

# EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

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We have been investigating the value of Employee Recognition for nearly two years. In our October 2010 paper, we shared our latest discoveries, together with the belief that Employee Recognition is key to Cultural Transformation. In summary:

- Gallup poll results showed that 65% of Americans had received no praise or recognition in the workplace in the last year. That's a lot of unappreciated people.
- There are different ways of recognising people, depending on their needs and levels of consciousness. Therefore we created the 'Seven Levels of Employee Recognition' model (see page 8) to reflect the whole range that people require.
- If Employee Recognition is activated and lived fully by everyone in an organisation, it will unleash the energy and creativity needed to foster the cultural transformation and changes that survey participants require.
- In order to help people change, leaders and managers need to learn how to identify each person's unique gifts and talents, and recognise their needs in the most appropriate way.
- In parallel, everyone needs to know how to recognise their own gifts and talents.

In the last three decades money in the West has been relatively plentiful. Too often recognition was given in the form of cash. However, as far back as the 1950s, management research challenged this approach. More recently, Daniel Pink's book 'Drive – The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us' affirms that money is a short-term approach as a form of recognition. Our research showed that people's need for recognition goes far beyond the desire for money. In today's uncharted waters, we need to look at more long-term sustainable solutions instead. This requires a focus on competence and vision, rather than financial remuneration.

We wanted to update our findings and gain a better understanding of why people are choosing Employee Recognition. So we worked in co-operation with Barrett Values Centre ([www.valuescentre.com](http://www.valuescentre.com)) to investigate the 2010 Cultural Values Assessment data and identify the most commonly chosen Personal, Current and Desired Culture values. This showed us why Employee Recognition continued to be in such demand in a Desired Culture.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The data analysed represents results from 193 Cultural Values Assessments conducted during 2010 that featured at least 20 participants. These results reflect data from:

- 170 organisations
- 139,430 participants
- 29 different industries
- 32 countries/regions

The data was taken anonymously from full reports and does not include any surveys conducted for teams or small groups.

## PERSONAL VALUES

Out of 193 CVA surveys, the top Personal Values chosen were:

Honesty	163
Commitment	145
Positive attitude	117
Responsibility	112
Accountability	101
Family	90
Humour/Fun	85
Respect	84
Integrity	84
Continuous learning	63
Balance (home/work)	62
Adaptability	52
Trust	52

If someone lives their life according to these values, they might say:

*"I am a committed, adaptable, positive person who likes to be given responsibility and accountability, who is honest and has integrity, who gives and desires respect, and wants to learn. My family is important to me. I want balance between home and work and I need humour and fun in my life.*

**The values of 'honesty', 'commitment', 'responsibility', 'accountability', 'respect', 'integrity' and 'trust' present a clear theme here. Someone who holds these values is essentially saying: 'You can trust me'.**

**What would happen if leaders recognised that their employees held these personal values and could be trusted?**



Note that these 13 values represent 63% of all Personal Values chosen (the total number of appearances as a top value divided by the total number of surveys – 193), as opposed to a total of 16% if given equal weight to 80 values on a typical template. This indicates that people in organisations the world over share a great commonality of values. In other words, the Personal Values of people in one organisation are not that different from people in another organisation.

## CURRENT CULTURE VALUES

Of the 193 CVA surveys, the most commonly chosen values in a Current Culture are:

Cost reduction	101
Customer satisfaction	97
Teamwork	91
Bureaucracy	85 (L)
Continuous improvement	78
Results orientation	77
Profit	58
Accountability	52
Productivity	37
Hierarchy	35 (L)
Long hours	34 (L)
Silo mentality	29 (L)

There is a wider range of selected values among the Current Culture results compared to the Personal Values, showing how diverse cultures are and can be.

The top value, 'cost reduction', appears in 52% of the surveys, and is a value that Barrett Values Centre now lists as potentially limiting. It is listed as a positive here since that is how it was designated on the standard CVA template in 2010.

**NOTE:** Apart from 'teamwork' and possibly 'accountability', none of these 12 values are employee-focused.

If these values reflected one organisation, it would be focused on: *reducing costs; looking after customers; encouraging teamwork and improvements; concentrating on results, profit and productivity; and giving people accountability.*

The culture would be hindered by '*hierarchy*', '*bureaucracy*', '*long hours*', and a '*silo mentality*'.

