



# **The Powerful Link Between Employee Wellness and Recognition**

**A CASE STUDY**

**workhuman\***

For over 120 years, CAA Club Group of Companies (CCG) has been an innovative leader committed to meeting and exceeding the needs of Canada's motorists and travellers. The organization is comprised of two automobile clubs – CAA South Central Ontario and CAA Manitoba – that provide Roadside Assistance, travel, insurance services and savings to over 2.5 million Members. It also includes CAA Insurance Company, a national property and casualty insurance company, Orion Travel Insurance, a nationwide trusted travel insurer, Echelon Insurance, a leading specialty insurer, and CCG Advisory Services, a trusted advisor on life, critical illness and disability insurance.

Even with roughly 2,500 employees across Canada, CCG has built and maintained a reputation for caring for their employees as people and valuing them for more than just what they can produce.

This case study explores how **CCG and Workhuman collaborated to create a powerful and interlinked employee wellness and recognition strategy** that deeply improved company culture and aided in employee retention. Let's explore how.





# The challenge

As their company continued to grow and evolve, CCG needed a powerful strategy to unite their employees in offices across Canada. Leaders knew that showing appreciation was a powerful strategy for connection, so they set out to find a recognition program that could support their vision and values. They needed **a program with a social component where good news could spread quickly** to employees in different environments and time zones.



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright yellow V-neck shirt, is smiling and looking down at a tablet computer she is holding with both hands. The background is a blurred office setting.

## The solution


CCG's recognition program, Applause, which is powered by Workhuman, launched in 2015. **Applause helps CCG's employees come to work every day feeling seen, valued, and appreciated for their efforts.** In 2019, CCG added a digital wellness program to their offerings. This program reminds employees of the importance of caring for their mental and physical health.

Adding a wellness program alongside their recognition program created a strategy for connection and retention that supported CCG's values as an organization, which are Leading by Example, Caring, Being Innovative, and Collaborating.

Mara Notarfonzo, Vice President of Total Rewards for CCG, notes that, while employees don't always remember those values offhand, they can recite them quickly when asked which behaviors are recognized through Applause.

These two programs are inextricably linked to show how deeply CCG cares about every aspect of their employees' wellbeing. The ability to earn extra points through wellness challenges and initiatives in the recognition application helps them accumulate points more quickly and earn the rewards they want even faster. This leads to **greater cohesion between the programs, heightening the positive impact they have on the employee experience.**

Through the innovative nature of both these programs, employees at CCG have been able to collaborate much more efficiently. Giving and receiving recognition functions as a means of connection on both micro and macro scales within the company. These platforms facilitated better communication during the COVID-19 pandemic and now help employees remain in touch in a remote/hybrid environment. The feeds also function as a means of spreading positive news, increasing feelings of wellbeing and psychological safety.



## The result

Having interlinked recognition and wellness programs in place helped smooth the transition when CCG acquired Echelon Insurance in 2019. Giving and receiving recognition helped welcome new employees and increase cohesion between teams as employees adjusted to this change.



Employee recognition was important throughout that transition, and remains important today because it really gives our employees that sense of direction so that they know what they're trying to accomplish. Rather than being driven by financial results quarter-over-quarter, they're now focused more on the long-term and they're really driving results through behaviors that we're celebrating as an organization.



JENNIFER KEW

Assistant Vice President of Marketing and Communications at Echelon Insurance

CCG has seen 100% adoption of their recognition program. Their employees were enthusiastic to dive into the program and excited to keep up with it. The company has measured 24,000 unique recognition moments per year. This translates to a **15x increase in recognition from their previous program and a 30% lower cost**. Carla Spina, Vice President of Human Resources at Echelon Insurance, notes that individuals who have been recognized by their leaders or their peers feel a connection with the organization and realize that their contributions are making a difference.

Leaders have also observed that the frequency of recognition directly correlates to rates of employee turnover. Employees who weren't recognized through the Applause program had the highest rates of turnover, which speaks volumes about the power of gratitude within an organization. After that, turnover rates directly correlated to the number of Applause awards received per year, with **employees who received 11 or more (roughly one per month) having the lowest rates of turnover within the organization.**

Leaders at CCG have also observed that giving recognition can be just as impactful as receiving it, as this fosters a people-first culture of connection. It shows employees that they are deeply valued, both by their leaders and their peers, and fosters feelings of gratitude. Formalizing their recognition program has helped it become more impactful and made it easier to measure the results.



Applause platform



Combining their recognition program with a wellness program has helped CCG shift toward a culture of wellbeing and gratitude, which has enabled **stronger team building and more positive communication**.

There's been a much stronger cohesion in the way news spreads among CCG's Associates all across Canada, which has united their staff and fostered a connected, collaborative atmosphere.



**I love giving out recognition. It's the opportunity to say thank you for a job well done, a creative idea, operationalizing something, going live with a new project, or even just lending a helping hand. It's great to receive recognition, but I get more joy out of giving it to others. For CCG, it really reinforces the culture we're trying to achieve.**



CARLA SPINA

Vice President of Human Resources, Echelon Insurance

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

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