



GUIDE TO RECOGNITION 2026:

Driving Retention &
Reskilling in Canada



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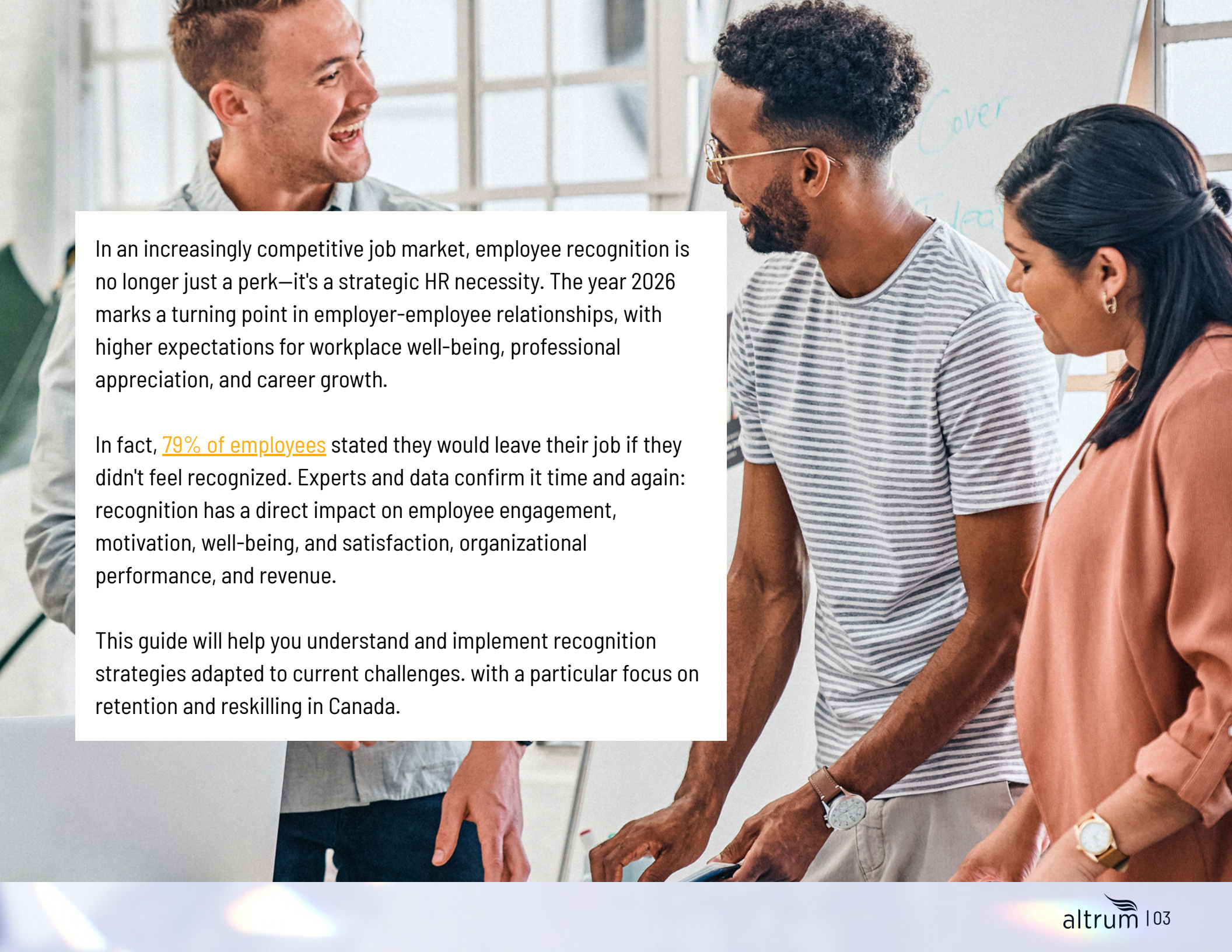
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A photograph of three people in a professional setting. On the left, a man with short brown hair is smiling and looking towards the center. In the center, a man with dark curly hair and glasses is looking down at something in his hands. On the right, a woman with dark hair tied back is looking towards the center. They appear to be in a collaborative meeting. The background is slightly blurred, showing what might be a whiteboard with some writing.

In an increasingly competitive job market, employee recognition is no longer just a perk—it's a strategic HR necessity. The year 2026 marks a turning point in employer-employee relationships, with higher expectations for workplace well-being, professional appreciation, and career growth.

