



# A Step-by-Step Template to Build Your Ideal Recognition Program



**Alexandra Powell**  
Director of U.S. Client Services

According to a survey done by Gallup in 2015, a top factor which raises overall employee engagement is regular praise and recognition from their managers. And that extends beyond the manager-employee relationship, too. The same survey called out that 82% of those surveyed went on to say that praise and recognition helped them improve their job performance.

**Why does recognition lead to higher productivity and improved job performance? To answer this question, we can look at decades of research.**

For decades, social scientists have worked to determine what makes the difference between an employee that is motivated to go above and beyond and an employee that takes the path of least resistance. These studies narrowed in on three simple things employees crave: feeling respected, understanding their purpose and building relationships. Workplaces that create environments that give employees what they crave unlock the secret to higher productivity and performance. Recognition is a perfect fit for all three keys to motivation.

**Not convinced by the science? Let me ask you a question: How do you feel after someone has recognized you?**

Do you feel more satisfied, motivated and engaged? Does it encourage you to maintain the same level of effort or go above and beyond in your work? Recognition leads to the latter, with employees putting in that extra effort. It's simple, really: What's the use of doing work if no one notices? I was reminded of this recently by my school teacher friend Sue, telling me the difference she sees between children who are recognized for their efforts and those who are not. She said you can see the difference in how they perform, behave and even in how they stand.

No matter your age, your occupation or where you live, that feeling you get when you're appreciated is something everyone understands. Over the last decade or so I've helped clients put employee recognition programs in place, and it's become more and more obvious that recognition has become a critical and essential tool that companies should be using to engage with their employees. So what is it and why is it so important for employees and for companies?

Recognition is the acknowledgement and appreciation of an employee's behavior, effort or action which supports and contributes to the company, and is given for going above and beyond normal expectations.

**It's important because appreciation and recognition are fundamental human needs. By being recognized for good work, employees feel valued, which leads to satisfaction, leading to engagement, which leads to productivity.**



But unfortunately, many companies don't understand the importance of recognition, put it on the backburner, or put in place recognition programs which don't fully engage staff. If a company is serious about engagement they need to focus time and attention to put in place a fully strategic and effective program.

# Building your employee recognition strategy...

When considering putting in place a recognition program the first place to start is by answering these key questions — “why are you putting it in place,” and “what do you hope it to achieve?” They seem like obvious questions to answer, but they are ones I’ve seen many organizations miss as they build their own employee recognition strategy.

**According to a WorldatWork report, these are the top 5 reasons why companies introduce recognition programs:**

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Recognize years of service</b>	<b>Create a positive work environment</b>	<b>Create a culture of continuous recognition</b>	<b>Motivate high performance</b>	<b>Reinforce certain behaviors</b>

Another key part of answering the question “what do you hope it to achieve?” is making key program design decisions.

Some of these include:

- Who can and should send the various levels of recognition in your organization (for instance, is it managers only, by peer-to-peer or both?).
- How will you customize your recognition program to ensure it demonstrates respect, builds relationships within and between teams, and highlights the purpose or value employees provide?
- What recognition award(s) will be the most effective in driving engagement? How might cash, gifts or experiences add to the power of the recognition?

