



# Team Awards

STRATEGIES AND INSPIRATION FOR EFFECTIVELY  
RECOGNIZING AND REWARDING YOUR TEAMS

workhuman\*



# Table of contents

1. The culture catalyst you are looking for
2. What are Team Awards?
3. Why use Team Awards?
4. Ways to use Team Awards
  - 4.1 Employee Appreciation & Relationship-Building
  - 4.2 DE&I, Employee Inclusion, and Empathy
  - 4.3 Change Management
  - 4.4 Culture Management
  - 4.5 Support Business Goals and Objectives
5. Will Team Awards work for you?

# Team Awards: the culture catalyst you are looking for

As a Workhuman® customer, you understand the exponential power of gratitude and recognition to impact behavior and satisfaction. You also already know that frequency, timing, and size of awards are all details that can enhance employee experience and engagement.

One variable you may not have considered as closely is the award cohort – for who you are grouping together as recipients of an award. In fact, Team Awards is a powerful culture management mechanism that you already have at your disposal.

It turns out that giving an award to a group – and the composition of that group – can also have a far-reaching, positive impact on your organization’s cultural health. This is something leaders have already discovered in many of our client companies – and we want to share some of their experiences with you.

**Let’s talk about how  
Team Awards work.**

# What are Team Awards?

**Team Awards are already a part of your Workhuman Cloud®.**

At their simplest, Team Awards entail providing the same award to a cohort of employees at the same time.

This cohort might comprise a team, a business unit, a geographic location, or your entire organization. They might be formal, existing groups on your org charts, matrixed groups that cut across the organization, or affinity groups you are effectively creating through the process of delivering the award.



Team Awards might be given from a C-suite level, a VP or director level, or even from the manager or supervisor level. Unlike a group award for a project or accomplishment, Team Awards are designed to reach large groups of employees – ranging from a hundred to thousands of employees – at once.

# Why use Team Awards?

There are infinite reasons why you might want to use Team Awards. They act similarly to individual or small group awards in this way – helping to influence behavior and drive feelings of inclusion and organizational affinity.

However, because they are less focused on individual accomplishment or behavior, they are stronger in influencing belonging and teamwork, encouraging the pursuit of collective goals, purpose, and group identity.

**We've provided more than thirty examples of how organizations like yours are currently thinking about and deploying Team Awards. These tend to be in service of one or more of the following outcomes.**

- **Team Awards that impact performance:**

Team Awards are a powerful tool for wide-scale positive reinforcement – both rewarding past good work and inspiring continued effort in the future. For employees who are high contributors, this makes them feel appreciated and valued. For those who are not, they can be inspired to contribute in the future to the ongoing group success.



- **Team Awards that ease change:** Team Awards can also be used in a forward-looking manner. They can be used as a rallying cry for future behavior and to drive excitement and enthusiasm for organizational change. They help to build a reservoir of goodwill and resilience that can introduce and pave the way for smoother organizational changes, mergers, or new initiatives.
- **Team Awards can help leaders manage culture:** Leaders who are on the lookout for levers to help manage culture at an organizational level will find particular value in Team Awards. Cohort-level awards will underscore your shared values and purpose and can be used as morale-boosters, driving feelings of inclusion and in-group membership that are critical to innovation and inspiring great work. They can also amplify messages and information that is important to you – as tying information to a reward is that much more likely to ensure it is seen and absorbed.

# Ways to use Team Awards

Looking for some ideas on how to use Team Awards in your company? Here are some ideas that have come out of our experiences working with executives across many industries around the globe.

We've grouped some of the themes you might use for Team Awards below with some specific examples. Have a look and see if you can find a few ways you could be using Team Awards and then work directly with your Workhuman customer success team to move your goals forward.

# Employee Appreciation & Relationship-Building

In a similar way to standard awards, Team Awards can help to make employees feel valued and appreciated – in this case, by leadership and the organization at large. According to McKinsey, when employees feel there is a good relationship between management and employees as a whole, employee satisfaction can rise almost 500%. Our own data has shown that employees who are recognized show trust for senior leaders at a rate of 82% – compared to a 48% trust rate for those receiving no recognition.

## How recognition affects trust

Trust shown for senior leaders  
who recognize

**82%**

Trust rate for senior leaders  
who don't recognize

**48%**

**Here are some examples of how our customers have used Team Awards for employee appreciation and relationship-building:**

- **Observe one or more of the days set aside on the calendar for appreciating employees, such as:**
  - **January** Have Fun at Work Day
  - **March** Employee Appreciation Day
  - **April** Administrative Professionals Day
  - **April** International Day for Safety and Health at Work
  - **May** Nurses Day
  - **May** Teacher Appreciation Week
  - **May** Night Shift Workers Day
  - **July** National Intern Day
  - **September** World Gratitude Day

- **Thank employees for strong past or ongoing all-hands efforts.** This can have the dual effect of rewarding those who are making an effort and inspiring those who have yet to do so.
- **Underscore the launch of a new company program or effort.** A great way to set a new program on the way to success is to accompany your launch with some positive motivation. This builds excitement and goodwill around the project and jump-starts efforts.