In fact, [79% of employees](#) stated they would leave their job if they didn't feel recognized. Experts and data confirm it time and again: recognition has a direct impact on employee engagement, motivation, well-being, and satisfaction, organizational performance, and revenue.

This guide will help you understand and implement recognition strategies adapted to current challenges. with a particular focus on retention and reskilling in Canada.

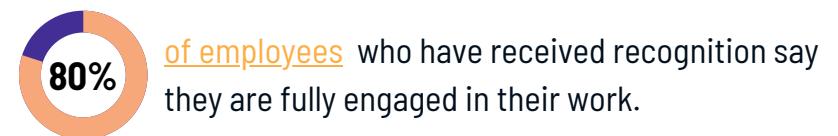
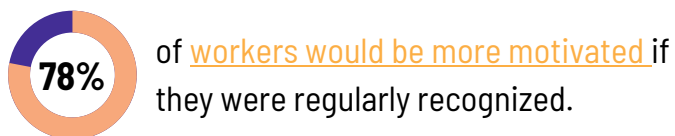
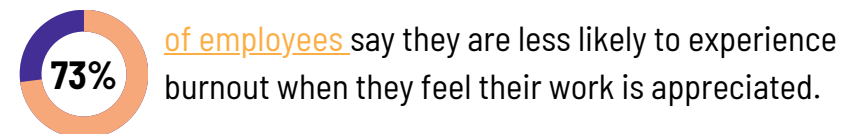
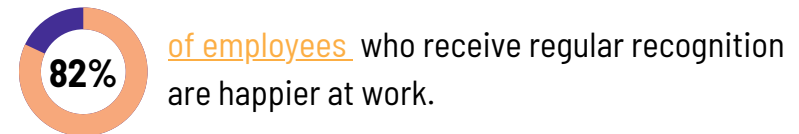
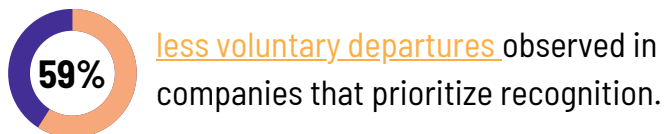
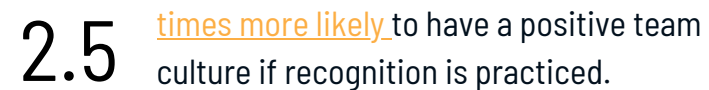
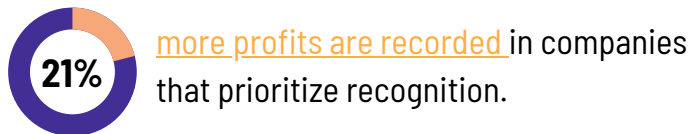
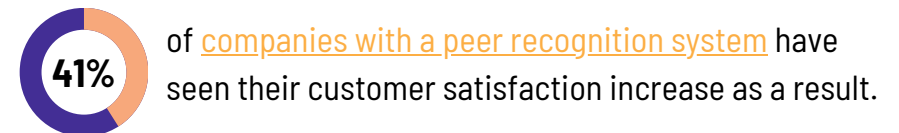
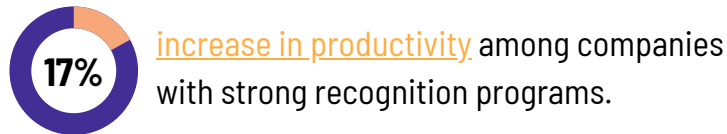
Understanding Employee Recognition

Employee recognition refers to all practices aimed at valuing the contributions, behaviours, and achievements of team members. It goes beyond simple financial rewards and encompasses an emotional and social dimension, essential for creating a sense of belonging and stimulating motivation.



Why Is It Essential?

The numbers speak for themselves: integrating recognition into company culture brings tangible results.



By integrating recognition at the heart of your HR strategy, you create an environment where employees feel valued, motivated, and ready to fully engage. However, it's essential to know how to recognize them properly. Each person has different sensitivities, and a unique approach can make all the difference. This is where the languages of recognition come into play.

The 5 Languages of Recognition

Inspired by Gary Chapman's work and adapted to the professional context by Paul White, the five languages allow for personalizing recognition according to employees' individual preferences:

Practical tip :

Create a questionnaire to identify each employee's preferred recognition language and adapt your actions accordingly.