A person with the Personal Values described earlier, who shows trustworthiness, would find this environment destructive for the heart and soul.

**This approach represents the contract developed for the Industrial Age when organisations were manufacturing products. How sustainable is it now in the Technological Age which focuses on selling skills and services?**



## DESIRED CULTURE VALUES

Of 193 CVAs, here are the most commonly chosen values in a Desired Culture. The words in bold are also found among the most common values in the Current Culture. The two columns to the right show how often a value is already represented in the Current Culture and if it is a new value that is required.

	TOTAL	CC MATCH	NEW in DC
<b>Teamwork</b>	134	89	45
<b>Continuous improvement</b>	123	76	47
<b>Customer satisfaction</b>	112	85	27
Employee recognition	93	4	89
Open communication	91	6	85
<b>Accountability</b>	86	47	39
Information sharing	54	4	50

These seven values comprise 36% of all Desired Culture values as opposed to 7% if all values were equal on a template of 100 values. The reason there are only seven values is because there is a dramatic drop in votes for subsequent common values. Note how **rarely** the Level 2 values of 'employee recognition', 'open communication' and Level 4 'information sharing' appear in the Current Culture.

The story behind the Desired Culture findings is that people are saying: "Give us accountability, talk to us, recognise us, and share information to allow us and the organisation to improve. Encourage us to work as a team and ensure all our customers are satisfied with what we do and say, as we know that these values create a high performing culture."

This amounts to a massive demand for connection between people.

**Does this make a good basis for a contract in the Technological or Consciousness Age, the one some believe we are moving to?**



It is clear that people are calling for connection, transparency and feedback at work. Their Personal Values of 'honesty', 'respect', 'trust' and 'continuous learning' demonstrate their belief and commitment to truth and self-improvement. Meanwhile, they are asking for 'employee recognition', 'open communication' and 'information sharing' from their leaders and colleagues.



In the diagrams above, the 'You can trust me' employee has the wisdom to maintain a focus on 'customer satisfaction', 'teamwork', 'accountability' and 'continuous improvement' - values which are known to be essential for high performance in today's competitive world. These employees are asking for the organisation to pay attention to them as people and not as objects. This is revealed by:

- Their desire for activation at Level 2
- Increased focus on evolving the culture as shown in the Business Needs Scorecard
- The strengthening of internal relationships as reflected by the IROS score.

Employee Recognition is in fourth place on the Desired Culture list – down from first place in the 2008 figures. However, more importantly, this value is a top Values Jump in 135 out of the 193 surveys - the most frequent of any value. To our thinking, organisations still urgently need to pay attention to the issue of Employee Recognition.

## **2010 CVA DATA AND EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

Next, we addressed the relationship of the 2010 CVA data to Employee Recognition and the questions of:

- Honesty
- Activating Level 2 values and behaviours to create a high performing culture

### **HONESTY**

Honesty is the top Personal Value in these 2010 results and is often the number one value. But what is honesty? It is a facet of moral character that includes integrity, straightforwardness, truthfulness and an absence of lying. You might also describe it as authenticity and genuineness. Confucius defined several levels of honesty. Starting from shallow and ending with deep, the levels are as follows:

- Li, wanting to appear truthful for your own personal gain. We see this as the 'mind' at work.
- Yi, doing what is right on the basis of how you would like to be treated in return. This type of honesty comes from the 'heart'.
- Ren, based on the most sincere form of empathy towards all others who are different from you in age, gender, culture, experience and family. This is a 'soul' connection.

It is a great starting point for a discussion to ask what we mean by honesty in organisations and which level of honesty is dominant, using Confucius's definitions.

In Employee Recognition, the person needs to be honest with themselves about their strengths, their development needs, and what they are looking for in work and organisational life. We believe that leaders and managers can help move the process of Employee Recognition forward through their own honesty. This might involve feedback on

performance, development and opportunity, or feedback on what is going on in the organisation - even if this means an honest 'I don't know'.

## **LEVEL 2 ACTIVATION**

The CVA data shows that people are calling for Level 2 **internally** in the workplace. Why is this happening? Level 2 reflects the very essential human need for connection. An African term for this connection is 'Ubuntu', meaning humanity and community. Archbishop Desmond Tutu offers this definition:

"Ubuntu is the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity. A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, and affirming of others. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."

