



Showing Employee Appreciation

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Emmet Ore

Hello and welcome, everyone. Thanks for being here. We're going to go ahead and get started. My name is Emmet. I'm the marketing coordinator for Avitus Group, a division partner of Vensure Employer Services, and I'll be your host for the next hour. Today, our panelist, Robin Paggi, will be talking about the most effective ways to show employee appreciation. As always, there will be a Q&A session at the end. We're going to do our best to answer all the questions we get. But if we don't get to those at the end, we'll respond to those on an individual basis after the webinar. And just a reminder, this is being recorded. So, don't need to take notes. We'll share this recording with you after the session concludes. As always, this webinar is brought to you by Vensure Employer Services. Vensure is the leader of 20-plus PEO partners with clients in all 50 states. Today, we're going to talk a little bit about why employers should recognize employees, why most employee recognition programs don't work, the top five best practices and effective recognition programs, the five languages of appreciation, and how to create oxytocin. And as always, there will be a Q&A session at the end. So, if you hear a topic you need more clarity on, feel free to submit a follow-up in the Q&A box. As I mentioned earlier, Robin Paggi will be joining us today as our panelist. She's a seasoned human resource practitioner specializing in training on topics such as harassment prevention, communication, team building, and supervisory skills. So with that, I'll hand it over to Robin.

Robin Paggi

Thanks, Emmet. Many years ago in a job far, far away, I had a supervisor tell me that she had received an email complimenting me on my performance and that she would forward it to me because she knew how much I needed getting a pat on the back. Therefore, it probably comes as no surprise that I'm in favor of employee recognition. However, I'm not in favor of telling employees that they're being recognized because they're needy. So, let's go to the next slide and see why employers should recognize employees.

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What I'm about to say might sound a bit devious, but here it goes. The business purpose of recognition programs is to positively impact the business. According to a survey I read, organizations that effectively recognized their employees far outperform those that don't. Employee engagement, productivity, and customer service are about 14% better than in organizations where recognition does not occur. Now, let's break that down before we move on. To me, employee engagement is a lot like becoming engaged to be married. You're promising that you're done looking around and your focus and energy is going to be on the person you're engaged to. When employees are engaged in their work, their focus and energy is on the organization and their head isn't getting turned by some other organization. Engaged employees are energetic employees, so they produce more. Engaged employees are happier employees and they pass that happiness onto their customers while serving them. Additionally, employees who are effectively recognized tend to stick around longer. Companies with recognition programs highly effective at improving employee engagement have 31% lower voluntary turnover than their peers without recognition programs, or with ineffective recognition programs, happily, engaged employees don't feel the need to leave the organization, and they resist offers to do so. Of course, even without the business reasons, it's always a good idea to recognize employees when they've exceeded your expectations because they're human beings and as such, they need their pats on the back. But, we've got a problem. Most employee recognition programs are ineffective. So, let's go to the next slide to find out why.