Words of affirmation

Sincere compliments, positive feedback, and verbal recognition.



Quality time

Personal attention, coaching, mentoring...



Acts of service

Concrete help, support with difficult tasks



Tangible gifts

Symbolic or useful objects reflecting personal interests



Appropriate physical touch

Handshake, pat on the back (adapted to cultural and professional context)

Mastering the right languages helps prevent your recognition efforts from falling flat. And for this recognition to have a real impact, it's also important to clearly distinguish between what falls under reward... and what falls under recognition.

Differences Between Reward and Recognition

The terms are often confused, but they are not interchangeable. Understanding their fundamental differences is essential for building a healthy and sustainable recognition culture.

	REWARD	RECOGNITION
Definition	A tangible benefit offered in exchange for a specific result, effort, or behaviour.	An expression of appreciation to highlight the value of a person or action.
Condition	Conditional: based on an expected result.	Unconditional: to highlight a behavior, an effort, a value...
Nature	Transactional: "Do this, you'll get that".	Relational: values the person and the action
Moment	Expected: in exchange for performance	Spontaneous: often unexpected
Flexibility	Rigid: framed by rules and objectives	Flexible: depends on observation and feeling
Human dimension	Impersonal: focused on the object or tangible value	Personal: focused on the human and their actions
Examples	Bonus, gift card, performance bonus	Verbal praise, handwritten note, thank you in a meeting
Emotional impact	Less sustainable, sometimes perceived as entitled	Deep, memorable, creates engagement
Frequency	Often occasional (e.g., year-end)	Ideally daily or regular
Goal	Rewarding a result	Celebrating behavior or attitude
Origin	Usually comes from the manager	Can come from a manager or a peer

2026 Recognition Trends



Skills-First Hiring & Internal Mobility

Skills-first hiring is redefining how organizations attract and develop talent, shifting focus from credentials to capabilities and potential. This approach expands access to diverse talent pools and better aligns people with evolving business needs.

Internal mobility has also become a core retention lever. Internal talent marketplaces and clear career pathways help employees visualize growth opportunities while reducing time-to-fill roles and preserving institutional knowledge. When employees see a future within the organization, engagement and performance increase.

Continuous Upskilling & Reskilling as a Core Strategy

As skill requirements evolve rapidly, continuous learning is now a strategic necessity. Organizations are moving away from one-off training toward integrated learning models that combine micro-learning, mentoring, and on-the-job development.

By linking learning to real business needs, employees build relevant skills while strengthening engagement and retention. Upskilling and reskilling efforts also help future-proof the workforce.

Employee Well-Being & Mental Health as a Strategic Priority

Well-being is no longer a secondary benefit—it is central to performance and retention. Organizations are embedding mental health and wellness into their strategies, focusing on burnout prevention and sustainable workloads.

Recognition reinforces these efforts by strengthening belonging, reducing stress, and supporting a more resilient and engaged workforce.

Data-Driven People Management & Predictive HR Analytics

HR teams are increasingly using data and predictive analytics to anticipate turnover risks, engagement dips, and skill gaps. These insights enable proactive decision-making and more targeted workforce strategies.

Analytics also enhance recognition and culture programs by measuring impact and guiding investment toward initiatives that deliver measurable outcomes. This data-driven approach ensures people strategies remain aligned with business priorities.

Ethical, Transparent Use of AI & HR Technology

As AI adoption accelerates across HR functions, organizations are prioritizing ethical, transparent, and human-centered use of technology. The goal is to enhance decision-making while maintaining human oversight and trust.

When implemented responsibly, AI improves hiring outcomes, reduces bias, and supports more equitable recognition.

Successful AI strategies focus on augmenting human judgment—not replacing it.

Hybrid & Blended Work Models 2.0

Hybrid work has evolved beyond location debates toward intentional flexibility. Organizations are designing adaptive models that balance productivity, collaboration, and employee well-being, guided by performance and engagement data.

Recognition is critical in these environments, helping maintain visibility, connection, and cohesion.

Consistent acknowledgment ensures employees feel valued regardless of where they work.

Personalized Employee Experience

Employees increasingly expect experiences tailored to their individual needs, preferences, and career goals.

Personalized benefits, recognition approaches, and career pathways are now central to engagement and retention strategies.

