

How Does Recognition Improve Safety?

(And Your Bottom Line)



workhuman*



Safety is a critical metric and not just for obvious reasons. Maintaining a safe work environment is about more than protecting your employees and means of production – it also has a direct connection to your bottom line.

Work injuries cost \$171 billion per year. That includes wage and productivity losses, medical expenses, employers' uninsured costs, and more. It's clear that safety incidents have a notable burden on organizations and hinder business profitability. There's a solution for that: employee recognition.

Employee recognition is also tied to business outcomes because recognition done right increases employee engagement.

When employees are disengaged, workplaces experience 37% higher absenteeism, 49% more accidents, and 60% more errors and defects.

The connection is a direct line. A more engaged workforce makes for a safer workplace. Let's dig into how recognition can improve both safety and your bottom line.



How recognition influences safety

Recognition fosters appreciation, trust, and goodwill among employees. With these traits as cultural pillars, your employees will have a greater sense of collective responsibility for one another. Stronger social bonds among teammates means employees are more likely to be engaged at work because they care and have a sense of investment in the work they do.

A strong culture of recognition reinforces the idea that how we work is just as important as the results we achieve. Careful work is usually higher-quality work, directly impacting safety outcomes and overall production quality.

In fact, there is an 82% lower recordable injury rate for plants with strong cultures of recognition.

People also feel more seen when they are recognized. When employees feel valued in this way, they tend to put more care into their work because they know that their efforts won't go unnoticed. When efforts in both quality and safety get recognized, the cycle is further reinforced and the culture of safety takes hold.



A quantifiable impact

Safety incidents can be devastating. They have a serious impact on the employees directly and indirectly. Injured workers suffer physical and psychological harm and they may even find it difficult to participate in ordinary daily life.

Workers not physically harmed can still suffer by operating with a sense of fear and a loss of faith in existing processes and precautions. In short: Safety is critical to the wellbeing of your employees and thus your organization. And the numbers bear that out.

\$164B

of work-related injury costs
U.S. businesses every year.

99M

days of work were lost due to
work-related injuries in 2020.

Recognition has a direct correlation with safety incidents.

Research from Gallup and Workhuman® shows the profound impact of recognition on safety. If the median organization in Gallup’s database simply doubled the number of employees who strongly agree that they

received recognition for doing good work in the last seven days, they could experience a **22% decrease in safety incidents**. This would result in an estimated cost savings of **\$2,807,200 per 10,000 employees**.

Cost savings on reduced workplace safety incidents after doubling the percentage of employees who have received recognition or praise for good work in the last seven days.

Industry	Safety incident rate per 100 employees	10,000-employee company	
		Number fewer safety incidents	Cost savings
Overall	2.9	63.80	\$2,807,200
Manufacturing	3.3	72.60	\$3,194,400
Construction	2.5	55.00	\$2,420,000
Hospitals	6.1	134.20	\$5,904,800
Professional & Business Services	1.4	30.80	\$1,355,200

Safety incidents per 100 employees were calculated based on BLS data on total recordable non-fatal occupational injuries and illnesses. Results assume the typical cost of an organization per non-fatal medically consulted injury is \$44,000 based on available data from the National Safety Council and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The cost savings estimate for 10,000-person Professional and Business Services organizations were revised on April 3,2023, to correct an overestimation of cost savings.

A photograph of a warehouse worker in blue overalls walking past tall shelves of cardboard boxes. A yellow hard hat is captured in mid-air, falling from above. The scene is overlaid with a white, torn-edge rectangular box containing text.

According to Workhuman data,
manufacturing plants that gave
the fewest safety incentives had

**5x higher
injury rates**

than plants with the most
comprehensive safety
incentive programs.

Source: Case study with leading manufacturing company, Workhuman, 2017



How to use recognition to increase safety

A safety incentive program, also known as a safety reward program, is a formal workplace safety initiative that focuses on rewarding safety-conscious behavior at work.

These programs convey that the organization values safety, while the incentives promote buy-in among employees. And the incentives don't just compel employees to establish and maintain a safe work environment. They also serve as an educational tool to

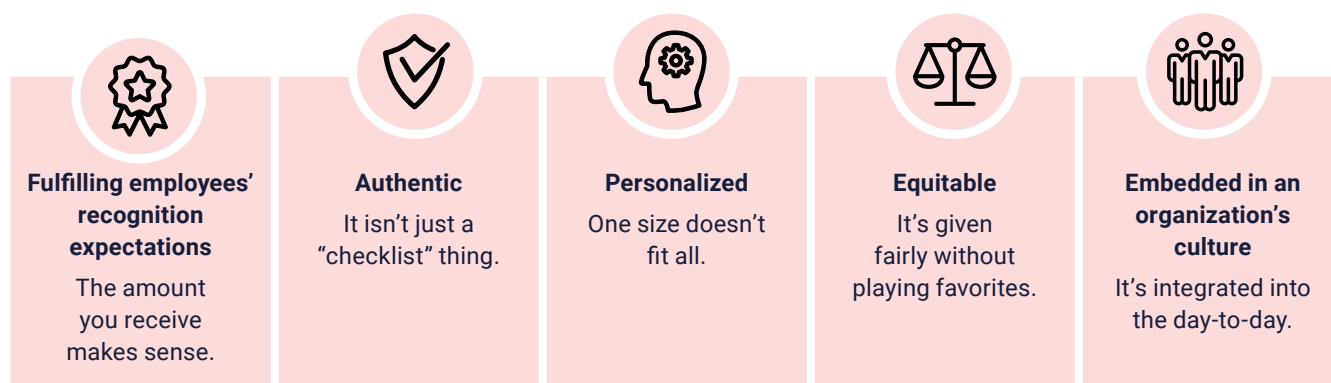
help employees better understand safety standards so they can readily meet and even exceed them.

This kind of proactive recognition helps reward the behavior that contributes to higher safety standards, rather than merely recognizing the result.

But not just any recognition will do. Gallup and Workhuman research from 2024 stresses that recognition needs to be strategic to be most effective.

To operationalize what impactful recognition looks like, Gallup and Workhuman have co-developed five essential pillars of strategic recognition in the workplace. At Workhuman, we call this “recognition done right.”

Five pillars of strategic recognition



Employees who receive recognition that fulfills at least four pillars are 9x as likely to be engaged.

Ready to take advantage of these benefits?

Learn more about how recognition can improve safety at your workplace and help your organization reach new heights.

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