

SEE IT.

SAY IT.

APPRECIATE IT!

**THE MANAGER'S
GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE
RECOGNITION**

DEBRA COREY

Free Introduction Chapter

Welcome to this document that contains the introduction chapter from my book titled *See It. Say It. Appreciate It!* I'm sharing it to give you a glimpse into the book, and into this important topic. I hope you find it helpful and that it inspires you to continue or begin your journey to deliver that all important appreciation feeling to your well-deserving employees!

Introduction

There's a phrase that is commonly seen on public transport in the U.K. which is "See it. Say it. Sorted." Every time I see or hear it, I think to myself, what a great phrase. It's a call to action, encouraging and driving people to take personal ownership and responsibility, and at the same time, work together to overcome a problem and challenge.

As they say on the British Transport Police website: "We've all got a role to play in keeping the rail network safe, and we rely on you to be our eyes and ears."

I love this phrase so much that I've decided to create my own version, my own call to action that relates to the important topic of employee recognition. I've changed the third part of the phrase from "Sorted," which refers to the idea of handing the problem over to someone else, to "Appreciate it!" This does two things:

- First, it makes the point that as a manager you need to **take personal ownership and responsibility throughout the recognition process** and not hand it off to someone else.
- And secondly, the process needs to **focus on showing appreciation**, doing so by looking for and appreciating your entire team's actions and behaviors through acts and moments of recognition.

With this in mind, my version of the website would say:

"As managers, we all have a role to play in keeping our businesses safe and successful by making our people feel valued and appreciated. Together, we are the eyes, ears and mouths, capturing all of the moments that need and deserve to be appreciated through recognition."

The math and science of appreciation

But why does it matter, why do we even *need* a call to action? We'll go into more detail shortly, but I thought it was important to tackle it from the start. So let me share how appreciation has statistically and scientifically been proven to motivate your people, improve their performance, drive business results and so much more.

Let's start with a piece of data from a study¹ that asked employees **what matters most to them**. The clear winner was appreciation, with 37% of respondents saying "recognize me," higher than getting more pay (7%), getting more training (6%) or getting a promotion (4%), showing how **appreciation matters the most to our people**.

The study also shows that **appreciation and recognition matter to our companies**, for when answering the question of what matters most to them, respondents also said that by getting more recognition, they'd **produce great work**. Two other studies found similar results, with one² reporting that 79% of employees said they'd **work harder** if their efforts were recognized, and another³ reporting that 82% of employees said that praise and recognition are leading factors in helping them **improve their job performance**.

A Little Thanks Goes a Long Way

A study was conducted at Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania to examine the effects of gratitude on fundraisers' prosocial behaviors in raising money to benefit the university.

A group of 41 fundraisers was randomly divided into two groups. One group made phone calls to solicit alumni donations in the same way they always had, and the second group, who worked on a different day, received a pep talk from their director, telling them, "I am very grateful for your hard work. We sincerely appreciate your contributions to the university."

The results found that the expression of gratitude increased the number of calls by more than 50% for the week, while fundraisers who received no thanks made about the same number of calls as the previous week.

The impact of recognition from a manager

And since this book is for managers, let me share four more pieces of data to highlight the impact that recognition from *you*, as a *manager*, can have on your team and your company as a whole:

- **Stronger business results** – A study found that when leaders and managers are actively involved in employee recognition, companies are 9 times more likely to have strong business results⁴.
- **Improved relationship with managers** – 58% of employees report that their relationship with their manager would improve if they were given more recognition⁵.
- **Improved morale** – 70% of employees said that their motivation and morale would improve if their managers would simply thank them more⁶.
- **Improved trust** – Employees who were recognized were 34% more likely to trust senior leaders and 33% more likely to trust managers, compared to those who had never been recognized⁵.
- **More likely to recognize others** – When a manager recognizes their people, they in turn are 2.5 times more likely to recognize others⁵.

Recognition releases happiness chemicals

Along with the math, believe it or not, there's also a science behind the power of appreciation. Without getting into too much detail, there's evidence showing that chemicals in our brain called "happiness chemicals" are released when we feel respected for the work we do and when we are praised. These chemicals — dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin, all influence how we feel, with sensations of happiness, closeness and joy, thus impacting how our body functions physically, mentally and emotionally.

Studies have shown that when you praise someone your words trigger their hypothalamus, which is the part of your brain that acts as your body's smart control coordinating center, having a key role to play in productivity. And that's because when the brain gets triggered to produce more of these chemicals through appreciation, they boost its work and your brain will work at its maximum to do its best.