By designing flexible, employee-centric programs, organizations strengthen loyalty, reduce turnover, and create more meaningful workplace experiences.



**For more details
on each of these
HR trends**

download our complete
free guide.

[Download](#)

Recognition Strategies

Now that you know the main trends in recognition, here are some strategies you can consider for your organization. They are simple, accessible, and can be adapted to your team's reality.



Establish an Ongoing Recognition Program

Implementing an ongoing recognition program to value employee contributions is a common but essential strategy for any company. [Use digital platforms](#) to facilitate celebration planning, recognize achievements in real-time, and allow managers and colleagues to highlight daily successes.

Offer Career Development Opportunities

Offering [training](#) and professional advancement, such as learning paths, mentoring, or stimulating projects, is a form of recognition of employees' potential. This strategy shows that the company is investing in the future of its talent, strengthening their engagement while developing their skills.

Offer Personalized, Inclusive, and Equitable Recognition

Adapting recognition to each employee's preferences maximizes its impact. While some value public praise, others feel more comfortable with discreet recognition. And when it comes to gifts, the vast majority prefer being able to choose what truly pleases them rather than receiving a generic item. Thanks to digital tools, it is now possible to better understand your employees' preferences and offer varied forms of recognition adapted to each individual.

Encourage Collaboration and Recognize Collective Efforts

In an increasingly hybrid work world, valuing team successes becomes essential. Establishing [peer recognition mechanisms](#) and celebrating collective achievements promotes cohesion, stimulates motivation, and strengthens the culture of collaboration.

Organize Special Events

Creating significant moments to celebrate successes strengthens corporate culture. Whether formal ceremonies, team activities, or informal gatherings, these events showcase individual and collective achievements while nurturing a sense of belonging and team pride.

Involve Employees in Decision-Making

Offering the opportunity to contribute to important decisions is a powerful form of recognition. It demonstrates that employees' expertise and viewpoints truly matter. This involvement strengthens engagement, stimulates innovation, and promotes a climate of trust and collaboration.

Reward Innovation and Creativity

Valuing new ideas and initiative-taking contributes to building a culture of continuous improvement. Establishing channels to collect suggestions, organizing innovation contests, or rewarding original initiatives allows for recognizing creativity while propelling the organization toward the future.

Create a Work Environment that Values Wellbeing

Integrating recognition into a global wellbeing approach sends a strong message: employees are seen holistically. This includes appropriate accommodations, increased flexibility, benefits that support mental and physical health, as well as recognition gestures that nurture feelings of value and balance.

Implement a Constructive Feedback System

Recognition also involves clear and kind feedback. Regularly offering constructive comments allows employees to progress while feeling supported and valued. This approach promotes a climate of learning, trust, and sustainable performance.

Align Recognition with Sustainable Values

More and more employees want their company to concretely embody its social and environmental commitments. Offering eco-responsible rewards, recognizing actions with positive impact, or integrating sustainable criteria into recognition programs helps strengthen the alignment between internal culture and the values upheld by the organization.



A photograph of two women, one Black and one Asian, smiling and looking at a laptop together. They are outdoors, with a bright, hazy background that suggests a sunset or sunrise. The woman on the left is wearing a yellow t-shirt, and the woman on the right is wearing a black and white plaid shirt and blue jeans. The laptop is silver and held by the woman on the right.

Developing an Effective Recognition Program

Now that you have a solid understanding of employee recognition, its impact on businesses, and the latest trends and strategies, let's explore how you can successfully integrate it into your organization.

Step 1: Analyze Your Current Situation

A good starting point is to examine your company culture and current recognition practices. If you already have a recognition program, take the time to evaluate its performance to determine strengths and areas for improvement.

Ask yourself the right questions:

- **What programs are in place?**
- **What works well?** Which aspects of the program gain employee buy-in?
- **What doesn't work?** Which elements generate confusion or are underutilized?
- **Do employees appreciate the current program?** Why? What feedback have they shared? What new methods, or existing methods, would they like to see evolve?
- **How much time does program management take each year?** Is this workload balanced equitably?
- **Who is involved in implementing and managing recognition practices?** Are responsibilities clearly defined and shared?

- **Are managers well-trained to use recognition tools?** Do they have the necessary resources to apply these practices daily?
- **Is the program perceived as fair and accessible to all employees?** If not, what obstacles have been identified?



