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LEADERSHIP
“Promoting a Positive Working Environment”

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Leadership Promoting a Positive Working Environment

Our agencies are faced with many challenges in the development, utilization and retention of employees. As leaders, we must learn to reward and recognize the efforts of those around us. Many people assume that money is the mainstay of motivation. However, in truth, the desire to accomplish extraordinary things is linked to basic human need: We all want to be respected for who we are and recognized for the things we do. While many leaders know this from experience, few know how best to act on it. We aim to *create a working environment that encourages employees to excel and recognize the valuable contribution being made by the employee*¹. Taking the initiative to say thank you is a relatively untapped leadership strategy. Yet recognition is probably one of the most powerful job motivators that we have available to us. Recognition is a powerful leadership tool because it is appropriate for everyone in your organization. Everyone in an organization can and should be skilled at recognizing the efforts of others. The keys to recognition effectiveness are in the honest passion and caring that drive it. These can be nurtured and enhanced by a management team who have taken the time to understand the value of developing a recognition strategy and who have taken the initiative to see that everyone in the organization has the necessary skills and tools. Today's employees have an increased need for support systems to help reduce the stress caused by workplace restructure, budget restrictions, downsizing and reorganizations. Rewards and recognition make good business sense and help people deal more effectively with a workplace in turmoil.

¹ South Carolina Governor's Office Executive Policy and Programs, Office of Victim Assistance Accountability Report for 2000-2001, Section III, category 1,5.

Recognition can impact an organization's effectiveness both positively and negatively. Organizations that encourage employees to recognize each others' contributions are rewarded with a healthier environment in which staff members openly and comfortably interact with each other. When you acknowledge and praise the positive, people are much more open in their relationships-- a key component of effective communication and a characteristic that most workers seek in a job. Recognition can be a cornerstone to an open-communication environment because it reinforces desired behavior and it creates an atmosphere of appreciation and trust in which people are more likely to communicate openly. People focus more on each other's positive contributions because these are brought to their attention through the recognition process. This is a strategy that should involve everyone in the organization and is most effective when initiated at the top. Modeling by senior staff set the tone for all employees as people watch and emulated the communication and recognition patterns of those in charge. Review your organization's communication and recognition patterns. How open are they? Are people encouraged to recognize each other's contributions? Do they provide input about all types of work-related behaviors, especially positive ones? Such communications must be consciously established and plans must be implemented to ensure that it is instituted and maintained. Recognition is a pulling strategy To be successful, the strategy must be converted to written plans that are shared. The plan must ensure that recognition vehicles are available to everyone in the organization. As the quality process has taught and emphasized, management must walk the talk.² (See Table 2-1)

² Joan P. Klubnik, *Rewarding and Recognizing Employees*, 659.314 KLUB

Employee incentive and other recognition programs present sound solutions when looking for ways to maintain or improve employee morale. It also helps to retain employees and increase employee awareness of the agency's objectives and/or mission. In recognizing individuals, we sometimes get lost in the ceremonial aspects. We think about form, but we forget substance. Such program will reward employees for a job well done, outstanding performance, and making suggestions for efficient performance and productivity.

It is the goal of this project to improve and/or to create employee incentive programs as an act of courtesy, reinforcement, validation and appreciation. A target date of October 1, 2002 is planned for implementation of various low-cost programs. The success and benefits of the programs will be measured periodically by staff evaluations and surveys.

In August 2002, focus groups of managerial staff and subordinates were conducted different times to discuss the criterion for programs. One-on-one interviews with staff were also conducted for confidentiality.

The recognition aspect can create a workplace that encourages employees to excel. When an organization recognizes individuals and/or team accomplishment, employees feel appreciated. Research into human behavior has shown that behaviors that get recognized are repeated. Success that is reinforced stimulates further success. When recognition is used sincerely and frequently, it creates a culture of success and mutual appreciation. In addition to the motivational influence of recognition, there is a matter of equity and fairness. It also enhances camaraderie and teamwork, motivates and energizes. Recognitions are opportunities! For most individuals, the act of recognition is more important than the type of recognition. It's a sign of appreciation that reinforces the employee's sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Without recognition, employees may feel taken for granted.³

Why Recognition Is Important

- *Encourages and reinforces performance excellence*
- *Creates a sense of fairness and equity*
- *Says " Thank-you for a job well done."*
- *Motivates and energizes*
- *Celebrates successes*
- *Creates winning attitudes*
- *Build self-esteem*
- *Enhances camaraderie and teamwork*

³**James Rollo, M.A., Performance Management, Guide for Employee Development, Chapter 10, Recognition.**

It is maintain that people will aspire to higher standards of performance when they are genuinely appreciated for their dedication and publicly recognized for their extraordinary achievements. More importantly, they extend a set of principles, practices and examples that show how to energize people to excel and then reach even greater heights.