To make this point when I run recognition workshops with managers, I normally hand out chocolates. And after giving them a moment to have a bite or two, I ask them how the chocolate made them feel, and the unanimous response is feelings of joy, feeling all warm and fuzzy. I then explain that the same happiness chemicals are released from your brain when eating chocolate as the ones released when recognition happens. And, the good news is that you don't have to work out to work off the calories from recognition!

Five key themes

Throughout this book I'll also be sharing a lot of strategies and tips to help you get recognition and appreciation "right," since I know from experience that this is not always an easy thing to do. To give you an idea of what you'll see in my book, I've pulled together five key themes that I strongly believe help you get and stay on the "right" path:

1. We need to **focus on the feeling of appreciation**, doing it in a way that is meaningful for our employees and to our company. It doesn't start with a fancy trophy, a beautiful gift or even money. It starts with a feeling that our people matter, that they make a difference, that they're seen, that they belong, and that they're appreciated for who they are and what they've done.
2. We need to have an **inclusive approach**, one where everyone is invited to the party, where we're all treated as individuals and which drives a sense of belonging through appreciation.
3. We need to **recognize the small inputs and contributions** that lead and add up to the ultimate outcome, and which keep our people and our work on track and in focus.
4. We need to **remove the "winner versus loser" mentality** that is often seen when we recognize only a few top people and ignore others that are also contributing to the business, thus changing recognition from a motivator to a demotivator.
5. We need to **remove the constraints and guard rails** that we've built into when and how we recognize our people, giving it more freely in a continuous and timely manner.

“

People will
forget what you
said. People will
forget what you
did. But people
will never forget
how you made
them feel.

”

MAYA ANGELOU

Getting started

I hope that what I've said so far has piqued your interest, and you're ready to learn how you can master the skills of appreciation and recognition. Here are four things to keep in mind as you get started:

1. **We need to move away from the ways of traditional recognition** – Throughout the book you'll notice that many of my suggestions and tips challenge traditional ways of recognizing our people, moving away from them and into new ways. My reason for this is because, to put it bluntly, *many no longer work!* Given all of the changes in the workplace and our workforces, they no longer meet the needs of our businesses and people. I encourage you to be open-minded, embracing the new ways and letting go of those that may be holding you back as you go forward.

We have a long way to go to make our people feel appreciated

Too many employees are not being recognized, with one survey finding that almost seven out of 10 (65%) employees have not been appreciated in the last year⁷. And no surprise, this large percentage of the workforce says that they don't feel appreciated. This needs to change!

2. **Much of what we need to do we learned when we were children** – In a previous book, where I wrote about challenging the ways we engage our people, I said that “maybe we've forgotten what we learned as children.” This is definitely true when it comes to recognition. If we go back to these childhood lessons, we were told to say thank you, to be grateful, and that it's the thought that counts, not the gift. It's key to keep these in mind in our new ways of recognizing people and meeting our goal of making them feel appreciated. They are even more important now as adults in the workplace.
3. **You need to find your own recognition style** – I will be sharing lots of strategies and tips throughout the book. Some you will agree with and some you may not. And do you know what? That's absolutely fine. I'm a big believer that in order for something to work and to be “right” it needs to be right for you. You need to find your own style when it comes to recognition, something that feels comfortable and genuine to you.

Later I'll share a story about a colleague who used to give his employees a bag of homemade chocolate chip cookies to thank them, which is great for him, but it may not feel right to you. I suggest that as you go through the book you highlight those that “speak” to you, and then use them, along with your own unique (and I'm sure amazing) ideas, to find and develop your own recognition style.

4. **Use the book as a guide** – And finally, let me say that this book is not a textbook, it is not a reference book, it is a guide. This means that it has a bias for action, giving you not just

theory and data, but practical and actionable strategies, approaches, techniques and tips to guide and support you to get things done. Pick and choose those that work best to help you create and drive an appreciation and recognition culture with your team and at your company. To help you with this, each chapter ends with a “call to action” section so you can start driving change right away. Each chapter also has an inspirational quote because, well, I do love a good quote!

So let's get started . . .

References

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About the author

Debra Corey is a highly experienced and award-winning HR leader, consultant, five-time author, world-class speaker, and was named one of the top 101 global employee engagement influencers. She’s had a varied and exciting career over the last 20+ years, working for global companies such as Gap Inc., Merlin Entertainments, and Reward Gateway to name a few.

Debra has moved into what she calls the ‘pay it forward’ part of her career. Acting as Chief Pay it Forward Officer at DebCo HR, she’s using her experience to assist and influence others to develop and deliver HR strategies in a rebellious way, pushing the boundaries and challenging the status quo to truly drive employee engagement.

