n-gen's New Book is Coming!

Employee Recognition and The Future of Leadership

January 2012

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A Sneak Peek...

We are pleased to announce that n-gen's 2nd book will be released in April 2012. Aligning to our mission of providing Generational 2.0 solutions, this book offers practical tips by focusing on the 9 core skills leaders need to effectively manage within a multigenerational workforce, plus what the future of leadership will look like. We provide the knowledge, practical advice and techniques required to be a successful leader. In the coming months, via our newsletters and webinars, we will be providing you with a brief synopsis of the key topics from our book. In this newsletter, we briefly highlight the two topics of employee recognition, and the future of leadership.

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Learn

Historically, recognition was given to employees based on their years of service with an organization through standard gifts at 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25+ years. In today's performance based work environments, the reasons for recognition have expanded in scope, as organizations realize that recognition should not only acknowledge past performance, but also should encourage future performance. Recognition programs are designed to increase the engagement levels of employees, so that they will be more likely to perform at higher levels. So the question becomes: what recognition programs and rewards are most effective in engaging all employees?

Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Motivations

Many organizations have moved away from unstructured recognition programs based on subjective assessments by leaders towards conditional recognition programs. Organizations and leaders detail exactly what conditions must be met in order for employees to be rewarded (for example, if we finish the project on time, the team will go on a boat cruise). The underlying philosophy is that employees are motivated by extrinsic rewards; they need to know what rewards, sometimes termed 'carrots', are available if they perform well. Employees crave 'carrots' - the rewards given by knowing what is expected of them, having the tools to do a good job, having the opportunity to do what they do best, and receiving recognition or praise for good work. This approach is based on the belief that conditional recognition programs are the best way to achieve better results and to retain employees. 'Carrots' are dangled in front of employees to spur them on to reach company goals, to boost morale, to increase profit margins, to drive more business, and to recognize success.

However, some researchers believe that the use of extrinsic motivators (carrots) through conditional recognition programs is based upon an antiquated concept of punishment and reward within the workplace. To be truly successful, leaders must look beyond the basic motivational factors of rewarding and look at what intrinsically motivates employees. Intrinsic rewards mean that employees feel joy, engagement and empowerment from being able to perform at a high level. Employees are more motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction of having mastered a task, being autonomous and finding purpose than any reward they might receive.

The most successful recognition program is a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The program must be dynamic, with leaders who are able to evaluate employees' motivators and identify which underlying theory resonates best for different employees in different situations. To be successful, you need to use your recognition program to extrinsically motivate employees with rewards that are meaningful to them. You also need to create a work environment that taps into intrinsic motivators by allowing employees to be as autonomous as possible, to learn and grow in order to achieve mastery of skills, and to understand the purposefulness of their work within the big picture.

Upgrade

For many Traditionalist employees, recognition was something that they experienced on rare occasions. Other than length of service rewards, which often weren't given until an employee reached ten plus years with an organization, recognition was not expected on a consistent basis. Today, for many Traditionalists, a pat on the back or a 'good job' comment at a team meeting is much appreciated. However, as with all employees, Traditionalists do enjoy being recognized for having achieved performance targets, as well as for their positive contributions to the organization and team.

Baby Boomers understand that recognition is an important mechanism to differentiate employees. In particular, 'star' employees are centered out for their exceptional contributions. Similar to Traditionalists, recognition was not a frequent occurrence for many Baby Boomers and was usually based on tenure within the organization and/or stages within their career. It is important for this cohort to have recognition conducted in public, in front of peers and other leaders, so as to communicate their value and importance to the team and organization. Because of this generation's desire to be acknowledged by senior leaders, items of recognition that highlight status within the organization are well appreciated.

Gen Xers were the first generation to expect recognition as a normal part of the employment experience. They believe that if they are doing an exceptional job, they should be recognized for going above and beyond in their role. Otherwise, they will be satisfied to just be a 'good' employee and won't strive to be 'great', if there aren't any rewards. They believe that recognition is possible in every role, at every level, in every organization, and regardless of what stage reached within their career. The rewards that appeal to this cohort must have value to them at an individual level, and not just be an item that the organization wants to give. Gen Xers also bring to the workplace a desire to recognize peers for doing a great job, or those who demonstrate organizational values.

Gen Ys have grown up in a world where they have been recognized constantly, often for just participating and not necessarily achieving results. In extra-curricular activities, everyone gets a trophy. In the classroom, each student is recognized for having a unique talent. This generation has brought into the workplace an expectation that recognition should happen frequently, for a variety of reasons, and occur at the team level, not just the individual level. Rewards should be personalized and unique to each employee. Since this generation has often been given a lot of material items, the rewards provided need to be creative, unique, hip or trendy in nature. Gen Ys not only want to be able to recognize their peers, but also expect that they can evaluate and nominate you (or other leaders) within the organization for a reward.

So if the goal is to increase employee engagement and deliver business results, the recognition expectations of all the generations need to be met, or managed, by a program that is comprehensive and flexible enough to address diverse needs. What appeals and motivates one generation may not be the same as what appeals and motivates another. You have to be practical by evaluating, consistently executing, and understanding what is important to your employees and what will engage them to high performance.

What's Next:
The Future of Leadership

Often asked in our sessions about the name and characteristics of the next generations, n-gen is beginning to observe socio-economic life-defining events, changes in technology, parenting and the school system in order to predict the characteristics. We have coined the next generation as the Global Generation aka 'The Globes' (and which encompasses those born after 2001). While globalization was an expanding concept for the Gen Ys, this generation is growing up in a global context as part of everyday life. The circle of impact on this generation has expanded beyond their cities, countries to the entire globe. While those on the cusp (born 3-4 years after 2001) may exhibit the traits of Gen Ys, there are several socio-historical factors that are bound to influence The Globes and to differentiate them from Gen Ys. We predict they are:

1. Iraq & Afghanistan War
2. North Africa and Middle East Uprisings
3. North American and European Democracy Protests
4. Real Estate Meltdown
5. Global Financial Crisis
6. Mobile Technology, Social Networks & the Internet
7. Parenting Style
8. Education System

These factors, in turn, will impact the future of leadership; leaders will need to be prepared to incorporate yet another generation into an already complex multigenerational workforce. Future leadership will have to be able to adapt and respond increasingly to the new generation's expectations, while managing the existing generational mix within their teams. Leaders will have to develop or improve the following skills:

* Information management
* Creating win-win outcomes
* Demonstrating Ethics & integrity
* Engaging the global workforce
* Demonstrating intellectual curiosity
* Complex processing of information into action

The future of leadership relies on analysing the internal and external factors that will impact an organization's ability to be sustainable, as well as the skills leaders will need to engage employees in the predicted environment.

Your Questions Answered

These two chapters will answer your questions about how to engage, motivate and drive results from current and future employees in order to achieve business goals by outlining how to:

1. Evaluate and upgrade your organization's reward/recognition program and identify what actions you can take to best reward/recognize your employees.

2. Identify generational preferences and understand the impact of these preferences on the effectiveness of your rewards and recognition program.

3. Differentiate between individual and team recognition, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

4. Involve others in the recognition process.

5. Understand the factors that have shaped the 'fifth generation'.

6. Learn more about the expected characteristics of The Global Generation.

7. Recognize the six competencies that n-gen believes leaders of the future will need to refine/develop.