- **Set Clear Standards...***the standards are the focus of the awards, as is the action of the award or recognition. The standards you set are your goals, as well as values or principles. It's certainly not very encouraging to be in the dark about what you're expected to achieve, or never to know where you stand relative to what's important. Only when you know the standards can you set your sights for success. By clearly defining the values and principles for which we're held accountable and by linking performance to those standards, leaders establish a benchmark for achievement. However, not just any standards will do. They must be standards of excellence. They must be inspirational, and bring out the best in us. They must make us feel like winners when we attain them.*

Pay Attention..... "I went through the office one day." This gives an immediate clue as to the kind of leader this might be; it suggests a wanderer, a walk-arounder, and a leader who is right there with you. That's a leader in the truest sense of the word---a venturer. A venturer is a leader who delights in "catching people doing things right." But it's more than that just catching people doing thing right; it's also paying attention and understanding the significance of their actions.

- **Personalize Recognition....** Invite the recipient's family to attend a special-recognition ceremony. Every time you plan an act of recognition, ask yourself, "What can I do to make sure this is special, dramatic, and unique for this person? Create symbols for certain kinds of recognition in your organization. Create your organization's Hall of Fame: an area for small plaques, or even handwritten notes, recognizing all the people who have done extraordinary things.

- **Tell the Story...** At the next opportunity, tell someone the story of your most meaningful recognition. Make the only agenda item for one of your team meetings that each person tells the story of his or her most meaningful recognition. Don't forget voice mail and e-email, these a good media for telling stories. Although people tend to want shorter stories in these formats, they are still helpful ways to disseminate good news.

- ***Celebrate Together....****Every celebration has a potential dual purpose. One is to offer social support, something that we know makes people happier, healthier, and higher-performing. The other is to honor an individual, group, or entire organization for upholding a cherished standard. Visit an organization that you know has a reputation for being a really fun place to work. Find out what makes them so inventive when it comes to celebration.*

- ***Set the Example....****Identify those experiences in your life that truly inspire you and then bring this kind of inspiration into your conversations with employees. Become more visible. You are supposed to be setting the example, and people have to see you doing what you say. Get personally involved in as many recognition events and celebrations as possible. If you don't attend staff celebrations, you're sending the message that you're not interested. That lack of interest is sure to be mirrored back to you.⁴*

⁴ ***Encouraging the Heart, A Leader's Guide to Rewarding and Recognizing Others,***
Kouzes and Posners, 658.4092 Kouzes

Recognition and rewarding employees can be a powerful and effective tool for enhancing an organization. The increased emphasis in today's business environment on individual and team productivity makes rewarding and recognizing employees vital to sustaining and improving workforce morale and motivation.

Recognition and rewarding employees help managers and other leaders determine what kind of rewards and recognition are best suited to their specific needs and organizational goals. It also allows leaders to take advantage of the power of recognition as a means of enhancing productivity and job satisfaction.

In recent study, **“When the Going Gets Tough” recognition matters more.** Key findings: Most (86%) of the five hundred thirty-nine (539) organizations surveyed have an employee recognition program and (62%) of those that don't are considering one. The majority of respondents (65%) felt they were doing more with employee recognition than they did three years ago. Their reasons: To improve employee morale (91%); to make employees feel part of the company (73%); and to influence employee retentions (70%). (See **Appendix A**)

Another survey, “**Are Men Harder to Motivate than Women? New Survey Says “YES”**”. The differences between men and women extend all the way to how they perceive rewards. The survey revealed that slightly more than half (51%) of women employees felt that they are always rewarded for a job well done, while only (34%) of men employees felt so.

