



User-Friendly Global Recognition

A CASE STUDY

With a 125-year history of working to make a difference, Merck is a truly global healthcare company. Its 69,000 employees around the world are bound by a common mission to discover, develop, and provide innovative products and services that save and improve lives around the world.

Whether helping invent the next breakthrough treatment or simply challenging and supporting one another for mutual betterment, Merck's culture is all about applied curiosity. Underpinning that culture are Merck's core values of patients first, respect for people, ethics and integrity, and innovation and scientific excellence.

This case study explores how Merck partnered with Workhuman® to implement a modern recognition and reward solution that allows for in-the-moment, peer-to-peer recognition anywhere in the world.



The challenge

The existing recognition experience at Merck was antiquated, to say the least. Recognition was not peer-to-peer – it could only be given top-down, from manager to employee. And since the nomination process was paper-based, no one was recognized in real time, in the moments it mattered most.

Merck's service anniversary program was also outdated. "Our vendor did not have local distribution centers, so we were dealing with tax and customs issues," explains Dave Watson, global solutions and relationship lead at Merck. "Many times, people didn't get their award for months after their anniversary."

The bottom line? "We didn't have a consistent global program," says Michaela Leo, director of compensation at Merck. "The experience as a Merck employee in different parts of the world was very different."

As such, Merck looked for a partner to help build a global culture of recognition and implement a solution that allowed employees to recognize each other quickly and easily.

The solution

Merck ultimately chose to partner with Workhuman to launch its first ever peer-to-peer recognition program, called INSPIRE. The program was launched globally in 85 countries on one day. “We treated it like a product launch,” says Michaela.

Helping launch INSPIRE were more than 400 ambassadors and early adopters around the world, tailoring launch events to their countries and cultures.

“Workhuman’s platform allowed us to improve every aspect of the recognition process, making it easier for employees to both give points and recognize each other, as well as redeem for gift cards and merchandise in every country,” explains Michaela.



Workhuman came to us with an innovative solution that allowed us to move into the digital space and make our recognition program more user-friendly.

MICHAELA LEO
Director of Compensation, Merck



The result

Excitement for INSPIRE has only grown since the program launched. There have been 400,000 recognition moments, with 72% of those between peers. Merck has also seen impressive adoption of the INSPIRE mobile application, with 84,000 mobile recognition actions.

INSPIRE has exceeded Merck's expectations for a more user-friendly recognition experience. "We don't have any training materials on how to use INSPIRE," says Dave. "The system is extremely intuitive. It takes two minutes to recognize somebody."

The ease-of-use means people are being recognized more frequently. "That builds a positive energy in the organization, which you just don't get with the infrequent cash awards," says Michaela.

+12

12-point increase on the recognition question in Merck's employee engagement survey

5x

Recognized new hires are 5x less likely to leave within their first year

72%

72% of awards have been peer-to-peer

Another tangible result of INSPIRE is a 12-point increase on the recognition question in Merck's employee engagement survey. Today, a majority of Merck employees say they have a positive recognition experience, which is a significant change from years prior to the launch of INSPIRE. Seeing this positive impact, Merck chose to increase investment in INSPIRE to create the best possible recognition and reward experience for employees.

"All of our line division leaders say HR should be doing more things like this. The business rarely talks about HR that way, but they're talking about INSPIRE that way all the time," says Dave.



It was an amazing experience and I am really energized to work with more passion, integrity, and hard work. I appreciate this kind of recognition from the organization.

MERCK EMPLOYEE

To learn how recognition can drive retention and engagement at your company, get in touch.

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