



## Driving Adoption of Employee Recognition Programs

When it comes to employee engagement in a newly launched software, passivity will diminish your return on investment and significantly lower your ceiling for success in this new venture. Taking control of your organization's adoption of a new software enables your users to succeed and positions your program to accomplish the goals you have outlined. The practices contained in this document provide a basic foundation on which you and your administration team may develop your adoption strategy for the Awardco software in your organization.

The topic of software adoption is covered extensively in business development and recognition industry publications. With the vast supply of resources available, it can be difficult to know where to start. As your partner in recognition Awardco has taken the experience of millions of users and identified 5 practices we view as essential when laying the groundwork for your recognition platform's successful adoption into your company's daily life and culture. These practices are communicating your vision, planning and budgeting for adoption, developing ambassadors to champion the new software, providing accessible training, and finally, the periodic check-in on employee engagement.

It is never too late to engage employees in driving adoption. If you currently use Awardco and have concerns with overall employee engagement, contact your account manager for assistance in developing an adoption plan. The elements of adoption discussed here will be applicable in efforts to boost employee engagement regardless of your platform's age.

### 5 Practices That Drive Adoption

#### Communicate Your Vision

Your vision for a reimagined recognition experience lies at the root of what you are trying to achieve. You know what you set out to create and after carefully considering the tools available to you, you selected Awardco as your partner in bringing this vision to life. How do you ensure that your organization's stakeholders and employees come to understand and engage with your vision?

Inviting others to adopt this vision may not be a simple task. When you attempt to influence another's behavior or established workflow, you will meet resistance or outright opposition until they understand and accept the value in reworking their set processes. This is why it is so important to identify and clearly communicate your reasoning and your vision when building your adoption strategy and trainings. Without communicating the reasoning behind this decision to change, how can those you are hoping to influence truly understand the need to adopt?



No two recognition programs are the same and no two organizations implementing a recognition software have the same culture. Your approach to adoption requires the incorporation of unique, organization specific elements to be truly successful. As you work to define your vision and build your own adoption plan, there are a few questions you should ask yourself:

- Have you defined and put words to your vision for this program?
- What does successful recognition look like to you?
- How will you know when your platform is successful?
- How will you communicate these ideas to members of your leadership team?
- How do you communicate the value of employee engagement to these stakeholders?
- How will you communicate these ideas to all members of your organization?

Clearly define your vision and use it to inform your decisions in the platform and in your discussions with Awardco representatives. We want you to succeed as you work to build and establish whatever you've set out to create. Your entire approach to adoption and employee recognition should revolve around your clearly defined vision.

Part of communicating your vision for the Awardco software includes helping your managers and employees understand the value of recognition. To better assist you as you develop your training program, Awardco has published two one-page guides – one for managers and one for employees – that explains why recognition is so important. Find these guides attached in the “Driving Adoption in Your Organization” article. Use these articles and other customized training elements to help your organization see that the organization's recognition and celebratory culture is made better through the Awardco software.

Understanding the need to successfully communicate your vision to your organization and then integrating that vision into your software and culture trainings is only the first step in the adoption process. Remember to incorporate your vision in each subsequent step, including the trainings you make available for employees and managers.

## **Plan and Budget for Adoption**

When a new software is chosen and the implementation process begins, often it is the product launch date that is chosen as the completion date for the project. As the old adage goes, “if you fail to prepare, you're preparing to fail.” Failing to account for the steps of adoption that fall after the launch of a new tool or software is a critical mistake. Successfully drawing your organization to the new tool requires post-launch training and follow-up.

Without these elements of continuing adoption, the importance of this tool and the vision you have communicated will quickly slip from the minds of your managers and employees. This will not only hamper your efficacy in implementing the changes you set out to make, it will also have a significant impact on your ROI. Any successful plan for the launch of a new tool



must account for the weeks and months that come after the launch of that tool. Plan for adoption; budget for adoption.

Strategy and Digital Transformation professor Didier Bonnet makes the case for continued adoption post-launch in his Harvard Business Review article, “Convincing Employees to Use New Technology.” In this article, he says the following:

“Faced with limited budgets, companies focus on the most tangible part first – deploying the technology. Adoption is left for later, and often “later” never comes. This drives negativism that can spread through the organization. The platforms are themselves blamed for the failure. Cynicism sets in... Plan and budget for adoption from the start. Plan for what it will take to realize the benefits beyond the technology deployment efforts. Take into account the people, process, and structural changes. Budget for the communication, training and organizational development required to succeed.”