Recognizing people isn't enough to increase engagement and retention. People need to feel appreciated to get those results and recognition does not equal appreciation. So, here are some basic problems with recognition programs. Generic actions, one size fits all. Have you ever seen an article of clothing that says one size fits all? Don't believe it. Obviously, it's not true because people come in all sorts of sizes. Recognizing everyone the same way is usually not effective because people are not all the same. Group-based. When I was in school, I very much disliked working in groups and getting a group grade. I would usually end up doing more work than the others because I wanted a good grade. But then, everyone got the good grade because of the extra work that I did. I promised if I ever teach again, I will not do that to students and I suggest not doing it to employees either. And then it's because rewards aren't meaningful. One of the things that employers tend to do is recognize people by giving them things that has the company logo on it. Some people really like to wear things with their company's logo on it, but for the people who don't, it's just a waste of money. So, here's a tip: if you see a lot of homeless people walking around wearing clothing with your company logo on it, choose another form of recognition. And then there's because rewards or recognition is infrequent. Now, let's talk about some infrequent programs. First of all, employee of the month programs, I'm not a fan...here's why. First, employees usually have no idea what they've done to win the award, neither do those who are giving the award. So, the winner is chosen based upon what? Who is most attractive? Who walked in the door recently? Who most needs a pat on the back? I guess I'd win every month if that was the criteria. Furthermore, the reward is usually meaningless. Most employees of the month are recognized by having their picture on a plaque that hangs in the lobby, which the employee never sees. Better yet, they get rewarded with an article of clothing with the company logo on it. Another problem is there's only one winner each month. So, what happens if two employees do something outstanding that's worthy of recognition? Do you recognize one this month and the other the next? If so, the second employee has to wait around an entire month to be recognized. By then, whatever he or she did that was outstanding is old news. Now, you might be thinking, "Huh, I don't have an employee of the month program. I'm good because I only recognize my employees every five years." Okay, that's a different problem. Josh Bersin is the principal and founder of Bersin by Deloitte, which is an organization that provides research-based information for strategic management purposes. He says that employers met about 46 billion dollars each year on plaques, statues, and other mementos with the company's logo on it, celebrating the fact that employees are still around. Evidently, lots of companies reward people this way because 87% of recognition programs focus on tenure those five, 10, 15, and 20-year awards. Unfortunately, this kind of recognition program doesn't work for two reasons. First, most people really don't care about those mementos and put them in a drawer. And two, it has virtually no impact on organizational

performance. No, I'm not going to talk a little bit more about that a little bit later on. But, let's look at our last point here. Recognition programs don't work when they're not perceived as genuine. Employers who have these kinds of programs, such as the tenure program, are indirectly letting their employees know that the employees have to be recognized because they're still around, regardless of whether the employer wants to recognize them or not. Alright. Now, that's the bad news. Let's move on to what you can do to implement or improve your recognition program.

So, the top five best practices in recognition programs include, drum roll, please. First of all, recognize people based on specific results and behavior. For example, if your company is all about delivering the best customer service, reward people for delivering the best customer service. This type of recognition reinforces what you're trying to do as an organization. It reinforces the mission, the vision, the goals of the organization, and keeps those things at the center of what employees are supposed to do. Remember, when you reward behavior, it gets repeated. And so, that's the kind of behavior you want to reward. Second, implement peer-to-peer recognition, modern recognition programs are social. They let anyone recognize anyone else. If you just allow supervisors to recognize employees, some employees won't ever get recognized because their supervisors just don't do that. Also, recognition coming from coworkers is sometimes valued more because the coworkers are in the trenches with each other and they see what the other is doing. Now, I want to tell you a quick story here about a peer-to-peer recognition program I implemented when I was HR director of a law firm. It was called the "High Five Award," and anyone could recognize anyone else with a High Five Award. And what it was, it was on a little piece of paper that was posted in the break room and employees could take the little piece of paper, or they can also get it online, and they could fill out the information about who was receiving the award, why they were receiving the award, and then they submitted all of those pieces of paper to me. So, at our monthly staff meeting. I would go through and I would read who was recognized for doing what and by whom they were recognized. And then those employees who are recognized got to choose between a five-dollar gift certificate to Starbucks, or movie theater, or Jamba Juice. And so, that was a nice way of people being able to recognize each other peer-to-peer. Now, supervisors could recognize as well. But again, a lot of the supervisors just thought that people were doing their jobs and didn't feel the need to recognize people. So, this was a nice way to give kudos to people who went above and beyond the call of duty, according to their peers or their supervisors, and got a nice little reward for it. Didn't cost the company much at all. Now, I will say we had our naysayers among the staff, people who are just, don't understand why people are getting recognized for just doing their jobs. But for the most part, people liked it. So, that's an easy thing to do. Also, share recognition stories such as like at staff meetings, but also in company newsletters, blogs, that kind of thing. Be careful with this, though, because something that I learned, which I find hard to believe, is that some people do not like public recognition. So, it's important to make sure that people are okay with being publicly recognized before you do it. Make recognition easy and frequent, and there are lots of online programs that are available now, especially because we're working remotely. Many of us are that are available. And so, it's just at a click of a button, and people can do it at any time and send out a shout-out to people who deserve it. And then, again, tie recognition to company values and goals, because those are the things that you want to keep at the forefront of people's minds and so that they're working toward achieving them. Now, I want to tell you a little story about the core values cut. When I went to work at a workplace, I had no idea they had core values. No one ever told me about them. I didn't see them posted anywhere. I found out that we had core values about a year or so after I started working there because we had a new CEO and that CEO implemented the Core Values Cup. And what that was, was a trophy that had inscribed on it the ten core values of our organization. So we had ten core values. I have no idea. And so, what the CEO did was he sent out an email about the Core Values Cup, and he said that he was going to recognize an employee who had demonstrated the behavior of the core values, and he said exactly what those behaviors were. And then he gave the employee the Core Values Cup. And then everybody knew what the core values were and then everybody wanted the cup. Alright. Well, not everybody, but I wanted that cup. And so, then the employee who received the Core Values Cup the following week did the same thing, recognized a coworker who had demonstrated one or more of

