

ARE YOU GETTING WHAT YOU NEED FROM YOUR RECOGNITION PROGRAM?

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Make sure your recognition program and service providers are helping you make the most of your investment.

Recognition programs to engage the entire employee base are a standard HR initiative in many companies today. Organizations both large and small are increasingly offering a multi-faceted web-based strategy that includes peer-to-peer recognition using eCards, manager discretionary recognition offering award points, nomination processes for major impact contributions with cash and travel awards, safety improvement with site-wide celebrations and wellness initiatives providing contributions to health spending funds sprinkled with some incentives for metric improvements.

If you have a web-based program, it's probably decently-designed and may be delivering adequate returns for you. Yet just like mobile phones and MP3 players, the edgiest solution everyone touts today can quickly become the most basic commodity nobody wants tomorrow.

Ask yourself these eight questions to see if your recognition program is delivering the best solution for you.

How does your program rate?

Ask yourself these eight questions to see if your recognition program is delivering the best solution for you. Is it giving you what you need? Is your vendor keeping you up-to-date and leading you into the next wave of best-in-class initiatives? Your responses will

help you decide if it's time for a few tweaks or if you need to dump your program in the recycle bin and start over.

8 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DECIDE IF YOUR RECOGNITION PROGRAM NEEDS AN UPGRADE

1 What's fresh, new and innovative about my program and what planned upgrades are on the horizon?

There are countless companies selling a wide range of recognition programs, services and awards. Many are "off-the-shelf" web tools that provide basic functionality and operate on a one-size fits all philosophy.

To keep your employees engaged, your program needs to have a long-term strategic plan with specific growth objectives and planned upgrades. If you are working with an outside provider to design and operate your program, that company should be conducting ongoing reviews with you and coming to you with ideas, plans and processes to keep your program fresh and innovative.

Your program should be constantly evolving to incorporate the newest employee engagement strategies to maintain its effectiveness.

2 What exactly can my platform do or not do?

It's easy to assume that your web-based platform can do anything you want it to...and that making changes, enhancements and upgrades are fast, easy and cheap. This is rarely the case.

Your company is like no other.

Your company is like no other. You have your own hierarchy, geographic parameters, management philosophies, brand standards, nuances and outright idiosyncrasies. It's your culture. It's what makes you special.

When considering a web-based platform purchase or designing one internally, be sure you clearly understand what it can and can't do. Assume nothing and allocate the necessary resources in both time and money upfront to get it done right the first time.

Your web-based platform needs to represent who you are as a company and provide the functionality you need so it can deliver the results you want. In-depth customization and flexibility is critical.

3 Do I have technology refreshes scheduled into my long-term strategic recognition plan?

There's no doubt about it; keeping up with the latest technology is expensive and time-consuming. Yet, every forward-moving company understands that this is a standard cost of doing business in order to stay current, or better yet, be ahead of the curve.

Suppliers who promise anything free are unlikely providing you with leading edge technology. Also beware of vendors who bundle services or claim that the technology costs are included in other goods and services. If this is the case you may be over-paying for those items and not getting the latest technology improvements you are expecting.

Budgeting and planning for technology upgrades will keep your program appealing to tech-savvy employees of all ages.

4 Does my web-based recognition platform provide the social interaction employees find so appealing?

Of course you don't want your employees hanging out on Facebook all day under the guise of recognizing a co-worker, but including a social recognition component in your program is extremely important. With over 1 billion Facebook users, social media is the preferred method of communication for an increasingly large number of people of all ages and walks of life.

Before adding social media to your program, be sure to have a well-defined site usage policy in place that defines what is and what isn't acceptable to post. Add technology controls that let you decide who can access specific sites and that also gives individuals the right to opt out of any postings about them.

Social recognition is an excellent employee engagement tool that can be implemented safely with proper policies and technological support.

5 Is all the data I'm collecting secure?

Corporate espionage and data piracy are a real concern for companies. Your recognition website houses a tremendous amount of proprietary data and personal employee information. It must be protected.

When using a supplier to operate your recognition platform or even when using internal resources, make sure to do your due diligence in ascertaining that the site is safe, secure and stable. Bring in your IT security team to help you evaluate the systems or hire a security consultant to help you if your IT department isn't up to the task. Security technology is constantly changing for good reason. Never assume your system is hacker-proof.

Employees must believe that their information is protected before they are willing to share the details needed for you to have a truly engaging program.

6 Is my web platform really accessible to everyone?

Not everyone sits at their desk using a company-issued PC to do their work during standard business hours anymore. You likely have employees all over the world using a wide range of operating systems and devices working whenever and wherever needed.

If your platform was only designed to operate on a PC, chances are very good that isn't working well –or at all--on other operating systems, tablets and mobile devices.

Employees won't participate in a program they can't access on their preferred device.

7 Do employees like the awards we offer and is it easy for them to get their awards?

It's certainly impossible to please all the people all the time, but you can get close with a carefully crafted awards collection. Opting for an awards service provider that offers millions and millions of choices may seem like the best solution, but often it's not. Too much choice can be overwhelming.

Employees want just the right amount of choice in their award opportunities and easy access for redemption.

Take the time to evaluate your employees' interests, needs, likes and dislikes. Find a supplier who will help you offer a diverse selection that includes merchandise, travel and entertainment choices in a wide range of price points. This gives you flexibility to tailor awards to specific promotions and

employee groups. Also, make sure your supplier can support redemption on all types of operating systems and devices.

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8 Am I paying for awards in the right way?

There are two ways to pay for awards: when the award media is issued to the employee or when the employee redeems the award media. Paying on redemption may seem like the best choice since some of the media is likely to never be used by the employee.

In reality, 95% or more of all media is redeemed and more importantly, paying on redemption requires additional accounting practices. Since the media is issued and outstanding, companies must maintain an escrow account to handle future cost liability. This is time consuming, can be expensive and is usually not a practice most auditors support. When you pay on issuance, your liability issues end. The awards vendor now must handle the escrow processes.

Use your available employee recognition budget to your best advantage by limiting your accounting liabilities.

Employee recognition programs are powerful tools for engaging employees and helping your organization grow and thrive. For help in evaluating your current program or to learn more about employee recognition programs, visit BIWORLDWIDE.com or email us at information@biworldwide.com.