The survey also revealed common ground between the sexes as well as areas for improvement in the way companies treat their employees. Most interesting was that the majority of respondents male or female believe they are not properly motivated in the workplace. Only (44%) of women and (48%) of men agreed that “my company knows how to motivate me,” suggesting that most corporations are missing opportunities to incentivize employees. Overall, respondents felt better about training: (78%) of men and (71%) of women said that they get enough training at work to help them progress. There were nine hundred (900) survey respondents. Of those, (75%) worked for companies with one hundred (100) or more employees, and (40%) worked for Fortune 500 companies. **(See Appendix B)**

Few management concepts are as solidly founded as the idea that positive reinforcement-rewarding behavior you want repeated-works. In fact, in today's business climate, rewards and recognition have become more important than ever for several reasons:

- *Managers have fewer ways to influence employees and shape their behavior. Coercion is no longer an option; managers increasingly must serve as coaches to indirectly influence rather than demand desired behavior.*
- *Employees are increasingly being asked to do more and to do it more autonomously. To support looser controls, managers need to create work environments that are both positive and reinforcing.*
- *Demographics predict that fewer workers will be available in the post-baby boom era and that those who do exist will likely have fewer skills than their predecessors. This new pool of employees have different values and expect work to be both purposeful and motivating.*
- *In tight financial times, rewards and recognition provide an effective low-cost way of encouraging higher levels of performance from employees.*

Studies indicate that employees find personal recognition more motivational than money. Yet, it is a rare manager who systematically makes the effort simply to thank employees for a job well done, let alone to do something more innovative to recognize accomplishments.⁵

⁵ **1001 Ways to Reward Employees, Bob Nelson, 658.314**

TABLE 2-1

Benefits to Organization

Costs to Organization

Stress reduction in employees – laughter is a stress reducer and results in less time away from work caused by stress-induced illness.

Actual time spent in designing and implementing the recognition program or process.

Greater productivity – recognizing what you want results in more of the changed behavior being performed, and as a consequence productivity goes up.

The time it takes to give the recognition.

Positive mind-set – results in more time spent focusing on the job and less on complaining.

Dollars needed for whatever is given – this can be to provide supplies for make-your-own recognition and money spent for more formal media.

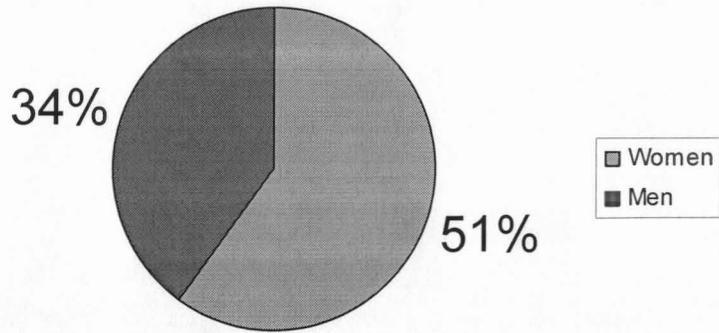
“Perk”-driven recognition – encourages greater productivity in both manufacturing and service environments; people like to work for tangible rewards.

The energy required to *teach* people how to give recognition, especially necessary if the environment doesn't currently support it.

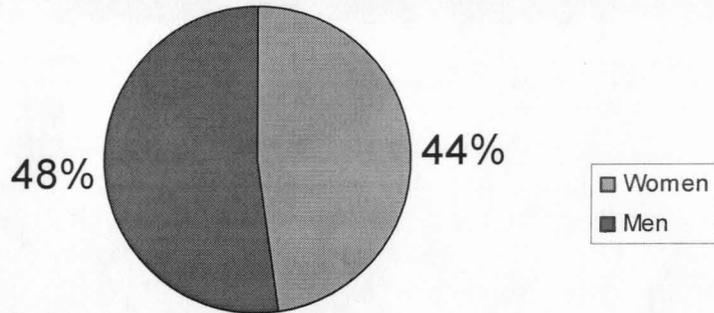
Lower turnover.

The costs associated with instituting a new process.

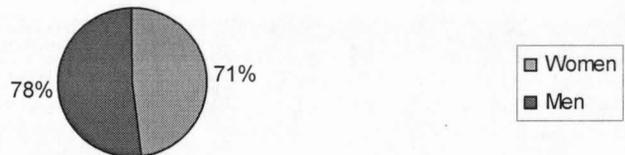
Percentage of Women and Men who felt they were always rewarded well