the core values during that week, gave the Core Value Cup to them to sit on their desk and sent out the email. And so, this happened. And before long, everybody knew what the core values were. And so that's how you do it. Now, this program worked for a while. Eventually, people got tired of it, so we had to change it up. But that's the thing about any recognition program. It's not going to work for everyone and it's not going to work forever. People will feel valued if appreciation is communicated regularly, if it's expressed in the language most important to the recipient. And I'll tell you about that in just a second. If it's individualized and delivered personally and it's viewed as being authentic. So, in addition to these five best practices, I've got a couple of other things that you can do. And let's go to the next slide and see what the five love languages of appreciation is all about.

You might remember a Capital One commercial that ran years ago. Comedian Jimmy Fallon stated, "According to research, everybody likes more cash. Well, almost everybody." And then Fallon turned to a toddler and asked if she would like more cash, and she replied, "No." And Fallon then said, "But it's more money." And the little girl threw Cheerios in Fallon's face in response. Employers often try to show their appreciation to their employees by giving them more money. And at the end of the year, sometimes a cash bonus. And you would think everyone would feel valued and loved because everyone loves cash. But, does the cash really do the job of making employees feel appreciated all year long? So, I don't know if you've heard of the book *The Five Love Languages* by Dr. Gary Chapman. If you haven't, you need to read it. And so, I'm giving you a homework assignment over the holidays, get that book and read it, because it is a life changer. It is a relationship changer. So, in this book, Dr. Gary Chapman, who is a marriage counselor, identified five ways that people generally show their love and feel loved. And Chapman and Dr. Paul White, who is an organizational psychologist, took the concept, applied it to the working world, and wrote *The Five Languages of Appreciation In the Workplace*. So, if you're not going to get *The Five Love Languages*, at least get this book. And no, I don't make any money off of recommending these books to you. I just value them highly. So, let me go through the five love languages and tell you how it works at work.