# DE&I, Employee Inclusion, and Empathy

One of the advantages of a Team Award over an individual award is that by grouping employees into a cohort, you can reinforce their group identity – making individuals feel more supported and accepted as part of that group. Employee inclusion is often a difficult metric to gather, and belonging is a difficult concept to measure, so Team Awards can be invaluable as part of your DE&I strategy.

## According to Forbes ...

**96%**

of workers think showing empathy is crucial for employee retention.

Another way Team Awards can underscore DE&I efforts is to help you walk the talk on DE&I – rewarding progress in this area on an organizational level. According to PwC, 90% of business leaders believe they are communicating to employees frequently about DE&I, but only 42% of employees say the messages are getting through. Team Awards can help those programs gain visibility and help leaders demonstrate their commitment to the initiatives.

Team Awards can also be a way of creating and cultivating a direct connection between leadership and individual employees. This sort of direct connection is generally not scalable with individual awards, and it allows senior executives to show empathy and appreciation and win trust on a wider scale. According to Forbes, 96% of workers think showing empathy is crucial for employee retention, yet in 2019, only 50% of employees said they thought their CEO was empathetic, so this could be an important delivery mechanism for empathy in your organization.

## How our customers have used Team Awards for building empathy and supporting DE&I efforts:

- **Reinforce a sense of community and in-group membership.** Issuing awards by cohort, particularly when they are oriented around a theme (such as promoting well-being or celebrating cultural diversity) can make people feel more tied to others in their cohort who are sharing the experience.
- **Bring together disparate or remote groups of employees.** When employees are physically apart, being reminded that they are part of a single team or a cohort can help to reinforce feelings of inclusion and belonging.



- **Increase affinity and positive feelings toward the organization.** Team Awards are an efficient and powerful way to demonstrate your appreciation for the value your employees as a whole bring to the company and at the same time increase their feelings of attachment to the organization.
- **Introduce new core values.** Introducing or relaunching your company values? Demonstrate them and make them more memorable by tying a Team Award to one of the pillars. Employees will better understand what the value means when they see it in practice.
- **Underscore shared purpose.** Purpose is a major driver of engagement and organizational affinity. Create a Team Award to show your commitment to your company mission.

# Change Management

Resistance is a natural human response to change. With so many companies reshaping strategy and reorganizing business processes in the 2020s, leaders are on the lookout for new ways to help bring employees on board with initiatives.

**According to Deloitte, in 2021, the single most important action (45%) companies said could transform work was “building an organizational culture that celebrates growth, adaptability, and resilience.”**

If you need to help employees get on board with your organizational transformation or make them more resilient against unforeseen bumps in the road, Team Awards can be a creative way to associate those changes with positivity.

In fact, according to Gartner, companies move 2x as fast on digital transformation when there is a shared understanding across the organization as a whole and everyone is on the same page. Team Awards are a way of helping that understanding happen – whether you are dealing with an upcoming merger, new technology implementation, or recovering from a reduction in force.

They are also a way of keeping your company more protected against the change you don't want: voluntary turnover. Use Team Awards out of the gate to help employees feel noticed and welcome from day one as a new hire cohort – or appreciated for the hard work they are putting in down the road to propel the organization forward.

## How our customers have used Team Awards for supporting change management efforts:

- **Ease mergers and acquisitions.** If you've got a merger or acquisition on the horizon, consider using Team Awards to welcome the new cohort on board and quickly integrate them into a culture of appreciation.
- **Celebrate new factory, facility, or division openings.** Adding a new building or capability to your organizational family? Transition or welcome them into the fold with a Team Award, or increase goodwill across the organization by celebrating with all employees.

- **Celebrating growth.** When you hit your growth or expansion goals, bring everyone in on the celebration with an organization-wide Team Award.
- **Promote healing after layoffs or reorganizations.** Reductions in force and reorganizations can be traumatic for the employees who remain. A Team Award can help to soothe their fears and reassure them that they are appreciated and valued – saving you damaging attrition down the road.
- **Celebrate new leadership.** A Team Award from a new leader to their team can go a long way toward letting employees know the leader is embracing your culture and excited to work with their team.

- **Introduce a new program, platform, or initiative.** Once the change is rolling out, you can accompany that with a Team Award to help people acclimate in a positive, energized frame of mind. Instead of a t-shirt or mug, a Team Award can help them associate something more meaningful and lasting with the change.
- **Celebrate the launch of a new brand identity.** Marketing might get in on the change-related Team Awards too. If you're launching a new logo or brand identity, a Team Award can make a more meaningful alternative to swag.

# Culture Management

Culture is central to success, which most CEOs know. In one 2018 study, 67% of global CEOs predicted that within five years, workplace talent would focus more on corporate culture and values than on pay. In the aftermath of the pandemic, this prediction is already bearing fruit.