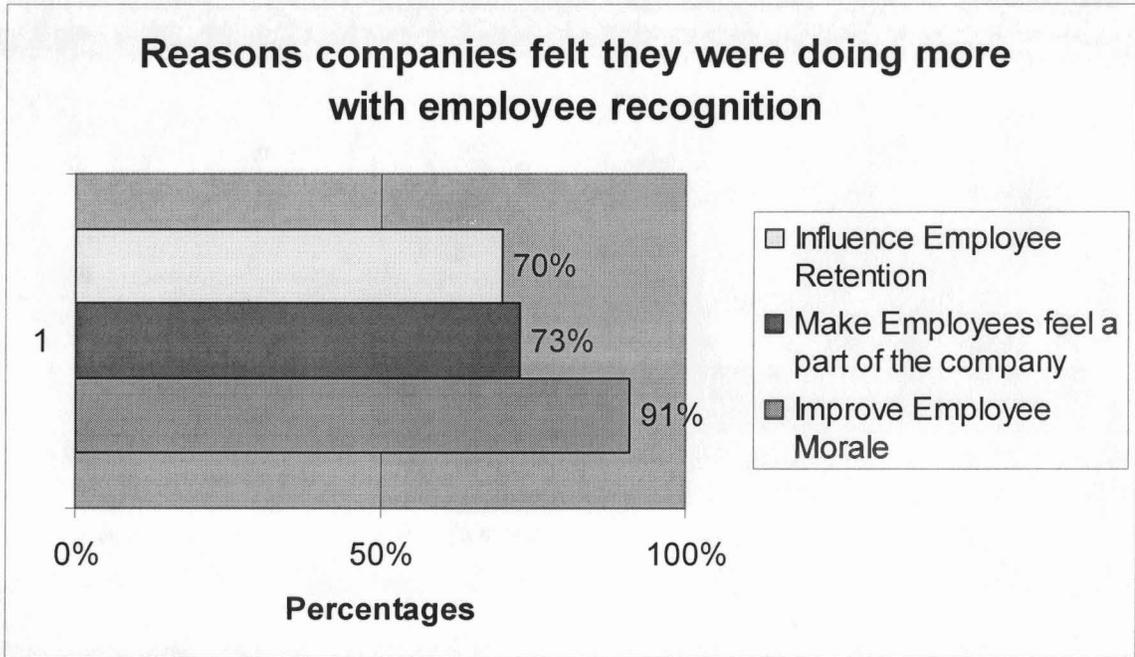
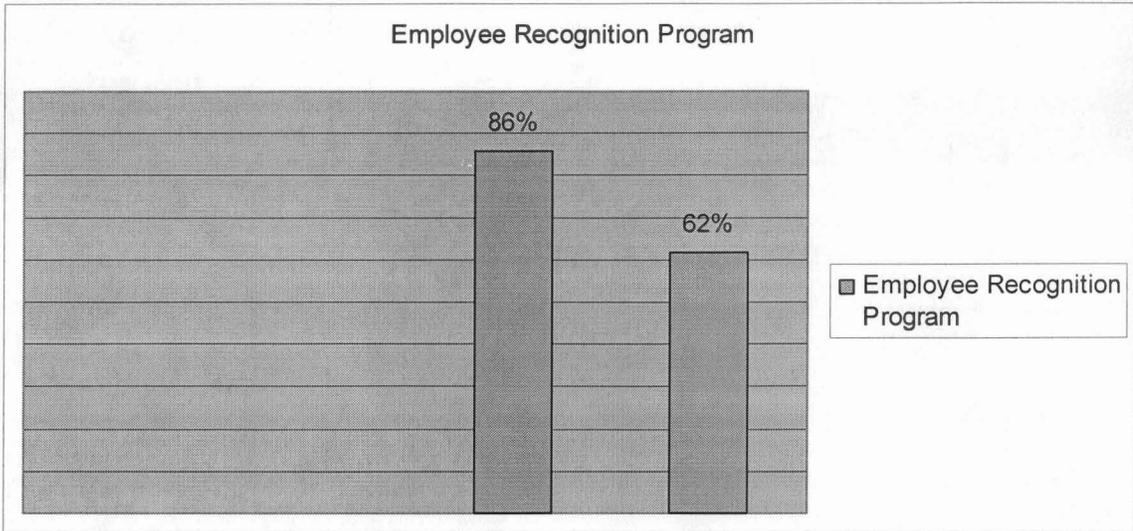
Percentage of Women and Men who feel their companies motivate them



Training at work



APPENDIX B



APPENDIX A

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Commitment

Feb 4, 2003

Laurette---

Janet Whipple's project paper is attached. It is disjointed and unfocused, particularly with regard to the employee well-being project she states they are planning to do.

However, she did review the literature adequately and present a case for paying attention to employees.

Given the turnover in the Governor's Office due to the election, I imagine this is the best we can expect, so let's accept it and call the project complete.

--Hardy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Hardy', written over the typed name.