

workhuman\*

# 11 Ways Employee Recognition Builds Better Managers

HOW TO HELP PEOPLE LEADERS INCREASE ENGAGEMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, AND RETENTION





**70% of the variance in an employee's engagement – the level of psychological commitment to work – ties back to the immediate supervisor. ... A good manager guides their employees to tap into their talents in pursuit of higher performance. A great manager leverages these opportunities to win employee buy-in and align an individual's purpose in life with their role in the workplace.**

**ROB DESIMONE**  
**Gallup**



“Social recognition is an investment with quantifiable returns: increased engagement, productivity, quality, and profitability; decreased turnover and absenteeism,” note Eric Mosley and Derek Irvine in their book, “Making Work Human.”

It’s true. Countless studies and volumes of research have proven the positive effects recognition has on many key business metrics that impact your bottom line. But there’s another area in which recognition has a meaningful impact: its ability to improve the process of managing individuals and teams.

Here, we’ll look at 11 ways employee recognition can help your managers realize their full potential.



## **How recognition makes managing individuals easier**

Leading employees is one of the most important roles managers play, and how well they fulfill this role can affect your employees' engagement, productivity, and tenure. Here are four of the ways recognition helps managers be inspiring and effective.

# 1. It provides a more accurate record of employee achievements.

Only 6% of CEOs think their organization's performance appraisal system is useful. How can you do better?

Recognition gives managers a body of information that makes their jobs easier. All the awards an employee receives are saved in a timeline accessible from within the recognition platform. When it comes time to create individual development plans or evaluations, your managers have an accurate, comprehensive record of each employee's achievements that were created in the moment – rather than trying to recall them months after the fact.

When it's time for performance reviews, managers should review recognition activity over the course of the previous year and bring that data and those relationships into the conversation as they discuss the values in which the employee excels. This provides an extra source of impartial data to strengthen the conversation and employees' trust in the process.

## 2. It makes giving feedback easier and more effective.

Recognition breaks feedback into small, individual moments. Managers can see and appreciate great work in real time – and in manageable bites. By making feedback a day-to-day routine, it becomes part of the regular course of the week rather than an imposing, overwhelming burden to deal with at the end of the year. And giving consistent, ongoing feedback helps managers positively shape behavior and reinforce values for their employees.

Check out this video to discover how different Workhuman® customers use peer-to-peer recognition to help manage their employees.

### **3. It provides a more diverse and accurate view of work.**

Because Social Recognition<sup>®</sup> can be given up and down the organization, it turns all team members into a manager's eyes and ears on the ground. They become witnesses to their colleagues' performance when the direct manager can't be there. This offers a more diverse, balanced, and rounded view of employee strengths and weaknesses because peers expand the scope of recognition and bring more voices into the conversation.

### **4. It motivates new employees.**

Recognition is a great way to orient new employees within the culture and energize them quickly and effectively. By recognizing new direct reports during their first couple of weeks and encouraging them to recognize others, a manager shows them firsthand what it means to truly practice your organization's values and embrace the behaviors that lead to success. In fact, at a consumer goods organization, recognized new hires saw 2x less voluntary turnover than their unrecognized peers.

Learn more about the power gratitude can have on new hires in this [Life at Workhuman](#) article.



**High-performing teams  
of today behave more as a  
network than a hierarchy,  
with shared authority and  
shared goals.**

**ERIC MOSLEY AND DEREK IRVINE**  
**"Making Work Human"**



## How recognition increases team performance

Coaching individual employees is undoubtedly important, but in today's modern, dynamic workplace, cross-functional teams and human connections are the way work gets done. Here are five ways recognition is an effective strategy for managing a broader team or department.



## 5. It illuminates how teams are connected.

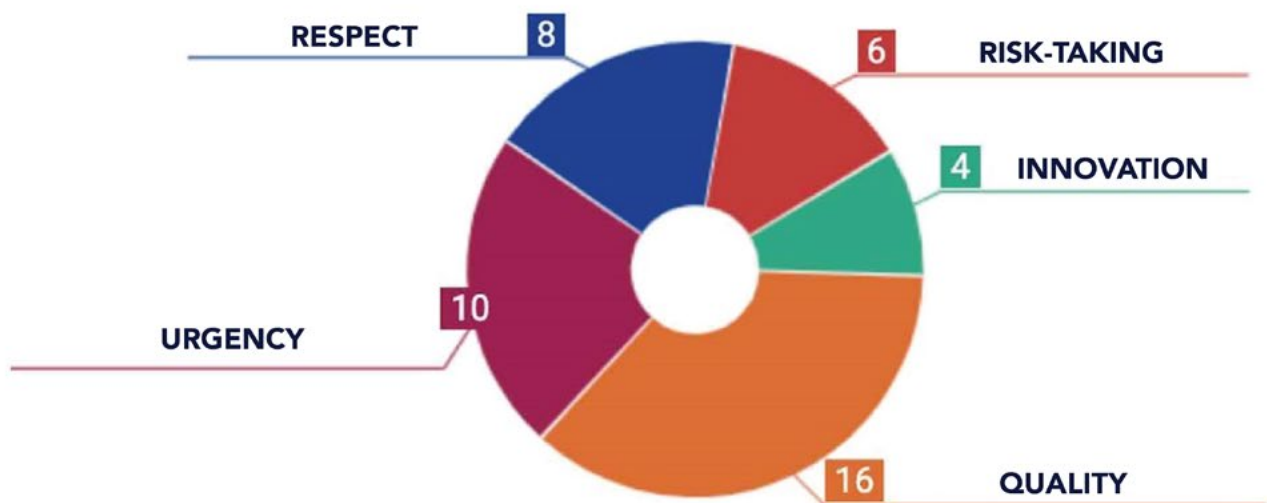
The powerful insights of a recognition platform make talent systems smarter while driving your strategy forward. Data reveals who is being recognized and which values are being practiced (and which are not). You'll also see what types of relationships your employees are forming within and outside of the department. These are all powerful and revealing clues into how well your employees are performing.