The first is words of affirmation. People who speak this love language often show their love and appreciation for others by telling them. According to Chapman, verbal compliments, words of appreciation, these are powerful communicators for these folks. In addition to showing their love through words, they tend to hear whether they are loved by others through words as well. And so, they happen to say, "I love you," quite a bit. Now at work, we're not really supposed to tell each other we love each other. But words people, excuse me, are quick to compliment others and usually like receiving compliments as well. So, that's how you know who and how to identify them. Now, do people who thrive on words of appreciation, appreciate cash? Sure, they do. However, receiving cash once a year doesn't make up for a year without verbal affirmation. It doesn't fix it. Next is quality time, and those who speak this love language show their love and appreciation for others by spending quality time with them, and they tend to determine how others feel about them by the quality of time that is reciprocated. Chapman said that quality time means that we are doing something together and that we are giving our full attention to the other person at work. This would translate into keeping appointments and giving others your undivided attention when meeting with them. People who thrive on quality time with those who are important to them probably like to receive a cash bonus. However, receiving cash once a year doesn't make up for a year of missed meetings and interrupted conversations. Alright. Now, we'll talk about acts of service. People who speak this love language, demonstrate their love and appreciation for others by doing things for them. And at home, it could be things like changing the oil in the car, picking up the dog poop in the backyard before the family comes over. It's just the normal stuff that people do. Now, Chapman says they are only expressions of love when they require thought, planning, time, effort, and energy, and they're done with a positive spirit. So make sure you're demonstrating your positive spirit when you're doing all of those things. And I will tell you, this is usually a male love language doing stuff. Now, not always, a very good friend of mine, a female friend, is an acts of service, has an acts of service love language. And it is apparent wherever we go, she takes care of me. If we are going out to dinner, she pipes up and lets the server know my friend here is a

vegetarian. She cannot have any meat touch anything on her plate, please. When we go someplace and she'll say, "Robin, do you need another glass of wine?" Of course, I do. So, she goes and gets it for me. "Do you need a piece of cake?" Of course, I do. So, she'll go get it for me. So, she's taking care of me and I buy her awesome gifts in return. So, hopefully she gets it. So, at work acts of service could include covering for an employee while she attends her child's school play, when they get to do that again, or pitching in to help an employee meet an important deadline. So, those who determine whether others care for them through their acts of service undoubtedly like cash, too. However, receiving cash once a year doesn't make up for a lack of helping out throughout the entire year. Gifts, by the way, gifts is my love language in case anybody cares. So, people who speak this love language usually show their appreciation for others by giving them carefully selected gifts. Unfortunately, they tend to feel loved only if a gift is carefully chosen just for them. Chapman says you must be thinking of someone to give him a gift. The gift itself is a symbol of that thought. It doesn't matter whether it costs money. What is important is that you thought of him or her. And I want to emphasize that because I know when I say I'm a gifts person, people think, oh, people have to buy your love and affection. But, this is the way it works. When I was teaching, I was drinking diet Pepsi quite a bit and I would go into the classroom that I taught at the college and I would put my stuff down and then I'd go to the break room and I'd give myself a diet Pepsi and then I'd bring it back and I drink it during class. So a new class started, a new group of students, and first night I went and I got my diet Pepsi and I came back the second night of class, I walked into the classroom and there was a little can of diet Pepsi cola, diet Pepsi sitting on my table where I put all my stuff. So some student went, bought that diet Pepsi, came back, put it on my desk so that I would not have to go and buy it myself. And that touched me tremendously. Now that diet Pepsi at the time cost a dollar, a dollar fifty, don't know. So, it's not that it has to be costly gifts. It is thoughtfully gifts or thoughtful gifts, because I don't think thoughtfully a word it is now. So, that's the whole point of it. Now, let me tell you how it works, on the other hand, is that people who are gifts, people tend to read into whether people like them or not based upon the gifts they give them. I have been a vegetarian for ten years and everybody in my family, everybody in my world pretty much knows that I've been a vegetarian for ten years. No meat whatsoever. So one Christmas, a few years ago, one of my brothers bought me a gift certificate to Dickie's barbecue for my Christmas present. So to me, that says you're really not paying attention, are you, because you can't go to Dickie's barbecue and get a salad without meat in it. So, that's the kind of thing. And people who say, well, it's the thought that counts and gifts people are usually, "well put some thought into it, please." So, I really had to control not thinking that people don't care about me because they're not thinking about what gift they buy me. But, just for those of you who have gifts people in your life just know that that's what they do. And then finally, physical touch. Now, those who speak this love language show their love and appreciation for others through physical touch: hugging pats on the back, hand-holding, other stuff. HR professionals tend to frown on this stuff at work, especially now because of COVID-19, although a handshake, a fist bump, a high five could safely be used to show appreciation prior to the pandemic. You're probably aware that last April, Dr. Belcea said that I don't think we should ever shake hands again, to be honest with you. So, we'll see what happens. But, those who determine how others feel about them by their physical contact undoubtedly like cash bonuses. But once again, it doesn't make up for a lack of the fist bumps, and the handshakes, and the high fives, or the elbow bump, which might be in our future. So, people speaking different love languages is like someone who speaks only English, trying to communicate with someone who speaks only Spanish. You can talk as loud as you want and you can enunciate your words, but you're still not communicating. You need to learn the other person's language in order to get the message across. And what I meant by this being a relationship saver is because if you speak one love language, but your significant other speaks a different love language, chances are you're not communicating your love in a way that is being recognized and felt, and that causes problems. So, when you learn to identify people's love language and you do those things for them, such as with my friend, if I would actually get up and go get her something instead of letting her wait on me. When you learn to speak their languages, then they feel the love and appreciation that you feel for them. So, now you're probably thinking, I don't have the time or the inclination to determine the love languages of my employees and they don't want my cash. I'll keep it up. Please, don't refrain from giving people cash if you want to,