We believe the data shows that people want this kind of human connectivity in the workplace. We know they are getting it externally through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. They are connecting outside of work in real time. But organisationally, how can these same needs be met? The CVA results show that it is through the 'relationship' (R) values of 'employee recognition', 'open communication' and 'information sharing'. What actions can your clients take now to integrate these values into their cultures?

Without meeting people's Level 2 needs, other evolutionary needs in the mental and spiritual realms cannot be activated or properly fulfilled. If you don't address Level 2 values in the organisation by reaching out and connecting to employees, they will never be able to live their higher level values safely and fully at work because they will not know how everything fits together and/or where they stand.

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the last few months we have been very interested to see articles and stories which demonstrate that organisations are staying or returning to the old paradigm as described in the Current Culture results above. At its extreme, this reflects the Victorian / Protestant work ethic that work is 'good for you' or 'keeps you out of trouble'. At the less extreme end, the philosophy is that people are work shy and need to be threatened with a stick in order to perform. The carrot approach is seen as wishy-washy. And even if an organisation does believe in the carrot rather than the stick, this approach will not be enough to convince the 'You can trust me' employee.

The management studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century danced between the relative importance of balancing the demands of tasks to be set and met, and the needs of people. We know we need to be efficient in organisations; the challenging world economic situation dictates it. We also know from current research (as outlined in our previous paper) that being in 'positive energy' encourages growth in people and is highly necessary. How beneficial

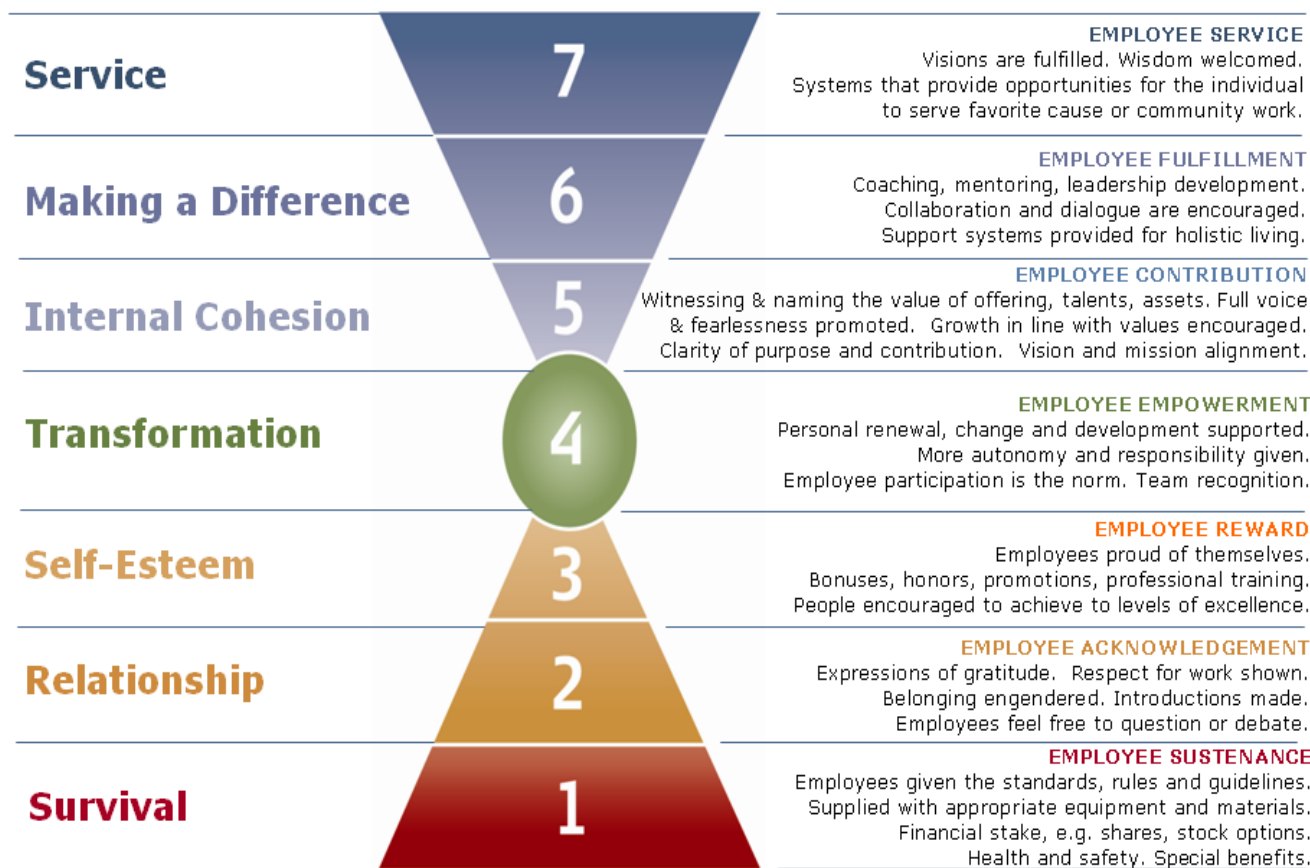
would it be if the new contract between employee and employer could reflect the Desired Culture with positive behaviours such as accountability, sharing information, recognising employees, encouraging team work, continuously improving the current, and openly communicating and satisfying customers? This would represent a true integration of people and tasks.

