

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOW TO CELEBRATE STAFF APPRECIATION WEEK

It's vital to recognize and appreciate your staff all year long, but it's especially important to make plans to celebrate them during Staff Appreciation Week. Your thought and care during this week will help your people feel valued, and will help show your team that employee recognition is a priority for UCI.

The best Staff Appreciation Week ideas are built on heartfelt appreciation and celebrations full of meaning and a little fun. A huge budget is not required to make the most of this week. People spend hours, days, weeks, months, and years serving UCI – do what you can to make this year's Staff Appreciation Week one that they'll remember.

HOW TO GIVE EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Best practices when it comes to giving recognition is to ensure that it is meaningful to the recipient. Recognition should be:

- **Personal and genuine.** It should not feel like a transaction, forced, or something you do to “check the box”.
- **Specific.** Describe what the individual did, the outcome of their work, why it exceeded expectations, how it made a difference, and how it impacted the team and organization. Generic statements like, “I heard you did a good job” take the meaning out of recognition.
- **Timely.** Give recognition as soon as you see good work. Delaying recognition lessens its impact.
- **Frequent.** Employees should be thanked or praised once a week if possible. Getting recognition only one or two times a year will not make someone feel appreciated.
- **Connected to purpose.** Align recognition back to your organization's purpose. Why did that individual's work make a key difference to UCI? How does it further your organization's purpose?
- **Presented in person.** Not left on someone's desk, or emailed to them, but presented in a meaningful and heartfelt way. Plan your words in advance, and invite peers to participate.
- **Public.** Public presentations not only showcase the employee's work to their peers and other leaders, but it also inspires observers of the recognition. It helps them see what behaviors and work are valued in your organization, and want to do more of the same.

Try a few of these no-cost staff recognition examples:

- e-Cards.
- Verbal thank you.
- Write a handwritten thank you note.
- Emails.
- Start a meeting with a shout-out to someone who put in extra effort or did something great that week.
- Hold a “Get to Know Your Co-Workers” event.
- Give recognition on the spot – when you see great work happening, or gather a small group of peers and create a “recognition moment” where you present recognition to the individual.
- Recognize someone more formally in a team meeting, unit meeting, or town hall.
- Publicize recognition on shared screens or spaces. Describe what the person did and why they are being recognized.
- Show your appreciation during your regular one-on-one meetings with your employees.
- Recognize when employees make healthy choices or contribute to their own or someone else's positive wellbeing.
- Recognize unsung heroes – those who do great work, day after day, to support their peers but may not be in very visible roles.
- Recognize up – often we forget to recognize our own managers and leaders. They want to feel appreciated too.

7 BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION EXPERIENCES

While recognition may look and feel a little different on a screen, it's still an essential part of work life. Especially when we're all working apart, we need the bonding experience that appreciation brings. Recognition not only helps remote employees feel valued and seen, it also helps on-site employees stay connected to their remote co-workers. Recognition can be that little spark of good news, encouragement, and celebration that reminds employees they can take on anything and succeed, even during a global crisis.

1. Schedule or set aside time specifically for the recognition.

Put a specific time on the calendar to call out great work or celebrate a career anniversary. Shout-outs during normal meetings are great in a pinch, but to create a truly memorable experience, recognition deserves its own special space and time.

2. Turn on your video.

We might be suffering from Zoom (or MS Teams) burnout, but during a recognition presentation, seeing everyone's faces and smiles contributes to the meaningfulness of the experience. Make it feel as close to the real thing as possible by having everyone on the call visible in real time on the screen.

3. Invite other team members to speak.

Here's a best practice that doesn't need to change just because we are physically separated. During your virtual meeting, give peers a chance to tell stories of team victories, battles won, and all the times when the recipient's great work carried the day. Be sure to ask participants in advance and remind them to block out the presentation time on their calendars.

4. Invite leaders to participate, too.

Research shows employees are anxious to see and hear from their leaders during the global pandemic. Remote employees may not be seeing their senior leaders on a regular basis. An invitation to help celebrate a team member is a great way to give leaders face time to bond with employees.

5. Include the family.

This is a good idea during the best of times. But right now, if the employee happens to be working from home, there's a good chance that family members are in the next room. Whether it's a spouse, kids, or their four-legged family members, invite them to join the celebration and hear all the good things the team has to say.

6. Get creative.

Play a song. Send the recipient a pizza or a box of fresh cookies. Do everything you would have done in person, just do it through video. Then tell the recipient why your team can't live without them. Don't let a little distance rob you of your culture-building traditions.

