

Bridging the gap: strengthening leader-employee connections on **Employee Appreciation Day**

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The disconnect between leaders and employees has become increasingly evident. According to *The New Rules of Engagement®* research from BI WORLDWIDE, a staggering 38% of U.S. employees feel their leaders don't understand the typical employee. This gap has been widening over the past five years, particularly around critical topics such as remote work, AI, mental health, pay disparities, and work/life balance. If you talk to leaders, they will emphatically clarify that they do value their employees. The question is, how can they better show it?

Our research at BIW shows that employees who feel understood and valued by leaders also have a strong sense of belonging, trust leadership, feel empowered to make decisions, have learning and development opportunities, and are often recognized at work.

On **Employee Appreciation Day**, leaders have a prime opportunity to demonstrate their appreciation by sending recognition to all employees that touches on these key factors.

For our clients, we recommend a **meaningful, authentic recognition** be sent from leadership to all employees through the recognition system. Ideally, this recognition would include a reward. And we would recommend each employee be given a small budget to distribute to their peers to show their appreciation for one another. This approach addresses all key drivers of feeling understood and valued:

- **Belonging and Trust:**

The recognition message should provide a **common sense of purpose and community**. Focus on how employees have contributed to the organization's successes or helped the organization through a tough time. Sharing this appreciation with a note of the vision for the future will help instill belonging and a trust in leadership.

- **Empowerment:**

Empower employees to **appreciate their colleagues**. Giving each employee a small budget to show another employee their appreciation empowers them to reward one another. Even without budget, encouraging recognizing one another is recommended.

- **Learning and Development:**

Consider rewarding employees with opportunities to **learn and grow**. This can be through internal growth resources or rewards that they can redeem for learning opportunities that interest them outside of work. BIW clients can redeem their rewards in our Mastery Marketplace if they want to use them to learn something new.



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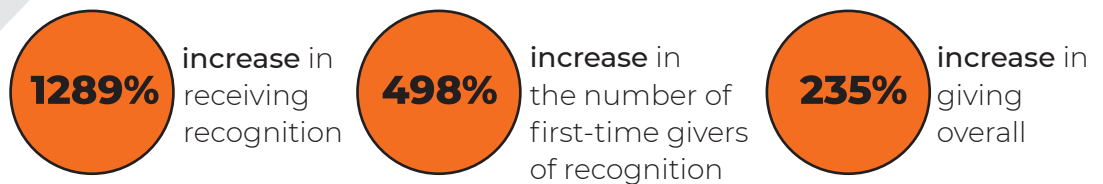
- **Recognition:**

By recognizing employees directly and empowering them to recognize each other, leaders will inspire a chain of recognition that can transform culture. This not only boosts morale but also reinforces positive behaviors and achievements.

The impact is clear. In our research, those who have received recognition as part of a team are twice as likely to say that leaders understand employees and are three times more likely to feel valued. Including an award can boost the impact: those who received an award recently are four times more likely to feel valued.

We analyzed the impact of this type of promotion on recognition behavior overall across more than forty programs at BIW. In addition to helping employees feel valued, Employee Appreciation Day celebrations resulted in greater engagement with the recognition programs.

Compared to the pre-celebration period, celebration periods result in a:



This impact outlasted the promotion. In the time period after the celebration, we also saw a 23% increase in receiving recognition with points in comparison to before the celebration.

Employee Appreciation Day is a golden opportunity for leaders to connect with their employees and show how much they are valued. The ripple effect of this recognition can spur a lasting culture of appreciation within your organization. Whether you are the CEO, a front-line manager, or an individual contributor: send a note to your colleagues and let them know they are appreciated.

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