but consider putting the cash in a carefully selected card with a few nice words written, especially for that employee, inside and giving them the card during a private moment with an elbow. You'll communicate your appreciation in every language and all of your employees will feel it. And remember the love languages throughout the entire year, not just at the end of the year. Demonstrate an appreciation for employees just once a year has the same effect of demonstrating your love for your significant other once a year. If they don't feel love, they might look for it elsewhere. So, I encourage you to go online and get the five love languages of appreciation quiz, download and make some copies of it, and give it to your employees, have them complete it, talk about it at your next team building session to see how you might be able to appreciate people more. Alright. One more thing to tell you about going on to the next slide, how to create oxytocin.

Oxytocin is the well-known love hormone that's created when we feel loved or appreciated and people who work under the influence of oxytocin perform better at work. Yes, they are under the influence. And yes, I am suggesting that you get your employees to fall in love with you, but just a little bit. So, here's how to do it. First of all, be present. This means interacting with employees face-to-face when we get to do so, as well as focusing all your attention on them during these interactions instead of your computer or phone. Now, this might sound familiar. People whose love language is quality time, being present, the face to face, focusing all the attention on them, helps speak their language. But I will tell you, I told you I am a gifts person. And that's true at work and at home, because sometimes we differ at work and at home makes life a little bit more complicated. But when I am interacting with people at work, I'm a quality time person or that really kicks into gear. I rate high on that as well. When I am talking to somebody and they're on their phone or their computer or paying attention to other things, I just feel devalued. And so, even though somebody is not a total quality time person, those moments kick it into high gear. So, always be present with everyone. Be truthful. Be honest with people. People cannot connect with other people who are not authentic and honest with them. This includes telling employees when they have not met your expectations. And I know sometimes you're thinking, "Well, if I tell people they're not meeting my expectations, then that's going to hurt their feelings. And that's not going to make them feel oxytocin." Quite the opposite. When you don't tell people the things they need to hear, they cannot benefit from your feedback. And if they don't benefit, they cannot learn and grow. And so, you're actually doing people a disservice when you are not truthful with them. However, the next bullet point is important for some of us, and that is be tactful.

So say what needs to be said in a way that doesn't destroy people. So be honest, but don't be brutally honest. Be tactful, choose your words very carefully, be personable. What does that mean to me? Being personable is, I allow you to see me as a person and I want to see you as a person. Now, that doesn't mean that you get involved in each other's lives, it's that you get to know each other a little bit besides just work. So, having a conversation now and then about something other than work allows people to get to know you a little bit better. And when people know each other a little bit better, they tend to like each other a little bit better. Not always, but a lot of times. Now, if you are uncomfortable sharing personal things about yourself, choose something that's not that personal. For example, I'm an animal lover and just about everybody in my life knows that I'm an animal lover as well as a vegetarian. And those two go hand-in-hand, right? And so, I'm very comfortable talking about my animals and how many have I've had. And I enjoy sharing that information with people. I want to hear that information from them. I want to see pictures of their dogs and cats. I do. And so, those are safe things that people can talk about that allows people to see you a little bit more without revealing really personal information.

