at your event.
Public Recognition: Awards, Trophies, or Certificates

Special trophies, awards, or certificates are an excellent way to publicly recognize employees on your team. Create opportunities for praise by the manager and peers.

**Go the Extra Mile (GEM)**

- When you, or a member of your team, witness an employee giving their all, recognize the employee with a “Go the Extra Mile” certificate. Click [here](#) for the GEM template. (Located in the Appendix)
- Be sure to also recognize those employees who work quietly “behind the scenes” to keep everything running efficiently.

**Rock Solid Award**

- Establish an award for employees who consistently go above and beyond expectations.
- Decorate a rock that includes the date and key words to remind the employee of their accomplishments.
  
  **Tip:**
  
  - Provide a creative outlet during a staff meeting or retreat to allow team members to create rock trophy masterpieces and display them until they are given away.

**Traveling Trophy**

- Create a traveling trophy, such as a special hat, ribbon, trinket, etc. that moves from employee to employee based on outstanding achievements.
- Present each deserving employee with specific feedback about their unique contributions.
- Include a memento the employee can keep to remember their specific accomplishments once the trophy moves to the next employee.

**Countywide “Employee Excellence Award”**

- Take advantage of the Countywide Employee Excellence Award program and nominate someone from your team.
- If your employee is selected, arrange for the team to attend the awards presentation at the Board of Supervisors meeting.
- If your employee is not selected for the award, share with your employee what you submitted to the committee. Your employee will appreciate your kind words of recognition.
Private Recognition

Building trust between the manager and the employee is essential for any form of meaningful recognition to be embraced. Consistent conversations are the key to building relationships. Most employees would appreciate more individual time with their manager.

One-to-One Time with the Manager

- Schedule time to get to know your employee(s) better and find out how their job is going, what their professional development plans are, and how you can help them.
  
  **Tip:**

  - Consider making this time more personal by:
    - Scheduling walk/talk time
    - Inviting the employee(s) for a cup of coffee, tea, or lunch.

Project-Based Recognition

- Take a moment and reflect on the recent project accomplishments your team has achieved (e.g., a software implementation, program launch, campaign, etc.).
- At the conclusion of big projects, write an e-mail to each employee who worked on the project and thank them for their specific contributions.

Greet Employees Every Day

- A personal greeting from you to each employee every day shows “I am so glad you are here.”

Handwritten and Verbal Thank-you

- A handwritten note to employees serves as a reminder of your recognition/praise and their accomplishments. Click here for notecard examples from the Public Health Department.
- The most meaningful recognition is when you use the employee’s name, specifically tell them what they did, and how it made you feel.

Team Power Cards

- Encourage employees to write private compliment cards for their co-workers. Click here for a variety of compliment phrases to customize a message to express gratitude and appreciation to co-workers for their work. (Located in the Appendix)

“Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers.”

Stephen R. Covey
Public Recognition from Peers

When employees have the trust and appreciation of their colleagues, they typically put in more effort to collaborate with their team members. Public recognition from peers offers an opportunity for employees to recognize, celebrate contributions, and build on each other’s strengths. Use internal communications already in place, such as SharePoint or Skype, to create a channel to encourage peers to share gratitude and recognition for those who are doing great work.

Celebration Calendar
- Post a large calendar or message board in a common area where employees can share milestone dates like service anniversaries, birthdays, life events, new babies, weddings, graduations, completing a 10K run/marathon, etc.

Applause Board
- Create an Applause Board. Encourage employees to fill out an applause card and post it for everyone to see when co-workers fulfill department values, goals, etc.

Achievement Timeline
- Create a timeline for employees to recognize their co-workers for achievements of big projects. The timeline summarizes the historical department achievements.
- The Project Manager may want to hold a “toast” with sparkling cider and healthy snacks to recognize employees who made significant impact on the project.
  
  **Tip:**
  - Leaders should periodically review the achievement timeline to ensure all employees are recognized.

Three Attributes of Effective Recognition

- **Authentic** - Recognition that feels genuine, real and heartfelt.
- **Meaningful** – Praise that highlights the value of the work and the person doing it.
- **Motivating** – Recognition that taps into what matters most to the individual.
New Employee Recognition

The first day at work for new employees can be filled with anxiety and enthusiasm. Creating a memorable first day experience will have an enormous impact on increasing retention and reducing turnover for your department. It is well-worth your time and attention to make the new employee's welcome be positive, affirming, and exciting.

Welcome Card

- Providing a “Welcome Card” signed by the team is the perfect way to greet your new employee to their first day on the job.

Lunch with the Manager

- Make plans to take your new employee to lunch on their first day or during their first week on the job.

Lunch with the Team

- Plan an activity such as a potluck or break time to make employees feel welcome on their first day.

“What gets recognized gets reinforced, and what gets reinforced gets repeated.”

Unknown
ENCOURAGES EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Employee Engagement and Well-Being Survey Question:
There is someone at work who encourages my development.

