

# TEAMWORK RECOGNITION:

Making a Team that Works

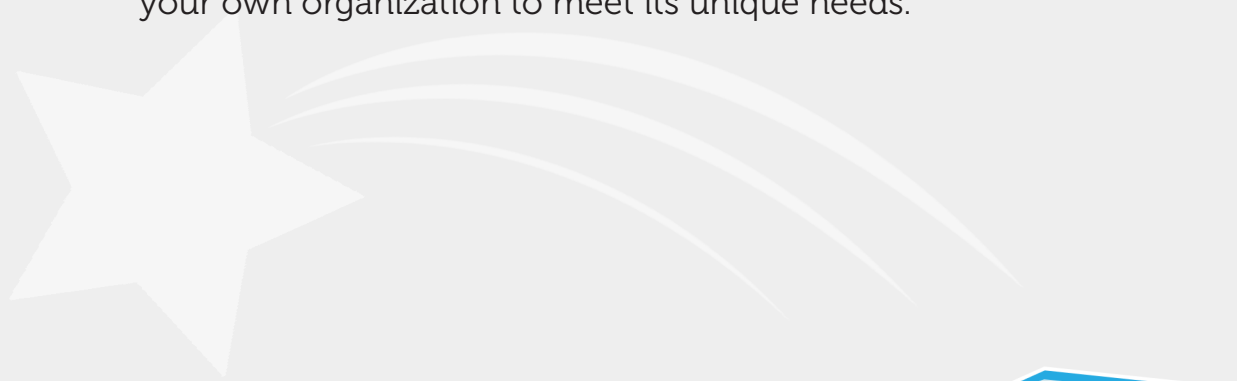




One of the greatest benefits of a team-driven organization is the positive and progressive attitude that seems to radiate throughout the company. Employees say they are happier with their jobs, and this is often echoed through their performance and customer interactions.

Teams and team players want to be rewarded for doing the right thing. Businesses that encourage teamwork understand the power of recognition and incentives to motivate individuals who embrace the idea of working as a group to accomplish a common goal.

What methods have been used to reward teamwork? And how effectively do these methods encourage and support collaboration, conflict resolution, satisfying customer needs, and solving complex problems? Our *"Teamwork Recognition: Making a Team that Works"* paper will outline strategies for teamwork recognition that can easily be incorporated into your own organization to meet its unique needs.





## Team Building Pays

Higher productivity is one indication that an organization encourages a team approach. When individuals feel as if they play a key part in the success of an organization, they often approach each task with a higher sense of accountability, and strive to present their best work. When colleagues see people around them working together, they will often step in to help each other whenever necessary and without being asked.

Besides boosting profits, team-driven organizations often have more stable staff, which cuts the costs of recruiting and training. A 2011 survey by the Gallup Organization has found that employees who are engaged and invested in their work produce better results and are more likely to withstand temptations to leave.





## Incentives Create Momentum

Employee recognition is not just a nice thing to do for people. Rewarding teamwork is a communication tool that reinforces and rewards the most important outcomes that people create for your business. Incentives can be considered an investment rather than an expense, as companies typically see a huge growth in productivity and employee performance when there is a team-driven philosophy.

Rewarding teamwork can create the momentum for individuals to work together to find solutions. In many cases, employees will utilize strengths among the group to implement strategies that will result in better overall performance. They may even be more likely to cross-train each other by sharing valuable skills and knowledge that can be helpful across different departments.





## Set the Stage for Team-Based Recognition

“Step back and set the right expectations,” advises Rodger Stotz, managing consultant at Maritz, an international research and performance-improvement company based in St. Louis. Develop in your managers and staff an appreciation for the potential of teamwork—regular positive communication passed between teammates will improve trust and relationships, leading to higher productivity, engagement and camaraderie. sharing valuable skills and knowledge that can be helpful across different departments.

Don't wait for the establishment of a formal rewards program! Much can be done on a low-cost and no-cost basis to recognize teams and team players. Non-cash incentives such as thank you notes with accompanying certificates, plaques, special parking, gift cards or a day off have trophy value — being able to discuss the award means it has greater power to be motivational.



To start a teamwork recognition program, follow these guidelines:

- **Make sure your words and efforts coincide.** Don't talk up teamwork and then recognize the player who always goes to the hoop and never passes. "Live the example," Stotz says.
- **Address the issue of fairness.** All employees must be eligible for recognition. Assure employees that the intended purpose of the program is to recognize worthy recipients who go beyond the call of duty and make outstanding contributions to a team.
- **Specify the criteria for recognition.** Supply specific information about what behaviors or actions will be rewarded and recognized. All employees must clearly see the relationship between the performance criteria and the reward.
- **Make the recognition timely.** Rewarding teamwork should occur as close to the performance of the actions as possible, so the recognition reinforces behavior the employer wants to encourage.
- **Share experiences that validate team achievements.** Send press releases to the newspapers and announce the recognition on your website and company newsletter. Provide anecdotes about what you've seen and why collaboration works. Get employee feedback to test how the team recognition program is going and assess staff buy-in.



## Example of Successful Team Recognition

After seeking manager and employee ideas, a company establishes criteria for rewarding teamwork. At the time of recognition, each employee on the team who met the stated criteria receives a thank you note hand-written by the supervisor. The note spells out exactly why the team and employee is receiving recognition. The note includes the opportunity for the employee to “draw” a gift from a box. Gifts range from awards, plaques and framed motivational artwork to candy, desk clocks and restaurant certificates. Each employee draws a reward, so no supervisory interference is perceived. A duplicate of the thank you note goes into a periodic drawing for even more substantial reward and recognition opportunities.





## Recognition Management

When granting awards for great teamwork, you are acknowledging the team's ability to perform as a group. But, it is also crucial to reward individual team member's exceptional behavior that has contributed to those results. Why? Because not every team member contributes at the same level and if all that gets rewarded is "the team" then each member's performance slides towards the average. But if exceptional individual contribution is recognized in front of the rest of the team, the team's overall performance is pulled towards the best.

Rewards and recognition that help both the employer and employees get what they need from work are a win-win situation. Make this the year you plan a team recognition process that will "wow" your staff and "wow" you with its positive outcomes.







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