To gather this information, don't hesitate to organize discussion groups, send surveys, or conduct individual interviews with employees and managers. These exchanges will help you better understand their expectations, identify potential barriers to your current program's success, and uncover improvement opportunities.

By identifying gaps and listening to your teams' needs, you will be able to build a more relevant recognition program better adapted to your company culture.

Step 2: Define Your Goals

Once your initial analysis is complete, it's time to clearly define your objectives and the resources needed to achieve them. Like any strategy, integrating recognition within your company can take several paths. You'll need to clarify your vision to implement the right strategic actions for you.

To lay the foundation for an effective program, start by questioning your motivation:

- **Why do you want to implement a recognition program?** What issues need to be resolved or what opportunities should be seized?
- **What concrete objectives do you want to achieve?** Is it to increase employee engagement, strengthen your company values, improve productivity, or increase retention of your key talents?
- **What results do you expect?** Think about defining measurable outcomes that will allow you to evaluate the effectiveness of your actions.
- **What resistance or obstacles might you encounter when implementing the recognition program** (lack of budget, manager reluctance, low employee buy-in, etc.)? How can you anticipate these?



To structure your approach, determine:

1. **Precise objectives** aligned with your overall business strategy
2. **Necessary operational and financial resources.** Identify the teams involved, required tools, and budgets to plan for
3. **Key performance indicators (KPIs)** to track and measure the impact of your initiatives. For example, retention rate, increase in employee satisfaction, or number of recognition actions performed by managers.

By clarifying these points from the start, you will be able to build a coherent recognition program adapted to your organization's needs.



Step 3: Structure the Program

Once your objectives are defined and your financial resources are established, it's time to structure your recognition program. Like any strategy, it is essential to choose the approaches that are best suited to your context and the results you want to achieve.

To build a balanced and effective program, adopt a consistent approach that combines different types of recognition, taking into account these three fundamental pillars. This diversity will allow you to reach all of your teams, respond to individual preferences, and create an environment where recognition becomes an ongoing practice.

Formal Recognition

Structured events and programs with predefined criteria.

Examples : service awards recognition, employee of the month awards, celebration of life events (birth, retirement, etc.), corporate galas, etc.

These initiatives are planned and often part of the company's official practices.

Informal Recognition

Non-monetary practices promoting mutual appreciation of contributions between employees and celebration of important moments, such as birthdays.

This can include encouraging messages, highlights on an internal social channel, or spontaneous collaborative initiatives.

Daily Recognition

Practices carried out daily by managers to express gratitude.

Examples: public thanks, personalized notes, or congratulations during team meetings.

These gestures promote a positive work climate and good employer-employee relationships.

Step 4: Implement Recognition in Daily Practice

To sustainably integrate recognition into company culture, adapt practices according to the types identified. Here's how to concretely deploy each form of recognition

FORMAL RECOGNITION

Formal practices aim to celebrate successes in a structured and official manner. They allow marking important milestones and valuing contributions over the long term.

Examples: service awards and milestones, quarterly celebrations with awards, leadership testimonials at special events, recognition gala...

Implementation steps:

1. **Define objective criteria:** identify clear parameters for each type of recognition (service anniversaries, employee of the month, etc.)
2. **Choose the right tools:** opt for [solutions that facilitate management and tracking of recognition](#)
3. **Plan key moments:** create an annual calendar to anticipate celebrations
4. **Formalize processes:** develop transparent nomination procedures and involve leadership in ceremonies
5. **Communicate program to employees**





INFORMAL RECOGNITION

Informal practices are spontaneous and non-monetary, promoting gestures of gratitude in daily life. They help strengthen bonds between colleagues in an authentic way.

Examples: Virtual gratitude wall, dedicated "shout out" channel in Teams or Slack, spontaneous encouragement messages, gratitude round table during meetings...

Implementation steps:

1. **Promote access to tools:** create virtual or physical recognition spaces ([appreciation wall](#), discussion channels)
2. **Define usage guidelines:** outline best practices, the appropriate tone, and the types of messages expected to foster a positive and inclusive environment.
3. **Train employees:** raise awareness about the importance of daily recognition gestures
4. **Encourage spontaneity:** value personal initiatives and recognize good moves as soon as they happen
5. **Involve ambassadors:** designate reference persons to animate informal recognition initiatives

DAILY RECOGNITION

Daily practices are carried by managers, who play a central role in expressing gratitude toward team members. These regular gestures strengthen engagement and well-being at work.

