Employee Recognition: Getting Started

Employee recognition is a vital aspect of fostering a positive and productive workplace environment. By acknowledging and celebrating the achievements and contributions of employees, supervisors and unit leaders can boost morale, enhance engagement, and promote a culture of appreciation.

Guidelines

1. **Be Specific**: Instead of a generic "good job", highlight exactly what the employee did well. This shows you're attentive and helps them understand how to replicate their success in the future.

2. **Be Timely**: Acknowledge accomplishments as soon as possible. Catching someone doing great work in the moment makes the recognition more impactful.

3. **Engage in Conversation**: Use the opportunity to discuss why their actions were commendable. This reinforces the importance of their contributions to the team.

4. **Avoid Mixed Messages**: Steer clear of adding caveats like "Well done, but…" to your praise. Focus on celebrating their achievements first and save constructive feedback for another time.

5. **Document It**: In addition to verbal recognition, keep a written record of accomplishments. This will be helpful during performance reviews and discussions.

6. **Be Genuine**: Only give praise that you truly mean. Insincere compliments can undermine your credibility and diminish the impact of your recognition.

7. **Share it**: If someone else acknowledges a team member's work, make sure to pass that praise along. It fosters a supportive environment.

8. **Personalize it**: Every employee reacts differently to praise. Some thrive on public recognition, while others prefer a more private acknowledgment. Know your team and tailor your approach accordingly.

9. **Look for Opportunities**: Actively seek out instances of good work. Be aware of who is excelling and when and where these successes occur, as this can lead to more meaningful recognition.

Ideas for Supervisors:

Bravo Bulletin Board: Establish a bulletin board in a shared space and encourage employees to hang notes highlighting their colleagues' contributions. Supply materials like construction paper, thumbtacks, markers, or cards.

Secret Cheerleader: Encourage a culture of spontaneous appreciation. Provide sticky notes or cards for employees to write messages of appreciation to each other. Employees can leave these notes on their colleagues' desks or workspaces.

Engagement Opportunities: Encourage employees to participate in campus engagement events. These events, ranging from spirit days and team-building activities to campus-wide celebrations, offer employees a chance to unwind, bond, and have fun outside of the usual work environment. Attending these opportunities helps create a positive workplace culture where employees feel valued, energized, and motivated, ultimately boosting overall team morale and productivity.

Peer Recognition Program: Set up an online platform or nomination box for employees to nominate their colleagues. Establish criteria for recognition and determine the types of awards. Review nominations regularly and recognize employees through awards or features in a newsletter.

Spotlight Moments: Identify individuals or teams to acknowledge during staff meetings or special events. Prepare a brief message highlighting their achievements. This is often meaningful for the recipient and can be a source of inspiration for others. (See Guideline #8)

Staff Awards: Nominate employees who go above and beyond as a candidate for a Staff Award. Choose one of the 9 campus awards that the employee's work encompasses or nominate them for your unit's Living the Values Award. If selected as the award recipient, make sure to attend the ceremony honoring them and encourage your team to also attend. Even if your candidate is not selected for an award, share with them that they were nominated. This shows that their hard work does not go unnoticed.

Celebrate Milestones: Keep track of employees' birthdays, work anniversaries, and other significant life events. Plan small celebrations or acknowledgments, such as a card, cake, or announcement during a meeting. Ensure that the celebrations are inclusive and respectful of employees' preferences. (See Guideline #8)

Professional Development Opportunities: Identify relevant workshops, conferences, or training sessions for employees to attend. Allocate budget and resources and establish clear criteria for selecting attendees. Leverage these professional development opportunities to recognize employees for their outstanding work while promoting engagement and growth.

Leadership Development Opportunities: Encourage employees to attend one of [UM System's Leadership Development Programs](#). Participation in these programs comes with no associated cost for the department and helps create connections between employees across campuses. These programs help to develop and retain top talent by educating, advancing and empowering leaders through programs and trainings.

Lunch with the Boss: Schedule regular lunch sessions with high-performing employees. Invite employees to join the lunch sessions based on their achievements. Use the lunch sessions as an opportunity to recognize their contributions and gather feedback.