Next, resolve conflicts. And again, there are some people they hate conflict. And if there's anything that seems like it might be a confrontation or a conflict, they head in the opposite direction. And that is not a good thing to do. First of all, conflicts build walls, and the bigger the walls get, the more we cannot connect and we will not be able to connect. And then the other thing, if you're in a supervisory position and you know that people have conflicts, it is important to get in there and help them resolve it, then you might think, hey, well, we're all adults. They can resolve their own conflicts.

I spend a lot of time mediating conflicts, which I really enjoy, not between me and somebody else, but between other people. And the reason that employers hire me to mediate conflicts between their employees is because the employees don't know how to do it themselves. So, one of the things that is being done in some schools is they are teaching conflict mediation. So, the kids are learning how to tell other kids when they're upset with them and kids are being trained to jump in and help resolve. And if we all would have learned that by the time we become adults, we might know how to resolve our own conflicts. Unfortunately, most of us were not taught that. We just learned how to resolve our conflicts by watching other people. And for the most part, they didn't do a good job of showing us how to do it. So, that's why I get to teach people how to do it and how to do it for them. So, resolving conflicts can help. Sure, it's going to be painful for a moment or so while you're talking about the conflict. But afterward, people become even closer when they're able to resolve the conflicts between them.

Next is apologize. Now, I'm like the words "I'm sorry," as opposed to "I apologize," but I do informal surveys and people say either one is fine with them. They don't care. To me, "I'm sorry," is a little bit more authentic, than "I apologize." But anyway, say you're sorry when you've made a mistake. Now that sounds obvious, but people in positions of authority often have the misguided notion that they always have to be right. And if you're always right, then you're never wrong. So, there's nothing to apologize for, right or wrong. One time in a job far, far away, I had a boss who made me really mad, so mad that I was seriously contemplating packing my stuff up and heading out to see what else was available. My boss came to me and said, "I messed up, I am so sorry," and I decided I was going to stay, that was a game-changer. Now, a lot of people can't afford just to pack their stuff up and go to the next job, but they pack up mentally and emotionally and move on, and they engage in something called presenteeism, which means my body is here, but my heart is not. And so, that's what some people do to leave the organization. It's even worse because they stay, but their heart and their mind is gone. So, apologies take a lot of guts sometimes for people who just hate to apologize, but it is a game-changer if you do it. Next, keep people in the loop. People need to have information, and one of the things if we've got stuff going on and we're not telling people about it, they will make up the information and what they'll make up is going to be way worse than probably what's actually going on. And so, tell people what's going on. Provide monthly or at least quarterly updates on finances, new clients, operational changes, anything that you possibly can, letting people know who left the organization, who's come into the organization, everything that you possibly can, and do it in a variety of ways. You've got your meetings, but then there are people who miss the meetings. So follow up with emails, have an intranet where you're posting information about what's going on in the company. So, you want to make sure if people want information that it's readily available for them because again, if they don't have it, they'll make it up and they'll tell other people. And then you'll have some conspiracy theories and things going on that are very damaging to the organization.