Examples: Public thanks, personalized congratulatory notes, recognition during team meetings, direct positive feedback, etcé

Implementation steps:

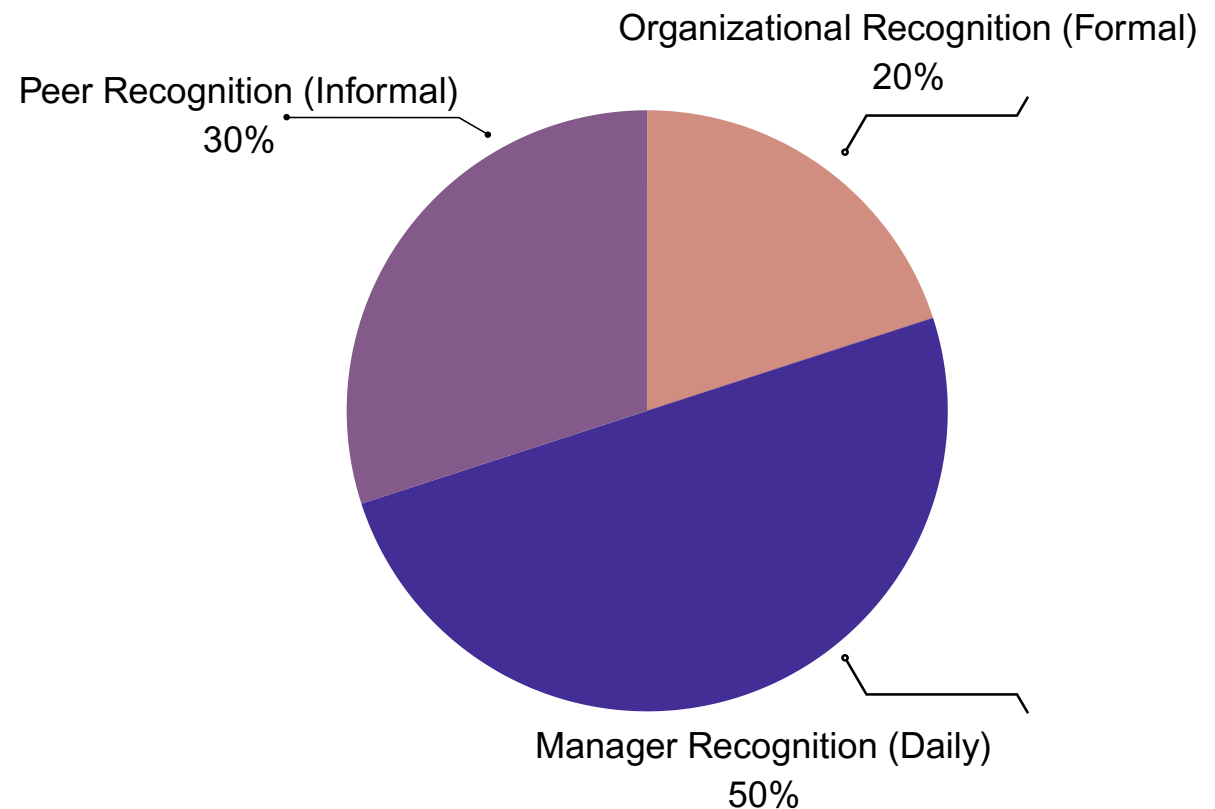
1. **Train managers:** develop their recognition skills and encourage regular practice
2. **Encourage authenticity:** value sincere and spontaneous messages to strengthen their impact
3. **Share best practices:** offer message templates or cards to facilitate gratitude gestures.



The 50/30/20 Rule

To ensure balance and sustainability in your program, it's essential to clearly identify the actors involved in recognition practices and define the optimal distribution of roles. The general trend, determined by [SHRM](#), proposes the following distribution.

By coherently combining these three types of recognition, you ensure sustainable integration into company culture and a stimulating and valorizing work climate.



Choose the Right Technological Tools

To effectively support recognition implementation, use adapted tools such as a gift management platform, a points-rewards system, a virtual appreciation wall, or analytics software to track performance indicators. These technological solutions not only ensure constant recognition accessible to all but also simplify the daily management of your initiatives.



