



Ways to Recognize Your People

Practical ideas for recognizing people in ways that actually matter to them

THE IDEA

In “The Difference Between Recognition and Appreciation,” I talk about making sure a person feels valued and not just thanked.

“Appreciation says thank you. Recognition scaffolds that thank you with attention, support, opportunity, or reward.”

The key is recognizing people in ways that are meaningful to them, not simply choosing the easiest or most obvious way to say thanks.



How to use this resource: Use these ideas as a starting point for recognizing a stellar performer in your midst. Choose and customize recognition based on what you know about the individual, what they value, and how they like to be recognized.

If you're not a “gifter” and the choice is difficult for you, pull in PeopleOps or someone else you trust on your team to help validate that your choice is appropriate.

One more thing: Recognition doesn't have to be expensive. Several of these options can cost \$0 (like a handwritten card), while others may have a short- or long-term cost to the company, such as a PTO day or stock options. The point isn't how much you spend. It's knowing the individual well enough to choose something that matters to them, and lets them see that you know them personally.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION

- ◆ An award presented at a company or team event
- ◆ A recognition spotlight at a company meeting or in a newsletter
- ◆ An opportunity to teach or train the team

FINANCIAL REWARDS

- ◆ A spot bonus
- ◆ A performance-based variable added to their salary
- ◆ Equity, such as common stock units (CSUs) or restricted stock units (RSUs)
- ◆ An incentive trip, like President's Club

GROWTH & OPPORTUNITY

- ◆ An invitation to attend a conference with the team
- ◆ A specialty learning opportunity or conference
- ◆ An opportunity to mentor (with commensurate compensation)
- ◆ An opportunity to be mentored, such as providing an executive coach

PERSONAL REWARDS & TIME

- ◆ A gift card to a favorite place (not just whatever you can grab easily, and something they'd actually enjoy)
- ◆ A handwritten note (with an optional gift card)
- ◆ A gift card for a local staycation or weekend away with their +1
- ◆ An airline, hotel, or Airbnb gift card + two extra PTO days

PERSONAL GIFTS

- ◆ A wearable (watch, necklace, purse, cufflinks, etc.)
- ◆ A custom pair of sneakers designed just for them
- ◆ A backpack with their initials, not the company's
- ◆ An expensive bottle of their favorite drink
- ◆ A kitschy gift from the team ("World's Best Boss" mug comes to mind...)

EXPERIENCES

- ◆ A trip to the racetrack to drive their favorite exotic car
- ◆ An extra perk at the President's Club trip, such as a gift card to the spa
- ◆ Tickets to their favorite sporting event + a gift card to the team store

PERSONAL & PLAYFUL

- ◆ A tree planted or a donation to a charity in their name
- ◆ Have everyone on the team dress like them for Halloween (only works if they have a distinct style)
- ◆ Have T-shirts made for the team with #TeamLiz or whatever
- ◆ Let them run something fun for the team (Elvish names, K-pop names, Fun Fridays, etc.)
- ◆ Make an entire on-site for the team about something fun rather than professional (rage room, escape room, TopGolf, movie at the theater, etc.)