7. Leverage fun Zoom backgrounds.

For one of our employee's service anniversaries, her team customized each of their Zoom backgrounds with pictures of the recipient, quotes, and messages of congratulations. Use a photo of the recipient's favorite candy, band, animal, etc. It's a small, personal detail that leads to big impact when everyone's staring at the screen. Whether you are recognizing in-person or virtually, the fundamentals are the same: invite others, plan ahead, and create a special moment for the employee. Recognition is a positive, memorable, repeatable experience that is core to your workplace culture. We need it now more than ever.

APPRECIATION BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST

Appreciation changes everything. Research has proven when employees are appreciated and recognized for their great work, they become more loyal, committed, and engaged. Check out the appreciation checklist below. It's an easy tool to make sure you're valuing the difference people make day in and day out.

- **Appreciate frequently.** Research shows that employees want some form of recognition every seven days.
- **Remember the power of the 'Thank You' note.** Taking the time to write a note of thanks has lasting impact.
- **Make it timely.** Hold the appreciation moment as close to the event that you're recognizing as possible. If the recognition is not timely, the appreciation starts to lose its value.
- **Be specific.** General praise is rarely motivating. Spell it out by telling them precisely what they did to earn your appreciation and why. Go into detail of the great work that's been done. Describe how your team and even the organization benefits from their specific contributions.
- **Recognize unique qualities and make it personal.** Create a list or virtual files for your team members and after conversations with them, write down information that's significant about each person. Over time, you'll create a "crib sheet" with key information for every individual. Then, when recognizing team members, you'll be able to add a personal anecdote or story to make the acknowledgement particularly powerful.
- **Share a story.** Highlight attributes that demonstrate the difference the person has made. Storytelling is a powerful way to illustrate how they live UCI values.
- **Invite others to speak.** Get co-workers and senior leaders to participate in the recognition, but don't stop there. If the recognition celebrates a career achievement, be sure to invite family and friends as well.
- **Prepare your remarks.** Take the time to pull together your thoughts for a meaningful show of appreciation.

SAMPLE LETTERS AND QUOTES OF EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION

Below are a three examples of different types of employee appreciation letters and quotes that might help spark some ideas.

Letters

Email

Peter,

I wanted to tell you how much I appreciate your support in helping me prepare for my presentation yesterday. You provided really great feedback for improving my talking points and I feel a lot more confident now that I've had a chance to practice. You always show me what it means to "build a brilliant future" here at UCI.

Hand-written Letter

Peter:

You've made me feel so welcome these first few months here at UCI. This is one of the best onboarding experiences I've ever had, and I feel like it's because of your willingness to help and answer questions.

I want to especially thank you for giving me the chance to work on the process documentation project with you. It was such a good learning experience for me and really brought me up to speed on all our processes. I feel like I'm much more effective at my job and I just wanted to let you know that I recognize how much of a hand you've played in that.

I hope that someday I can help someone else as much as you've helped me. You are a tremendous asset to UCI, and it is people like you who truly make this a great place to work.

Public Display

I want to recognize Peter the Anteater for building the consolidated report we implemented in our system earlier this week. This report combines the best of three reports into one — meaning our department can now run one report instead of three to get the job done. This will save so much time and will help us be that much more responsive to our clients.

I know you put in a lot of hard work on this project — you collaborated with other teams to make sure all needs were met and accomplished this while you were handling other important projects as well. Thank you for helping us achieve our goal of innovation. Well done!

Quotes

Top performance

- I am constantly impressed by your performance. Thank you for your hard work!
- Thank you for using your remarkable talents and skills to fuel our mutual efforts.
- I'm amazed by how you maintain your performance while taking on even more work. You're a superstar!
- A reliable employee is the best gift a leader can ask for. Thank you for being someone I can rely on.
- Your excellent performance is an inspiration to all. Keep up the great work!

Work ethic

- Your hard work and dedication is an example to everyone on our team! Thank you for being your best every day!
- It's a great relief for any leader to have a team member who manages themselves. Your effort is deeply appreciated.
- I'm so grateful for all of your hard work. It definitely hasn't gone unnoticed.
- Only an exemplary employee inspires his boss on a daily basis. You are that employee. Thank you for setting such a great example for everyone at UCI.
- Your dedication to your work is helping lead us to success.

Teamwork and collaboration

- The perfect employee lifts others up instead of pushing them down. Thank you for being a positive influence.
- I'm so grateful that you always take the time to help your coworkers. It's really made our team come together.
- Thank you for being such a team player. We wouldn't be the same without you.
- Your unique perspective adds so much to our team. We're so grateful to have you with us.
- Team members are always talking about your hard work and helpful attitude. Thank you for being such an exemplary role model.