Best Practices
The most effective managers create opportunities for employees to learn, grow, acquire new skills, try new ways of doing things and take on new challenges. These managers try to build a culture of encouraged development by incorporating the following behaviors into their management style and approach:

- Teach employees the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their roles.
- Help each employee identify, document, and track performance goals.
- Don’t look at development as a finished product. Keep moving the goal posts to encourage next steps.
- Meet regularly with team members to talk about their development and progress.
- Look for coaching opportunities to provide greater clarity and improved understanding of a role.
- Help employees track and celebrate personal bests.
- Identify an employee’s role in the development process to support and provide any information necessary for employees to achieve their development goals.
- Consider what development opportunities to offer the team. These opportunities could mean job shadowing or project-based responsibilities for a specific employee.
- Pay special attention to long-serving employees. They need development opportunities, too.

The 70-20-10 approach is a strategic workplace learning framework that can be used to boost staff effectiveness by supporting the three types of learning:

Experience (70%) focuses on introducing employees to new knowledge and new skills that can expand the scope of their current role.

Exposure (20%) is obtained from interactions with co-workers who help employees gain new knowledge and observations.

Education (10%) is what we commonly understand as traditional training and development. This includes employee professional development education through instructor-led training and web-based training. Click here to learn more about the 70-20-10 approach to learning. (Located in the Appendix)
Team Development

Cultivating team development benefits employees by connecting them to the team, department, and County.

Team Goal-Setting
- To build strong team dynamics, organize regular goal-setting activities for the team. This way, each employee on the team is focused on the outcome.
- In a meeting, set up flipchart paper/whiteboard and have each person on the team write a goal. You can create program/service areas to help categorize the goals. Then, review as a team.

Learn Together
- Take a web-based training course, a webinar, or a podcast together as a team, or independently, by a given deadline.
- Discuss key outcomes, how the information is useful, and next steps to put the new learning into action.

Feedback Strategies
- Think about the acronyms “Next Time Try” or “NTT” when giving constructive feedback, and “It Was Effective When” or “IWEW” when giving positive enforcement.

Three Ways to Encourage Development

- **Individualized**: Customized for each team member and consistent with their role.
- **Intentional**: Directed and purposeful for each person.
- **Ongoing**: Continuous process throughout each person’s work life cycle, from onboarding to promotion.
Networking Opportunities

Networking allows the exchange of information and ideas among individuals, or groups, that share a common interest(s).

Expanding Networks

- Invite an employee to attend a “special meeting” they would not generally attend. This provides employees with an opportunity to expand their organizational awareness and network with other employees across the County.
- Assign an employee to a special assignment or project that requires working outside of the department and will expose them to new ideas, discussions, and decision-making methods.
- Help the employee get started by discussing how they plan to identify stakeholders, prioritize tasks, and manage roadblocks.

Work One-On-One with A Subject Matter Expert

- Arrange to have an employee meet, or work, with other internal employees with experience in specific areas or with external professionals. For example, exposing an employee to lateral job functions either on a project or observation basis is an opportunity for the employee to develop specific skills they may not have.
- Identify and plan the expected outcomes with the employee. Follow-up to review new ideas, perspectives, and knowledge gained.

Utilize Internal Talents

- If you have an internal expert on a topic, ask the individual to provide training to the rest of the team to build knowledge and skill capacity within the team. This also allows the expert to shine!
- Assign meeting presentations to individual employees, so each member of your team has an opportunity to practice planning and organizational skills, as well as effectiveness in speaking.

Tips:

- Set aside time to review the presentation prior to the meeting.
- Provide feedback after the presentation.
Educational Opportunities

Employees watch and observe the actions of their leaders. Be active in your learning and development journey and share your successes, or setbacks, along the way. Sharing your setbacks demonstrates that you are actively developing yourself and experience similar challenges, so you can understand what employees might be going through.

Education can be an important component of an employee’s career and development. It can also boost an employee’s confidence in their current position or lead to opportunities for career advancement. Take a moment to ensure your employees are aware of these existing educational opportunities and resources.

**Education Reimbursement Program**

- Talk to employees about the Education Reimbursement Program administered by the Finance Agency’s Controller-Treasurer Department. If employees are familiar with this benefit, they are more likely to use it for their professional development.
- Once your employee has completed a course, talk to them about it and what they learned.

**Continuing Education**

- Recognize employees who participate in continuing education. Be curious about the topic they are learning by asking them about their classes. Consider assigning them a project that will complement their class.

**Classes or Books**

- Help employees improve mastery in a desired subject by recommending a certification program, individual classes, videos, books, eBooks, or podcasts.
- Instructor-led classes, web-based training classes, and books are available on sccLearn.

**Individual Development Plans**

- Show employees this free tool to help improve skills in their current job or a desired future job.
- Endorse employees’ attendance at classes, conferences, or meetings and discuss what they learned from these experiences. Look for opportunities to integrate their new learning into their work responsibilities.
A Manager’s Role in Supporting a Well Workforce

The County has taken bold steps to create and support a dynamic Employee Wellness Division. The County recognizes that healthy individuals build a healthy and productive organization.