One of the strengths of employee recognition and appreciation is simply in creating a more positive, human place to work. This works on a peer-to-peer basis, a manager-to-report basis, and a leadership-to-employees basis.



According to McKinsey, culture

**“forms the backbone of organizational health and fuels sustained outperformance over time: companies with strong cultures achieve up to three-times higher total returns to shareholders than companies without them.”**

Moreover, making an effort to manage culture is more likely to positively impact employee productivity, alignment, and engagement, according to Gallup.



## **How our customers are thinking about Team Awards in their efforts to create a healthy, inclusive culture:**

- **Underscore focus on a core value or behavior.** Has your recognition program identified an underutilized or underappreciated core value? Consider kicking off a renewed focus on that value with a Team Award to model what it means to you as a leader and how it adds strength to the organization.
- **Celebrate company milestones or anniversaries.** Did you just celebrate 10 years as a company, or maybe 100? Maybe you just hired your 10,000th employee? Team Awards are an excellent way to mark these moments as a team, so everyone can share in the accomplishment.

- **Ameliorate organizational traumas or crisis management.** Sometimes things can happen in a company that are upsetting, and companies can use support from leadership then too. Your Team Award may be focused on offering resilience and self-care for employees following organizational trauma – working to help knit the fabric of your culture back together.
- **Celebrate the activities or accomplishments of ESG programs.** Purpose is a key driver for today's organizations. Chances are your ESG programs are important initiatives to you that raise your profile in the marketplace and make employees proud to work for your company. Ensure that those programs get the attention they deserve by using a Team Award to amplify and celebrate them.

- **Underscore health and wellness goals.**

If you're trying to encourage employees to take time for their health and well-being, you can make that a call to action by including a Team Award they could use toward their wellness goals.

- **Celebrate external awards and commendations (such as Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup>).**

If your company has been given an important award or commendation, a Team Award is an excellent way to pay it forward or thank your employees who made it possible.

# Support Business Goals and Objectives

Let's not overlook the incredible potential of using Team Awards to align employees with shared performance goals. Employee satisfaction – an outcome of recognition – is also a strong influence on improving customer or patient satisfaction rates.

A powerful tool for motivating individuals to do great work, recognition is also a powerful motivator for larger cohorts of your employees.



## **How our customers are thinking about Team Awards as they work toward specific business goals:**

- **Kick off a rallying cry for a new business goal.** Get your team excited and motivated by your new quarterly, biannual, or annual rallying cry and incentivized to hit the ground running.
- **Celebrate the acquisition of a big client or contract.** Did you just land a big deal or renewal? Show your employees how much it matters to the business by sending out a Team Award to accompany the news.

- **Celebrate the launch of a new product, service, or LOB.** New products or lines of business can take months or even years to get into development. Show employees in those groups that they are noticed and appreciated with a Team Award to celebrate the launch.
- **Celebrate major new patents or copyrights.** If your business is built on intellectual property, a major new patent, trademark, or copyright might be cause for celebration. Let everyone know what you've achieved by calling attention to it with a Team Award.
- **Performance-based cohort awards.** Do you want to give a special shout-out from the CEO or another leader to a cohort of people who go the extra mile in your organization? A Team Award can be a terrific way to appreciate them and encourage others to aim high.

- **Reward quarterly or annual business/ revenue goals.** If your company has made its revenue goals, consider a Team Award as a way to give the team an extra “thank you” all at once.
- **Celebrate the achievement of a big company business objective.** Whatever it is that is on your list of big, hairy goals, you can celebrate its achievement with a Team Award to the people who made it happen. This not only thanks those who went the extra mile, but also sets your next project up for success.
- **Celebrate ongoing safety standards or goals.** In many industries, safety is a big focus. Celebrate your safety goals and keep safety top of mind with Team Awards.
- **Celebrate certifications or ratings.** Whatever the certifications are that matter in your industry – from ISO to LEED to UL – you can ensure that employees feel good about the achievement and give them a big congratulations with a Team Award.

# Will Team Awards work for you?

Team Awards are a powerful mechanism for every recognition program, and every company can benefit by employing them.

Team Awards are flexible, so you can decide how they will work best in your organization. For example, one company might deploy them from the CEO level. Many companies will see the benefits in expanding them to cover other organization-wide givers, such as the C-suite or VPs.



Likewise, you may want to expand access to include line of business leaders, or allow directors or managers to give Team Awards to their organizations. It is easy to create rules and governance for approvals of Team Awards that match your exact organizational needs. This is something you can work with your account team to implement.

However you decide to set up governance, you will find that Team Awards are in many cases easier and more effective than cash or physical gifts. They are a streamlined and efficient way to reach many people in a way that puts the messaging first and are never lost in a paycheck or bogged down in the logistics surrounding payroll.



**Want to get started with Team Awards?  
Connect with your account team to chat.**

+1 888.743.6723 | [workhuman.com](https://workhuman.com)  
Or read more on our blog: [workhuman.com/whblog](https://workhuman.com/whblog)