Project and goal completion

- Your hard work and commitment helped us complete our project on time. I'm so grateful to have you with us.
- Thank you for going above and beyond to help us achieve our goal. We wouldn't have made it without you.
- Your extraordinary attention to detail took this project to another level.
- You did a fantastic job helping our team reach its goal. Thank you for setting such a positive example.
- Our project wouldn't have been the same without your invaluable insight and creativity.

Wonderful workplace attitudes

- The office is a happier place with you in it. Thanks for the laughs!
- I love that you always come to work with a bright smile and a fantastic attitude.
- Your sense of humor makes coming to work an absolute delight. Thank you for keeping our spirits high.
- You never fail to make everyone's day better when you're here.
- I've noticed that you always make an effort to encourage your co-workers. Thank you for being such a positive force on our team.

Personal successes

- You've been crushing your personal goals lately. Awesome job!
- I'm so happy that your dedication has paid off in a big way. Keep up the great work!
- Your enthusiasm for developing your talents is truly inspirational.
- Watching you strive to improve has been an inspiration for both the entire team and me. You're amazing.
- You've worked so hard to get where you are. Congratulations on your well-earned reward.

Anniversaries and milestones

- It's been so great working with you this year. I look forward to many more years to come.
- You never do just a good job when you can do a great one. Thank you for the time and effort you put into every thing you do.
- As we celebrate UCI Staff Appreciation Week, it's just another chance for us to express how grateful we are for your first-rate work.
- From day one, your work has always been amazingly high quality. So thrilled to have you with us!
- I don't know how we could have made it through this year without you. Happy UCI anniversary!

QUESTIONS TO HELP INDIVIDUALIZE RECOGNITION

When it comes to recognition, individualization is key. In order for recognition to be meaningful, it must be tailored to the recipient's preferences, not the giver's preferences. Many people prefer tangible rewards or gifts, while others are more moved by words and acknowledgment. And while some people want to receive kind words in front of a crowd, others prefer a quieter, one-to-one commendation or compliment from someone they admire or respect.

Not sure how to individualize recognition? Just ask your employees questions like these:

- By what name do you like to be called?
- What are your "hot buttons" – hobbies or interests you like to talk about a lot?
- What increases your positive emotion or "fills your bucket" the most?
- From whom do you most like to receive recognition or praise?
- What type of recognition or praise do you like best? Do you like public, private, written, verbal, or other kinds of recognition?
- What form of recognition motivates you the most? Do you like gift certificates, a title for winning a competition, a meaningful note or e-mail, or something else?
- What is the greatest recognition you have ever received?

Source: Gallup

BUILD A RECOGNITION-RICH ENVIRONMENT

Employees rely on praise and recognition to better understand their manager's expectations and values. Praise and recognition are tools that managers can use to communicate what is important and help an employee see his or her value.

Individuals who receive recognition and praise increase their individual productivity, boost engagement among their colleagues, are more likely to stay with their organization, and receive higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers.

What to Do

The most effective managers always look for opportunities to recognize and praise individuals. This creates a workplace where individuals know the value of their work and the emotional reward that comes with it.

As a manager, one way to help your team members see the value in their work is to find more ways to recognize them. Your regularly scheduled team meetings provide a perfect opportunity to do this. Taking five minutes to share and talk about recent successes in each team meeting can help you promote a recognition-rich environment.

At your next team meeting, add two questions to the agenda:

1. What have we achieved as a team recently that we are most proud of?
2. What are we doing to recognize one another for this success? Could we do more? What would that look like?

Next Step: Review Manager's Resource Guide to Gallup Engagement Survey Q04.

This guide includes techniques and best practices related to Q04. Recognition. The discussion topics will help managers influence engagement, ask better questions and actively listen to what employees are saying.

- Download Gallup's Q4 Managers Guide [HERE](#)

Source: Gallup

CREATE A CARING AND PRODUCTIVE WORKPLACE

If you truly understand and appreciate each employee's unique strengths, motivations and workplace needs, you can create a caring and productive workplace.

There are important payoffs when employees feel cared for in a work environment. They are more likely to experiment with new ideas, share information and support colleagues personally and professionally.

What to Do

The most effective managers make each individual on their team feel valued, respected and genuinely cared about as a person. Each person might have a different idea about how to demonstrate care. The best managers listen to individuals and respond to each one's unique needs. Employees need to know that they are more than just a number.

As a manager, you should routinely ask yourself:

- Do my employees believe I care about them as people?
- What am I doing to increase my understanding and appreciation of each individual on the team?
- What can I do to foster a caring work environment?

Next Step: Review Manager's Resource Guide to Gallup Engagement Survey Q05. Cares About Me

This guide includes techniques and best practices related to Q05. Cares About Me. The discussion topics will help managers influence engagement, ask better questions and actively listen to what employees are saying.

- Download Gallup's Q5 Managers Guide [HERE](#)

Source: Gallup