Communicate Your Commitment to Well-Being

- Send out an e-mail or memo to your department or team.
- Include a message or article in your department’s publications.
- Post information about upcoming wellness campaigns, classes, or events on your Intranet site.

Demonstrate Your Commitment to Well-Being

- Designate and support a Wellness Champion(s) for your department/divisions.
- Include well-being as a regular item on your staff meeting agendas.
- Incorporate a well-being goal into your team goals.
  
  **Tip:**
  - Contact the Employee Wellness Division at wellness@ewd.sccgov.org to designate your Wellness Champion today.

Model the Behavior

- Schedule your preventive visits with your medical provider, eye doctor, and dentist.
- Participate in Countywide worksite wellness activities or initiate your own.
- Engage in regular physical activity during the day such as holding walking meetings or incorporating stretch breaks during meetings.
- Encourage, or provide, nutritious food and beverage options for potlucks, staff recognition events, etc.
- Share your personal well-being journey.
- By openly practicing good well-being habits, your employees are more likely to follow in your footsteps.
Go the Extra Mile (GEM) Certificate

GEM Certificate
[Add your personal message here.]

Presented To

Issued By

Go the Extra Mile

GEM Certificate
[Add your personal message here.]

Presented To

Issued By

Go the Extra Mile
Compliment Starters

If you are stuck on getting started with a compliment, one of the following may spark an idea to create your own.

- You make such a positive impact on our team.
- Thank you for speaking up in meetings and providing fresh ideas.
- I can count on you to help new employees get up-to-speed.
- I truly enjoy working with you.
- You have such a positive and healthy outlook.
- Your flexibility is really appreciated.
- Thank you for everything you do.
- You are so dependable.
- You are an excellent role model.
- You are amazing!
- Thank you for being the “go-to” person.
- Thank you for showing up with your positive attitude.
- Your dedication makes me want to be a better employee.
- You are an inspiration.
- Thank you for being there.
- You bring an open-mind to tough meetings.
- Your initiative is contagious! Thank you for being here.
- Your communication skills are spot on.
- You handled that difficult situation with resilience.
- Your attention to details saves so much time.
- I value you as a member of my team.
RESOURCES

County Resources
Visit sccLearn at http://sccLearn.sccgov.org to access the web-based trainings and books below.

Web-Based Trainings:

- Managing Employee Development Web-Based Training (Duration 31 Minutes)
- Communicating Vision to Your Employees Web-Based Training (Duration 24 Minutes)
- Developing Employees through Delegation Web-Based Training (Duration 15 Minutes)
- Motivating Your Employees Web-Based Training (Duration 24 Minutes)

Books:

- 50 Top Tools for Employee Wellbeing: A Complete Toolkit for Developing Happy, Healthy, Productive and Engaged Employees by Debbie Mitchell Kogan Page © 2018
- Build it: The Rebel Playbook for World-Class Employee Engagement by Glenn Elliott and Debra Corey John Wiley & Sons © 2018
- Employee Development on A Shoestring by Halelly Azulay Association for Talent Development © 2012
- Strategic Reward and Recognition: Improving Employee Performance through Non-Monetary Incentives by John G. Fisher Kogan Page © 2015
- The Manager’s Guide to Employee Development by David Hosmer Association for Talent Development © 2015
**County resources, continued**

Employee Education Reimbursement Program  
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/led/tr/Pages/program.aspx *(available from a County Computer Only)*

Employee Excellence Award  
https://connect.sccgov.org/sites/ee/Pages/Employee-Excellence.aspx

Employee Wellness Division  
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/wellness/Pages/ewd.aspx

**Public Health Department – Staff Engagement**  
https://hhsconnect.sccgov.org/sites/phd/ph-improve/Pages/qi-staff-subgroup.aspx

Learning and Employee Development  
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/led/Pages/led.aspx

Self-Development Planning  
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/led/Self-Development-Planning/Pages/home.aspx

**External Resources**

6 Ways to Invest in Your Team for 2019  
https://www.td.org/insights/6-ways-to-invest-in-your-team-for-2019

7 Ways to Improve Employee Development  
https://hbr.org/2015/07/7-ways-to-improve-employee-development-programs

25 Staff Appreciation and Recognition Ideas That Won’t Break the Bank  

**Collin County**  
https://www.collincountytx.gov/government/Pages/GEMAwards.aspx


**Duke Human Resources, Suggested Professional Development Activities**  
https://hr.duke.edu/managers/performance-management/university/performance-evaluation

**Gallup: Engagement Resource Guide 2016**

**People-Centered Leadership**  
http://www.kenblanchard.com/KBCPublic/media/PDF/People-Centered-Leadership-white-paper

The Top 50 Compliments for Coworkers  
https://www.tinypulse.com/blog/50-employee-recognition-phrases

Top 25 Employee Recognition & Appreciation Ideas From the Pros  
https://fitsmallbusiness.com/employee-recognition-ideas/

**Wellness Council of America**  
https://www.welcoa.org/about/