

RECOGNITION BY DESIGN, NOT BY DEFAULT.



Recognition does more than acknowledge contributions. It plays a critical role in driving engagement, strengthening connection, and shaping culture. But too often, recognition is driven by tools and programs rather than intentional design.

According to Gallup's latest research, only about **31% of employees are actively engaged at work**, meaning nearly 7 in 10 are not fully engaged. When recognition is not strategically defined, it becomes a series of disconnected moments rather than a cohesive experience. In response, many organizations have invested in platforms and tools to scale recognition. Technology brings efficiency and consistency, but on its own, it cannot define what recognition should accomplish.



To move forward, organizations must reimagine recognition, not as a set of initiatives, but as a deliberate, culture-shaping practice.

Strategy as the Foundation

An effective recognition program begins with thoughtful design. A strategic approach looks across the full employee experience, from onboarding through tenure and into retirement. It defines how recognition shows up consistently in both everyday interactions and milestone moments, including service anniversaries, personal and professional achievements.

It also brings clarity to key questions:

- What behaviors and values are we reinforcing?
- How should recognition evolve as employees grow?
- What role do managers play in delivering recognition?
- How do we create consistency across the organization?

When these elements are defined, recognition moves beyond a set of programs and becomes part of how the organization operates - supporting engagement, retention, and cultural alignment.



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Strategy as an Ongoing Practice

Strategy does not stop once a program launches. It must continue as the program evolves. Organizations are not static. Priorities shift. Business conditions change. New initiatives emerge. What is important today may not have the same relevance a year from now.

Recognition programs that maintain momentum are those that are actively managed and continuously refined. This includes:

- Adjusting recognition to reflect key organizational priorities or initiatives.
- Reinforcing behaviors tied to change, resilience, or growth.
- Refreshing messaging, campaigns, and reward approaches to maintain relevance.
- Using program insights and data to identify gaps and opportunities.

Without this ongoing lens, even well-designed programs can lose energy over time. Recognition becomes routine rather than meaningful.

Organizations that take a dynamic, strategy-led approach keep recognition aligned to what is happening in the business and in the employee experience. The result is a program that continues to engage, connect, and reinforce what matters most.

Designing for What Matters

Organizations seeing the greatest results in their recognition efforts take a more intentional approach. They combine thoughtful design with ongoing strategic insight to keep recognition relevant and aligned over time.

They reimagine recognition as something that happens not only at major milestones, but in everyday interactions that shape engagement and connection.

Recognition is not just about celebrating the past. It is about reinforcing what matters in the present and supporting where the organization is going next.

When recognition is designed with intention and continuously refined, it becomes a powerful driver of engagement, retention, and culture.