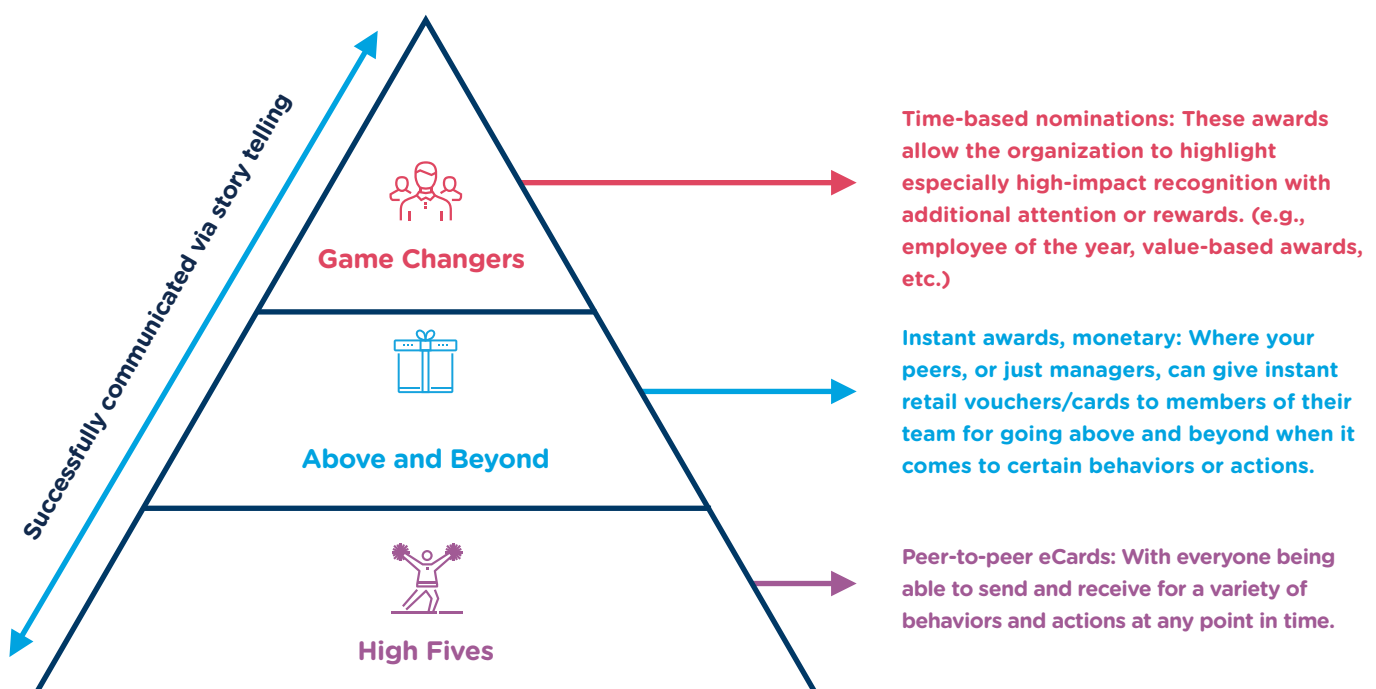
These decisions will vary by company and by provider as all recognition programs are built differently, and company needs vary by size, industry, workforce, etc., so it's important to take the time and think these questions through before moving on to the next step.

[www.rewardgateway.com](http://www.rewardgateway.com)

# Building your employee recognition pyramid...

Once you've answered these core questions of "why?" and "what are you trying to achieve?" it's time to move onto the next question, which is "how"? How are you actually going to put this recognition program in place? A great tool for doing this is an approach I've used at various organizations: The employee recognition pyramid. Recognition pyramids are a helpful visual and strategic tool, as they help you map out the different layers of your recognition approach, and hopefully like the original Egyptian pyramids, will stand the test of time. **The width of the layers reflects the amount of people that recognition touches, with the goal of creating programs that reach everyone in your business in some way.** Here's how we approach the recognition pyramid at Reward Gateway:

## The Recognition Pyramid



[www.rewardgateway.com](http://www.rewardgateway.com)

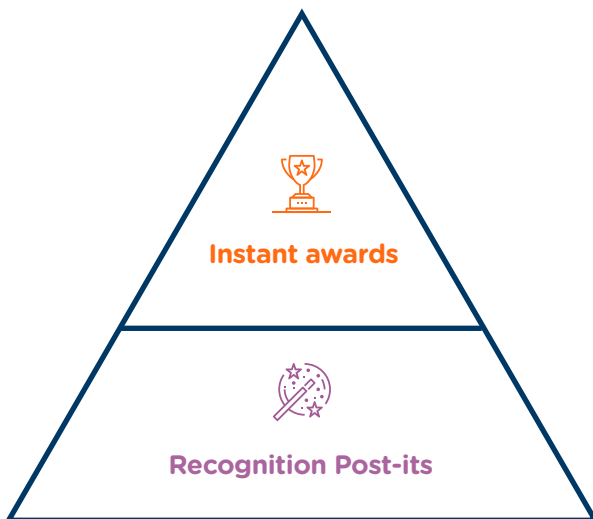
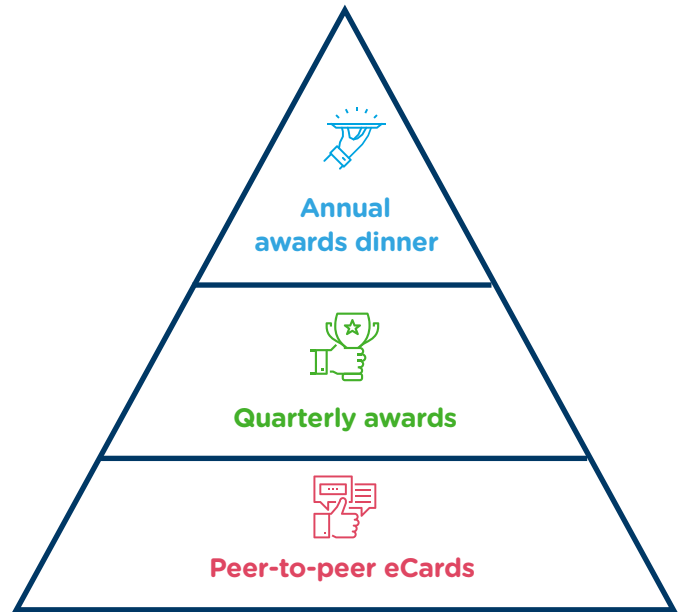
**Your pyramids will be different depending on budget, company size and a variety of other factors.**