Recognition data gives you a visual map of the relationships within your team and how your team relates to others in the organization. Using this data helps facilitate deeper connections, increases departmental and interdepartmental flow, breaks down barriers, and makes it easier for your department to function.

It also shows the reverse – which departments have isolated or less engaged employees. This indicates where you may need to put more effort into helping employees communicate, collaborate, and recognize each other to realize all the goodness that comes with sharing recognition at work.

## 6. It reveals team strengths and weaknesses.

A recognition platform pools data on team members, giving managers a window into weaknesses or soft spots in their departments. Imagine, for example, you notice a team of engineers is getting numerous awards for quality, but few for innovation or risk-taking. This may represent an opportunity for you to encourage, instill, and reward more creativity and boldness in your team.



Number of recognition awards by value

## 7. It facilitates change management.

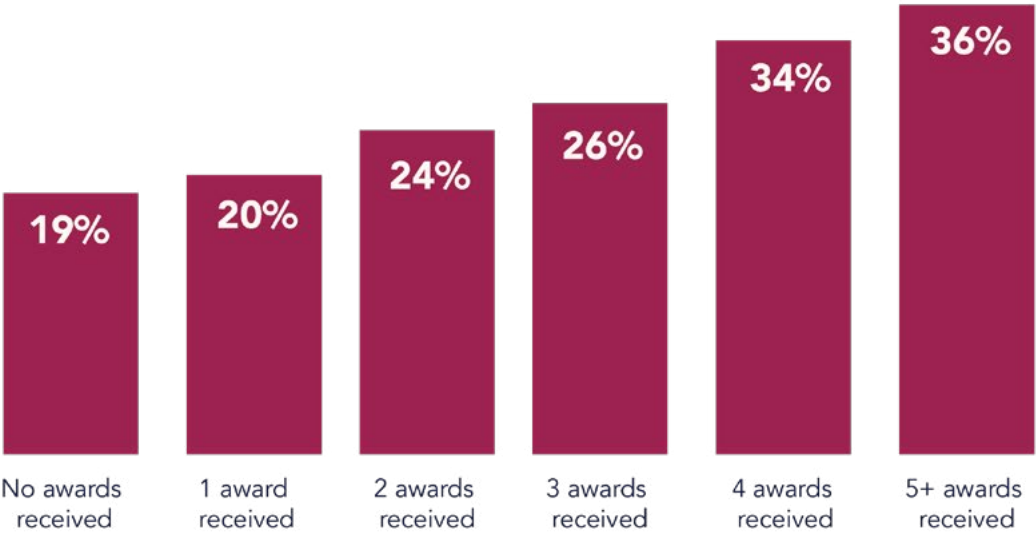
Change management can be a daunting challenge for many managers. According to data from Willis Towers Watson, 75% of change management programs fail – not because leaders don't have a great vision or aren't smart enough to pull them off, but because changing yourself is hard and leading other people through a major transition is even harder.

But recognition can help here, too. By recognizing and celebrating change management behavior, managers show department members what it means to embrace change. This kind of positive reinforcement helps mitigate the negativity and resistance that can often accompany unexpected change.

## **8. It boosts team performance and productivity.**

Recognition helps people leaders manage – and improve – the quality of team performance. Whether an employee is failing to work to their full potential, struggling to understand expectations, or disengaged in their work, these situations can be distracting and draining for a manager. Recognition helps managers have proactive, positive conversations with team members about what they're doing right, thereby lessening the need for future conversations about what they're doing wrong.

In addition, when an employee receives frequent recognition, they feel their work is valued and they're more likely to maintain higher levels of performance throughout the year. At one Workhuman customer, a technology firm, employees who received 5+ awards were nearly 2x as likely to improve their year-over-year performance in fiscal year 2019-2020.



**Percentage of employees who improved performance YoY (FY 19-20)**

## **9. It demonstrates the true value of a team.**

A manager's job can sometimes be more work when managing up and trying to secure additional headcount and/or promotions for high performers. Recognition can help there, too.

A recognition platform provides data that proves the team is meeting the goals set by senior management. Recognition reach, strength of values, and interdepartmental recognition activity all help to show senior leaders a more nuanced picture of the departmental performance and culture – and the team's contribution to the business.



## How recognition enhances business processes

Now that we've explored some of the ways Social Recognition – and the data it provides – helps leaders manage individuals and teams, let's examine how to put your recognition insights into real-world practice. Here are two additional areas where recognition improves processes.

## **10. It improves succession planning.**

Succession planning and the development of high-potential employees is an important tool for enriching organizational culture, motivating employee growth, and retaining talented flight risks. But it's easier said than done. How can you get external and impartial input to inform whom you should coach for promotion?

Recognition data lets managers visualize and identify cultural energizers and linchpin employees – those connected most strongly to their peers inside the department and across the company. These are the critical influencers who hold your culture together and are perfect candidates for development.

## **11. It helps people leaders self-assess.**

Finally, recognition is a wonderful opportunity for self-reflection. As managers receive awards and congratulations on their own recognition activity, they gain powerful insights into what's working and where there's room for improvement. For instance, managers can pool data on team members to get a sense of where their department might have weaknesses or areas of opportunity. This gives them the rare chance to recalibrate their focus and priorities as they develop as managers.

So there you have it: 11 ways Social Recognition can help people leaders nurture and inspire the individuals and teams they manage – along with how to use that knowledge to enhance existing management activities and business practices.

**Discover how peer-to-peer employee recognition can help you put these strategies to work.**



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