Personalize the Employee Experience

To maximize the impact of recognition practices, it's crucial to personalize the experience according to your employees' preferences and needs. The era of "one-size-fits-all" solutions is over. Today, recognition must be authentic, targeted, and adapted.

Concrete examples:

- Offer a varied choice of gifts to meet individual tastes
- Personalize messages based on the employee's journey and achievements
- Take into account cultural and generational specificities for meaningful gestures

Key steps for successful personalization:

- **Gather expectations:** ask employees about their recognition preferences
- **Adapt practices:** integrate personalized options in formal, informal and daily programs
- **Evaluate impact:** gather regular feedback to continuously adjust actions

Step 5: Measure the Impact of Recognition

To ensure your recognition program meets its objectives, it's essential to measure its impact regularly. Evaluation allows you to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and demonstrate the added value of your initiatives.

Defining key performance indicators (KPIs) at the beginning of the process is crucial to have baseline data and track the evolution of your results. KPIs should be adapted to the initial objectives of the recognition program to ensure their relevance.

Example of key performance indicators (KPIs):

1. **Retention rate:** Analyze the evolution of employee retention rate since program implementation.
2. **Employee engagement:** Measure the impact on engagement via regular surveys or feedback tools.
3. **Participation rate:** Track participation in formal and informal recognition programs.
4. **Employee satisfaction:** Use surveys to gather perceptions about workplace recognition.
5. **Productivity and performance:** Compare performance indicators before and after program implementation.



Measurement tools:

- Annual or quarterly surveys to gather employee impressions
- HR data analysis to identify trends related to recognition practices
- Dashboards to track participation rates and results obtained

To maintain program effectiveness, plan periodic evaluation points. Analyze collected data, share results with stakeholders, and adjust strategies if necessary. Involving managers and employees in this approach promotes transparency and adherence to a sustainable recognition culture.



Employee recognition is no longer just a good HR practice but a true strategic imperative for organizations in 202. As we've seen throughout this guide, the benefits of well-conducted recognition are numerous and significant:

- Improved engagement and productivity
- Reduced voluntary turnover rate
- Enhanced workplace well-being and burnout prevention
- Strengthened positive company culture
- Increased customer satisfaction

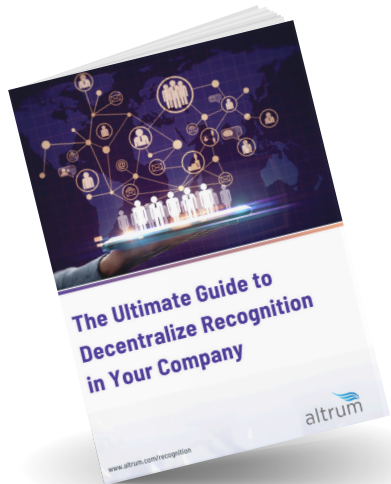
The effectiveness of a recognition program lies in its ability to naturally integrate into the company's daily life. By combining formal, informal, and daily approaches, you create an environment where every contribution is valued and where each employee feels recognized according to their individual preferences.

The trend toward more personalized, inclusive recognition aligned with sustainability values will continue to intensify in the coming years. Organizations that can anticipate these evolutions and adapt their practices accordingly will benefit from a certain competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talent.

Don't wait to act! Whether you want to optimize an existing program or create a new one, every gesture of recognition counts. [Start cultivating this essential practice today](#) and observe the positive transformation of your work environment.

Recognition is not simply what we do—it's who we are as an organization. It reflects our values, strengthens our culture, and, above all, allows everyone to fully thrive in their role.

Resources & Tools to Take it Further



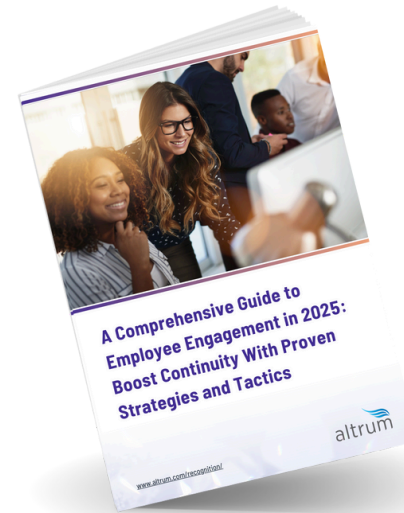
Integrate a decentralized recognition approach to retain your employees and make a real impact on their day-to-day experience

[Download](#)



A calendar proposed by Altrum to help you plan recognition initiatives throughout the year.