Provide social opportunities. When we can all get back together again, but you know what? You can still do it over Zoom or whatever. And so, that's one of the things that I think is really important. And I was a little surprised this last week. I'm in California and we had to go back to major shut down again. And so, we were venturing out into our workplaces and socially distancing. But, we were there. And then now, we had to come back home. And I was surprised that my husband, who is not a really social person, was really upset one day and he was upset because he didn't get to see his colleagues. He was upset because they were all having to go back home and he couldn't interact with them and I thought that was really sweet. And they all got on his phone call and they all checked in with each other to see how everybody was doing. And he felt much better as a result. And I just thought, wow, that is really telling when someone like him is so affected by not being able to see his coworkers. So, especially now, provide social opportunities. If you're like us and everybody's social distancing at home and you can have your happy hours, you can have your bingo, you can have your holiday parties, you can have all sorts of things through the computer, it's better than nothing. Now, when we get to go back to work, you don't have to foot the bill for a lavish party. Just bring us some cookies or pizza that

employees can munch on while chatting. And here's another thing, too. When we all go back and we're sitting in our meetings, one of the things that people have a tendency to do when they're sitting there waiting for the meeting to start is to scroll through their phone and see what's happening on there. And one of the things you might consider is to ban technology so that people actually have to sit there and probably talk to each other before the meeting starts. And that provides a nice little social opportunity. I remember one time I was sitting at work waiting for a meeting to start and I just turned to my neighbor and started talking to him and found out all sorts of interesting things about him. And I liked him better as a result of that. And that's what's supposed to happen because when people get to know each other and connect, they work better together and then finally celebrate successes. Employers and supervisors who think that people are supposed to do a good job and therefore shouldn't have to be thanked for doing so, need to think again. So, celebrate the sales goals, the milestones at work, anything that you can possibly do to let them know that you care about them. And another thing to consider, celebrate their personal successes and milestones. They got married. They had a baby, they graduated from school, they got another certificate, whatever it was they did, so that they know that you value them as a person and not just what they can do for the organization. So in closing, when your company embraces a modern recognition program like the ones that I've talked about and people start thanking each other, trust and engagement go up. And what does that do? That improves employee morale, quality, productivity, and customer service. All right. That's all I got for you. Do you have any questions for me?

Emmet Ore

Thanks, Robin. And once again, here are the instructions for submitting questions, and I'll just dive right in here. What can employees do if their employer doesn't believe in recognition programs?

Robin Paggi

Well, the first thing they can do is have their employer watch this video that will be posted to the Vensure website as all of our webinars have been. But, if your employer doesn't want to spend 40 minutes listening to a video, then present the business case for recognition programs. Most recognition programs do cost a little bit of money, and sometimes people do not understand the value of that investment. But if you are able to demonstrate that before the recognition program, this is what our productivity, our retention, our customer service, whatever, this is what it looked like. And then let's see what it looks like after we implement a recognition program and see if there is any difference. And if there is and things have improved, then we should probably keep doing it. But one of the things that you can do, too, is look at the things like turnover. Turnover is an indication that people are unhappy. Voluntary turnover, I mean, we've had to lay off a lot of people. But when people are voluntarily leaving the job, especially during a pandemic, that is an indication that people are unhappy. And how can you make people feel happier? One of the things you can do is show them how much you appreciate them. So usually people don't want to do things that cost money. But, presenting the business case on really it's an investment that will get a return then that usually persuades them.

Emmet Ore

Thank you. What should I do if I want to start a recognition program?

Robin Paggi

Well, you've got some ideas that I provided for you, but these aren't the end-all, be-all. And so, do some research first and see what is out there. And then instead of just jumping into it and hoping it works, talk to employees about what they think about the different things that you'd like to do and just say we want to do a recognition program, but we want people to feel appreciated. And so, here are some ideas we have. What are some ideas you have? You might get a little committee together. And I know sometimes people don't like that word, but don't try to do it all yourself. Get some help.

There are people who love to be on these types of committees that definitely ask employees what it takes for them to feel appreciated. So, you make sure you're not wasting your money on implementing something that you think is a good idea. But they don't.

Emmet Ore

Okay, are there ever any concerns about over recognition?