Here are a few examples of how you could design a recognition pyramid:

An **annual awards** dinner, with recipients being brought together to receive recognition and/or awards for their achievements, such as cash, a retail voucher or an experiential award. The award should be of higher value than the quarterly award to signify that it is of greater value to your organization.

**Quarterly awards** where you give an award to those that are selected for going above and beyond when it comes to certain behaviors or actions. Recipients could receive a cash award, a retail voucher or an experiential award.

**Peer-to-peer eCards**, with everyone being able to send and receive for a variety of behaviors and actions at any point in time.



**Here's another pyramid example, which is a more straightforward approach, possibly for a company that has one location:**

**Instant awards** where your managers can give instant vouchers/cards to members of their team for going above and beyond when it comes to certain behaviors or actions.

**Recognition Post-its**, where employees can write a Post-it and put it up on a recognition wall in the office for everyone to see for a variety of behaviors and actions at any point in time.

[www.rewardgateway.com](http://www.rewardgateway.com)

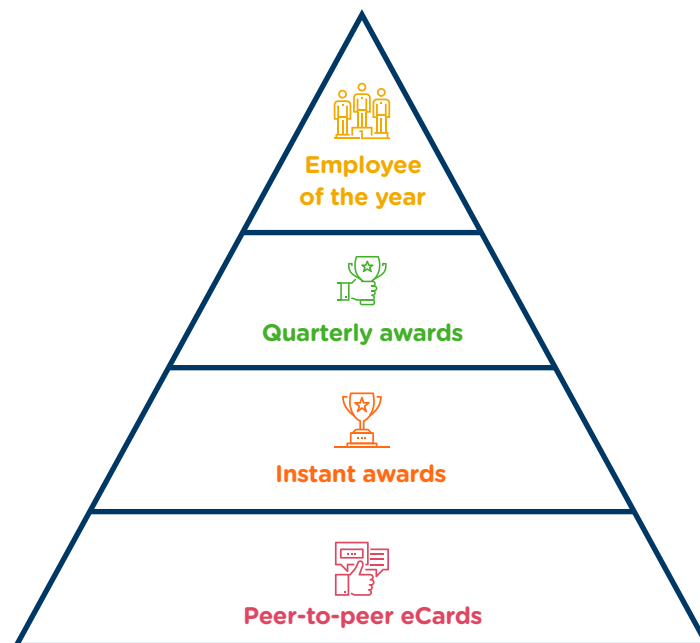
**Here's a final example of a four-section pyramid for a company that has a more comprehensive approach, using a combination of the previously mentioned techniques:**

**Employee of the year awards** with a selection panel reviewing quarterly awards to select the top 10-12 employees of the year, potentially receiving a cash award, a retail voucher or an experiential award, but of higher value than the quarterly award to signify that it is of greater value to your organization.

**Quarterly awards** with everyone being able to nominate anyone to be selected for going above and beyond when it comes to certain behaviors or actions. Recipients would receive a cash award, a retail voucher or an experiential award.

**Instant awards** where your managers can give instant retail vouchers/cards to members of their team for going above and beyond when it comes to certain behaviors or actions.

**Peer-to-peer eCards**, with everyone being able to send and receive for a variety of behaviors and actions at any point in time.



**The most important thing to keep in mind is that you need to develop a recognition pyramid that is right for your organization.**

If you're thinking about building your own recognition pyramid, the employee engagement experts at Reward Gateway can help. Our employee recognition platform helps you create a culture of continuous recognition among your employees with eCards, award nominating capabilities, monetary instant awards and more.



**Get in touch with one of our specialists to see how we can build a recognition program for your people.**

[www.rewardgateway.com](http://www.rewardgateway.com) | [engage-us@rewardgateway.com](mailto:engage-us@rewardgateway.com)