[Download](#)



Discover innovative and effective strategies to boost employee engagement in your organization with this free guide!

[Download](#)



Get a broader overview of 2026 HR trends with insights from our recognition experts.

[Download](#)

Inspiring Success Stories: Recognition Programs That Truly Raise the Bar



Hawkesbury and District General Hospital (HGH) Streamlines Gift Management and Boosts Employee Satisfaction

Background

In 2020, [HGH](#) discovered Altrum through an internal recommendation. At the time, the HR team was managing employee gifts using Excel spreadsheets and numerous email exchanges with employees and suppliers. This manual and inflexible process led to disappointment—some employees didn't receive their gifts or didn't participate at all, resulting in financial losses.

HGH's goal: modernize its recognition program to increase employee satisfaction, reduce HR workload, and maximize the impact of its annual investment.

Solution :

The team adopted the [Celebration platform](#) to benefit from a turnkey management process and a wide selection of gifts to suit all preferences. Since implementing the solution, gift management now happens "like magic," according to Isabelle Drouin, Director of Human Resources.

Results

- **Improved efficiency:** Faster, less manual management and reduced HR workload.
- **Higher participation and satisfaction:** More gift options, flexible delivery methods, and a user-friendly platform—even for the less tech-savvy.
- **Zero waste:** Only the gifts that are actually ordered are billed—eliminating financial losses.



The Celebration Platform has significantly lightened the administrative burden related to managing our gifts. Thanks to its flexibility, we can now offer various recognition programs throughout the year with peace of mind. Moreover, the feedback from our staff has been extremely positive, reinforcing our satisfaction with this solution.

Isabelle Drouin, Human Ressource Director



A Montreal Call Center Reinvents Peer Recognition and Employee Engagement

Background

In 2021, a [Montreal-based call center with over 500 agents](#)—part of one of the world's largest IT and business consulting firms—faced a significant challenge: maintaining a strong culture of recognition amid a shift to remote work, which was leading to decreased engagement and team cohesion.

The call center aimed to:

- Preserve a sense of recognition and belonging, even from a distance.
- Encourage peer-to-peer interactions.
- Boost motivation through contests, themed campaigns, and a rewards system.

Solution :

The team adopted Altrum's [peer recognition and points-based rewards platform](#)—a comprehensive solution designed to promote everyday recognition, drive engagement through incentive campaigns, celebrate positive behaviours, reward effort, track performance in real time, and much more.

Results

Since implementing the platform, the organization has seen significant benefits:

- **More daily recognition**, with thank-you messages exchanged between colleagues.
- **Stronger engagement and motivation** fueled by campaigns and rewards.
- **Improved performance**, as employees are incentivized to reach their goals.



The platform has truly transformed how we recognize and engage our employees. It's both intuitive and user-friendly, designed to encourage colleagues to engage with recognition posts, creating a positive ripple effect across the entire team. Real-time performance tracking and point-based rewards incentive campaigns have been game-changers for us.

Operational Efficiency Project Manager.



Nortera Transforms Workplace Recognition Through Altrum's Manager Training Program

Background

During a meeting with Altrum, Oriane Tisseyre, Total Rewards Coordinator at Nortera, discovered that some of her managers had taken part in the [Orange Program](#) a few years earlier. Curious, she reached out to past participants to gather their feedback. She quickly realized that not only had the managers enjoyed the experience, but they were still applying what they had learned—three years later.

Always on the lookout for new training opportunities to strengthen employee skills and align team knowledge, launching a second cohort of the program made perfect sense for the company.

Solution :

[Nortera](#) enrolled 100 new N-1 level managers from various departments in the Orange Program. Over several weeks, participants learned how to integrate recognition into their daily routines.

Results

The Orange Program significantly strengthened the culture of recognition at Nortera, with positive impacts on motivation and engagement. Plant managers, in particular, began incorporating recognition into their daily routines and onboarding processes. Internal surveys showed an increase in recognition scores following the training.



Plant managers don't have the time or inclination to sit down to theoretical training courses lasting more than an hour. The Orange Program, with videos of up to 25 minutes per week and hands-on activities, fitted in perfectly with their busy schedules and learning preferences. What's more, as the training is spread over several weeks, they had plenty of time to put the concepts taught into practice.

– Oriane Tisseyre, Total Rewards Coordinator



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