We have to let go of the known, where Level 2 internal needs are ignored, to create a new paradigm. In times of change we often return to the status quo as this feels safe and familiar, yet it is a stage in the transition process and should be recognised as such. If we see Honesty as Ren or Yi, the ‘You can trust me’ employee is asking for something that is more focused on the heart and soul. People want a culture in which Level 2 is active, where their voices can be heard and their actions appreciated.

If you wish to embrace the new paradigm as an organisation, you need to ask your people how they want to experience the internal aspects of Level 2. Are gratitude and respect embedded in the day-to-day work of the organisation? Can people ask questions and be heard? Is the sense of belonging evident?

Then look at your competency systems to review how you are encouraging Level 2 values. Examine your training and development programs, and your appraisal systems to see what changes need to be made for them to be in alignment. Then you will be on your way to achieving the full desired spectrum in Employee Recognition terms.

### The Seven Levels of Employee Recognition



**Level 1 - Employee Sustenance:** This covers the recognition needs an employee has to function successfully in an organisation at a basic level. It includes having the tools for the job, receiving fair pay on time, understanding the standard operating procedures, safety guidelines, health benefits, and the possibility of profit sharing. Fulfilment of these needs provides the employee with a sense of stability.

**Level 2 - Employee Acknowledgment:** This level values the humanity of an employee: what helps them develop at work, including respecting and appreciating their behaviour and/or contribution. Feedback both positive and corrective is the norm. Debate, openness and contact with other areas are encouraged. Belonging is engendered, and relationships are seen as the oil that facilitates the working of the organisation. The employees also take responsibility for appreciating themselves and their skills, as well as recognising their own achievements and development needs.

**Level 3 - Employee Reward:** Employees take pride in themselves and the organisation. Their managers express belief in them. They want to develop professionally and are supported in achieving this. They are encouraged to strive for excellence with different rewards that acknowledge when they achieve this.

**Level 4 - Employee Empowerment:** People are recognised for their presence, not just their skills. They are acknowledged for who they are and what they could become - for themselves and the organisation. They are given more responsibility, encouraged to express their views, adapt and initiate, and given permission to be transformers in the organisation. They are empowered and see themselves as accountable for achieving their own objectives and contributing to teams, both formally and informally. They use their creativity on their own and with others.

**Level 5 - Employee Contribution:** People are clear about their own vision, purpose and values, as well as those of the organisation, and are able to live them and operate congruently. Concrete connections are made between the contribution of the person and the overall realisation of the vision or deliverable. People's head, heart and behaviours are aligned. They have the inner confidence to speak with full voice. They are both courageous and fearless.

**Level 6 - Employee Fulfilment:** Staff are supported to make a difference and to be fulfilled in their work. They are coached and given the chance to coach others so they experience directly helping others. Their intuition is respected. They listen deeply to their inner voices and to what others say or don't say. They operate through dialogue and in collaboration, internally and externally.

**Level 7 – Employee Service:** Employees are respected for their wisdom and vision, and encouraged to be of service to causes which will make an impact on humanity in the future.

Thank you for your comments about our last article, which were important in inspiring us to write this current article. We would love to hear from you, particularly if you would like to share examples of occasions where Employee Recognition is a priority in organisations and how your clients are working to achieve it.

**Link to our first article (Oct. 2010):**

[Recognition Now.pdf](#)

## AUTHORS



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