Take steps to defend against natural recoil from a proposed change of process by anticipating the way your organization will react. This is done by outlining how your training efforts will be approached and funded. Successful deployment of any action is fought and won in the planning stages. During this planning stage, we recommend discussing the following points with your administration team:

- Define success – what metrics will you rely on as you evaluate the success of your Awardco platform?
- Determine time and budget – how much time does your team have to work on this project? Who will own which areas of adoption? What funds are available for utilization as you train employees and reinforce process change?
- Identify the product support network – who and what will you make available to employees who have questions about the new technology?
- Finalize target dates to transition – how long will the adoption period last? When will you transition from training to maintaining?

Regular and open collaboration with your senior stakeholders and administration team will be critical to this planning and budgeting stage. Communicate your vision, outline the steps of adoption that still need attention, and incorporate the contributions from these team members to raise their level of investment in the project.

## **Cultivate Executive and Champion Sponsorship**

One point that is consistent across every piece of research done on the subject of adoption is the instruction to develop product ambassadors; influential individuals in your organization who can drive adoption. While executive buy-in is important, this champion sponsorship is critical. Identifying champions does not have to be a difficult task and should be done in collaboration with senior leaders around the organization.



The champions chosen should be representative of your organization as a whole and should include employees from all departments and levels. These individuals need to be able to influence usage of the software at all levels. While managers and employees in company leadership may certainly be chosen, consider high performers and those who are looked up to on their respective teams as potential champions for your software. Select those who have strong communication skills and who are proven networkers. You want champions who will be early adopters in your recognition technology, who will lead by example, and who will eagerly assist users with software questions.

Your strategy for recruiting influencers will be heavily influenced by your organization's unique culture. Collaborate with your team and senior leaders as you choose your champions. Enable these champions to successfully adopt the platform by providing ample training and emphasizing their role as an early user who will assist with the adoption of the software.

## **Develop and Provide Accessible Training Materials**

Once your plan is established and your champions are on board, it's time to take your vision to the organization at large. For these trainings to be effective they must be accessible. Making trainings available in several mediums will improve employee engagement as employees seek out methods of learning that match their preferred learning styles. Recorded walkthroughs, marketing pamphlets, and one-on-one or team walkthroughs are the most common methods used to train employees in the initial roll-out of the Awardco software. We strongly recommend incorporating the Why, What, and How of recognition into your trainings.

- **The Why of Recognition** – This principle is tied closely with your vision for your recognition program. Help your managers and employees understand what you are setting out to accomplish, why it matters, and how their day-to-day experience will improve by utilizing this tool. It may be helpful to use the questions posed in the Communicate Your Vision section of this document when designing the slides that address this principle.
- **The What of Recognition** – This principle is the substance of the recognition. What makes a workplace recognition truly meaningful? This is one of the most important topics to cover with your managers as you train them on successful recognition. The what of recognition is a training topic that should be refreshed often in your managers' minds. Enable them to create truly meaningful recognition and reinforce its importance. Awardco cannot provide your company with a new culture of appreciation but it can facilitate its development when it is driven from inside your organization. An inexperienced manager can only do so much without guidance on how to best celebrate and recognize their employees. Teaching the 'what' of



recognition enables your managers to elevate your organizational recognition standard.

Our subject matter experts have determined that successful recognition from a manager includes these four elements:

- **The recognition is tied to established values** – These values will often be your organization’s values – well established and tied to the mission statement. This statement and the values derived from it are the foundation of your culture. For example, the Awardco mission statement is, “Inspiring human connection through rewarding recognition.” The values used in Awardco’s own corporate recognition program are customers, innovation, simplicity, transparency, flexibility, and goals. Each recognition submitted in the Awardco corporate platform use tags to link each individual recognition to one or more of these company values.

In companies that link a celebrated action with an established company value, adoption is generally 70% higher than in companies who do not associate the recognition with a value. Aligning recognition with values is one of the easiest ways to reinforce company culture and further employee engagement.

