

How To Design Your Recognition Program

The average person will change careers at least once in their lifetime and most will change jobs numerous times. You spend time and money training your employees. Losing R&D employees is especially costly as projects are interrupted and technical knowledge is lost, many times to competitors. Therefore, maintaining employee loyalty is critical to your company's success.

Studies have shown that recognizing employee accomplishments is an effective way to maintain employee loyalty. According to staffing company Robert Half International, the number one reason people give for leaving a company is a lack of praise and recognition. (1996 Quality Digest) {For a more detailed discussion see "Why is Recognition Important" by SG Capps, Ph.D. }

Just as no two companies are the same, not every Recognition Program will be the same. Most importantly, your employees should feel appreciated and understand why they are being recognized.

Each of the following questions will help you design your company's own individualized Recognition Program.

Step One – Who will be a part of your Recognition Program team?

- Who can best contribute to the development of your Recognition Program? Whose commitment is necessary for effectiveness and success?
 - Representatives for your innovators/inventors
 - Research and Development
 - Engineering
 - Representatives of your IP Group
 - Attorneys
 - Paralegals
 - Representatives for your functional operations of a Recognition Program
 - Accounting/Budgetary
 - Human Resources
 - Representatives of/for your company's commitment to Recognition
 - Top Management

Your design team may not include someone from each of these groups. However, remember that Top Management commitment is essential for an effective Recognition Program.

Step Two - What are the goals of your Recognition Program?

- To say "Thank You"
- To recognize creativity and hard work
- To encourage continued excellence
- To reinforce company vision or values
- ...

There are many other reasons to have a Recognition Program. Take a few moments to consider why it is important for your company. How does a Recognition Program fit into the culture of your company? Work to articulate what you want the Recognition Program to do and what message you want to send.

Step Three - When do you want to recognize innovators/inventors?

- Event
 - Whenever a patent application is submitted
 - Whenever a patent is granted
 - For total yearly achievement in IP
- Schedule
 - Once every year
 - Quarterly
 - Monthly
 - As patents are granted
- Frequency
 - Every patent
 - With patent(s) at some interval
 - Ex: first patent, fifth patent, tenth patent

Step Four - How do you want to recognize innovators/inventors?

- Award/gift for each individual named on patent
- Award/gift for the team/group that contributed to patent
- Award/gift for the lead inventor
- Award/gift for “company wall of fame”
- Combination of these
- Awards Banquet where recognition awards are presented (public)
- One on one presentation (private)

Step Five – What is your budget?

- How much money is your company willing to spend on this program?
- Are these discretionary funds where you have some flexibility?
Budgets are a fact of life and setting your budget will influence your Recognition Program. The Recognition Program team needs to decide which components have the most budget flexibility based on the established goals. For example, it may be necessary to have quarterly on-site group presentations instead of renting the most exclusive country club in town for a large awards ceremony.

Once the program is designed and the budget has been set – someone will need to implement then manage the Recognition Program. This has its own set of issues that you can explore by reading [“How do you IMPLEMENT a Recognition Program?”](#)

"What's New in Benefits & Compensation?" stated that 83% of companies surveyed said that they have at least one recognition program; some had more. How does your company measure up? If you need further information on starting an inventor recognition program or information on how other companies are recognizing their inventors, please email lucretia@patentawards.com or call Lucretia directly at 800-707-0011 ext. 105.