Robin Paggi

Yes, and that's one of the things is that you don't want to recognize people necessarily for just showing up at work unless you've got a big problem with that. So, again, the point of a recognition program is for the organization to benefit from it. That's the business reason for it. And so, anything that you need to be improved, that's what you pinpoint and recognize people for doing those things that improve. But certainly, you've got to be careful, for example, of doing things on a regular basis. So once again, in a workplace far, far away, we used to have donuts every Friday morning and every Friday people would come in and there'd be all these donuts. But one day, the person who was supposed to go get the donuts, couldn't go get the donuts. And so, people showed up and there were no donuts. Now, do you think that people went, "That's okay because we have donuts every other week?" No, they did not. They were mad because there were no donuts. They didn't eat breakfast because they knew there would be donuts. Now, they had to go out and get some food because they were hungry. And so, yes, that is the danger of having recognition programs where people are expecting some type of recognition for doing things. So, it is tricky to do things more frequently so that people feel appreciated, but not so frequently that it becomes an expectation and just a part of their job.

Emmet Ore

Got it, thank you. Okay, what should employers do to recognize employees that have previously been recognized with a plaque in a way that doesn't make anyone feel left out now that the company has changed the way it recognizes people?

Robin Paggi

Well, once again, I would check in to make sure that there are people who still want that plaque. So, my bias shows through in talking about plaques and things with company logos on it because I'm just not a fan of them. But there are some people who really love that stuff. And so don't just throw it out simply because I've said that they're not the end-all, be-all that people tend to think they are. Check in with employees and see what they like and how they want to be recognized. And when you do that, it's hard to fail.

Emmet Ore

Okay, if we start a program like the high five reward, how do we ensure that it isn't the same employees that are nominated or win each time? We're a small company of only 15 employees.

Robin Paggi

Yeah, and that's one of the things that it gets tricky and why it don't work for forever is because that was one of the things that would happen at the law firm that where I implemented that program, is that after a while it was the same people over and over who were being nominated. And so, especially when you have only 15 employees. So again, research all the different things that might be available, talk to employees about what they'd like to see and what would be fun for them and just know that any kind of program you implement, there are going to be drawbacks. There are going to be people who don't like it and it's not going to work for forever.

Emmet Ore

Okay, what is the thought on recognizing employees for good attendance?

Robin Paggi

Well, that's one of the things is that if you want people to show up for work, then rewarding them for it, but it becomes a problem sometimes because then people show up when they're sick and we certainly don't want that, do we? So, that is one of the things to consider. As I said, with every kind of recognition program, there are going to be some drawbacks. But if you want people to show up for work, make sure that if you reward them, they're showing up healthy and they're not killing themselves to get to work when they shouldn't get to work simply because they want a reward for it.

Emmet Ore

Got it. Which program could replace the employee of the month?

Robin Paggi

Well, I think that employees should be able to be recognized at any time. And so, and anybody should be able to recognize anybody else. And so, that's what should replace it, is that if you've got the high five or anything else, it should just be, not just about one person once a month kind of thing. And so, just open it up more to somebody's gone above and beyond the call of duty, recognize them at any point and will make sure that it's a public recognition if they want it. If it's not so, it's not necessarily that we have to have this program that replaces it. It's just don't limit yourself to a program that only recognizes one person once a month.

Emmet Ore

Okay, well, hey, here's a little piece of cosmic irony for you. Someone said, "Thanks, as always, you're informative and fun to listen to when you give a person examples, when you give personal examples of your experiences."

Robin Paggi

Well, (appreciation for you) and I am a words of appreciation person as well. So, I appreciate that people like my personal story. Thank you.

Emmet Ore

Excellent. Well, if there are any other questions, just feel free to email us at webinarHRhelp@vensure.com. I think we'll leave it here. And thanks, Robin, for being here.

Robin Paggi

Thanks. And I just want to let everybody know this is the last webinar for 2020. And so, we're going to take a little break and we'll see you in January. We talk about interviewing, hiring the best, and weeding out the rest. So, have a very safe holiday. Can't wait till this year is over, can't wait for the new year to begin, and can't wait to see you on January 6th.

Emmet Ore

Thanks, everyone.