- **The recognition is earned** – Ensuring recognitions are awarded based solely on merit will protect the value of your awards and will make the public recognition truly special for the employee receiving that recognition. It is useful to have different tiers of awards so that managers are able to appropriately recognize contributions of all types.
- **The recognition is timely** – Every moment a positive contribution goes uncelebrated, the eventual recognition of that action loses value. Make sure your managers understand that timely recognition makes a real difference in the experience of the employee. Surveys indicate that 60% of individuals feel that timely recognition is more motivating than a recognition processed slowly. Recognitions should be carried out shortly after the time of the celebrated action or behavior.
- **The recognition is sincere** – This principle should go without saying but you may be surprised at how many recognitions mention only the celebrated action and don’t carry a message of appreciation. The detail and effort put into a recognition is easily identifiable by the recipient. Your managers may consider taking a narrative approach in recognizing their employees. For example, which of the following statements better conveys a manager’s appreciation?

“Thank you for doing a great job with Client A. They haven’t been the easiest but thank you for your efforts.”

“Jennifer has been an absolute champ with the daily if not hourly emails and requests



from Client A. They haven't been the easiest client but we are steadily growing and expanding with them. You have taken each and every question, concern, and task with grace! Thank you for making them happy!"

Being specific and sincere ensures your employees know that every effort is noticed and appreciated. A simple "good job" message may reinforce an employee's commitment to a task, but putting in extra effort in writing the recognition will motivate that employee in a way that goes above and beyond that celebrated behavior. Teach your managers to explain the significance of the employee's act and to communicate their appreciation.

- **The How of Recognition** – This principle covers the technical knowledge an employee or manager needs to successfully navigate the Awardco platform to recognize their peers and employees. Trainings for this final step should be tailored to the individual programs and roles available in your platform. Work closely with your Awardco point of contact as you build this 'how' module. While the Awardco platform is simple, we recommend having a form of training in place for each role and access level in the platform. You never know when an employee will need a little extra help for the simplest actions. For the employee role, trainings for the redemption of points and navigating the site will be valuable. For a manager, helping them navigate the recognition screen, understanding budgets, accessing their reports, and successfully using any other functionality they have access to will be important for their successfully utilizing this tool. Tailoring this section to your individual program is vital to the successful adoption of this software.

No matter how this section is structured, materials such as handouts and videos should be provided in a common area where employees will be able to refer back to the content after the initial stages of training have been completed. It is also advisable to identify proficient users early in the training process. Recruit them to be team and department resources where coworkers can turn to ask questions.

## Periodic Program Check-Ins

Scheduling periodic check-ins on program health and platform operation is the final piece of our critical adoption practices. During initial trainings and program launch, there may be an elevated level of excitement surrounding the software's rollout. On average, it takes about three months for an organization to correct and see a standard develop for their platform's usage. At this three month mark, we recommend working with your Awardco account manager to assess the initial health of your program using several platform usage reports.

Using the data collected, work with your account manager to make critical adjustments to ensure the continued success of your platform. This review may outline needed revisions in trainings or highlight the users' desire for expanded redemption options. Whatever the identified pain points may be, by taking the temperature of your program early on and



identifying possible issues, any required adjustments to your platform will be more easily implemented and adopted by your users when done soon after the launch of the platform.

In addition to using platform usage data generated by the Awardco software, we recommend conducting surveys with your employees to uncover what they enjoy most about the platform and what they would like to see improved. Is there a demand for expanded recognition program types? Do employees need additional training resources developed? Utilize these platform usage reports and employee surveys to ensure you have all the information you need as you make decisions about your organization's recognition program.

While conducting surveys and pulling reports will be done largely on your own, ultimately your Awardco account manager will be a great resource for you. Whether you would like to design and schedule a survey, learn more about specific platform functions, or discuss industry benchmarks, your account manager will be happy to help.

## The Case for Driving Adoption

Your willingness to employ the most basic adoption efforts in bringing your organization onto a new software will net you far greater results than if you left the acceptance and utilization of that software to chance. By leveraging the principles discussed above you will be able to take control of your organization's utilization of the Awardco software. Communicate your vision to your senior leadership, stakeholders, and organization as a whole. Plan and budget for the efforts that will be required to successfully adopt this software. Cultivate and highlight executive and champion sponsorship. Develop technical and substantive trainings for each platform role that include instructions on the why, what, and how of recognition in the Awardco software. Finally, schedule periodic check-ins to identify both platform pain points and successes.

Driving adoption takes a concerted effort and a finely tuned, custom strategy for your organization. Your efforts here will have a significant impact on your organization's return on investment in the Awardco software as users accept the software into their daily workflows. Work with your Awardco support team to identify ways you can help your organization's employees take to their new recognition platform with enthusiasm.

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