

TODAY'S SERVICE AWARDS: Not your traditional recognition program.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression." When you think of this quote, people typically consider how it relates to their own behavior and presence. However, in today's competitive hiring and retention landscape, it's critical for companies to think about the first impression *THEY* make on a new employee in that first year. No longer can organizations wait for the traditional 5-year milestone to show gratitude and appreciation. What can you do to make employees feel like they belong straightaway? What can you do to recognize and reward their work? And what can be done to keep it going?



Start strong with onboarding: Establish your recognition routine and exceed expectations from day one.

There's no time like the present. So, why wait when it could be too late? Consider establishing a strategic framework of recognition (a balanced blend of appreciation, recognition, and rewards) with 8 to 12 recognition touchpoints per employee annually – beginning on DAY ONE with a new hire welcome. Keep the momentum going with 90- and 180-day recognitions, and year one recognition and beyond.

But don't stop there! Service awards don't have to be a one-time recognition moment – rather, it should be something that can consistently inspire and motivate your teammates. Best practices have shown to think about it from a "hire-to-retire" approach incorporating appreciation moments not just at the milestone years, but every year in-between. An easy way to bring this philosophy into action is by using a platform to facilitate continuity, social engagement, and interactions.

Double down on your recognition investment strategy.

It's never a gamble when you can make a difference by investing in a foundational service award strategy to recognize teammates. You may wonder how to measure that though. It's quite easy if you know the value of turning those measures into usable insight and correlate your program results into a bigger picture around cost savings, employee engagement, and retention. We've seen clients save upwards of \$2M from program efficiencies, increase engagement by ten percent, and increase first-year retention by seven percent – proving the value of recognition on the measures that matter. So, when you look at it that way, is \$20-\$30 per year of service per employee too much to spend on a foundational service milestone program? Best practices say no.

The true value of a foundational service award strategy.

While the workplace and service awards may look a lot different today than even five years ago, the fundamental factors of motivation have stayed the same. Appreciation and recognition will always be at the top of the list for employees, and retention is high on the list for HR leaders today. As Jay Choi from Qualtrics said in a Forbes article, "2020 changed the employee experience forever."¹ Your culture (employee demographics, business model, and corporate values) should drive your milestones, messaging, and affirmation. Use a service award program to not only reconfirm your employees' loyalty to you, but most importantly, to reaffirm your loyalty to them.

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2020/12/15/2020-changed-the-employee-experience-forever--these-trends-will-matter-in-2021/?sh=3f2c42475c1d>