



Connect People and Transform Culture

A CASE STUDY

Co-founded in 1982 by Leonard Bosack and Sandy Lerner, Cisco Systems is a worldwide IT leader that designs, manufactures, and sells networking equipment. While its headquarters is in San Jose, Calif., Cisco employs more than 70,000 people in nearly 400 sites globally. Its mission is to shape the future of the Internet by creating unprecedented value and opportunity for customers, employees, investors, and ecosystem partners.

The People Deal is Cisco's vision for the kind of experience it hopes to create for employees. Embedded within the People Deal are Cisco's values of Connect Everything, Innovate Everywhere, and Benefit Everyone.

The challenge

As part of a broader culture refresh to improve “moments that matter” in the employee experience, Cisco was looking to modernize its reward program – a traditional spot bonus program for employees who completed big projects.

“Recognition is really at the center of the employee experience,” says Gabrielle Thompson, former senior vice president, acquisitions & total rewards at Cisco.

The challenge was around publicity of the program – only people on the team would know if someone received a reward. And only managers were able to give rewards to their team members.

“We wanted to put power in the hands of people through peer-to-peer recognition because they’re the people who see you every day. We know the power of teams. Your manager may see just one piece of your work,” says Gabrielle.

Cisco’s ambition was to better align employees’ recognition and reward experience around these moments that matter – and with the cultural experience that the People Deal promises employees.

The solution

To create a better experience for employees, Cisco set out to create a global, peer-to-peer recognition and reward program based on its core values. Some of the goals of the program were to:

- Increase participation and frequency
- Create positive employee interactions and connections
- Improve productivity of teams and individuals
- Increase employee engagement and satisfaction

Ultimately, Cisco chose to partner with Workhuman® to bring this vision to life. Claire Gray, vice president, human resources at Cisco, explains why the partnership works so well: “What we came to really appreciate and partner on is the innovation and co-design. Workhuman brought a lot of other ideas as part of our partnership, like video and mobile capability.”

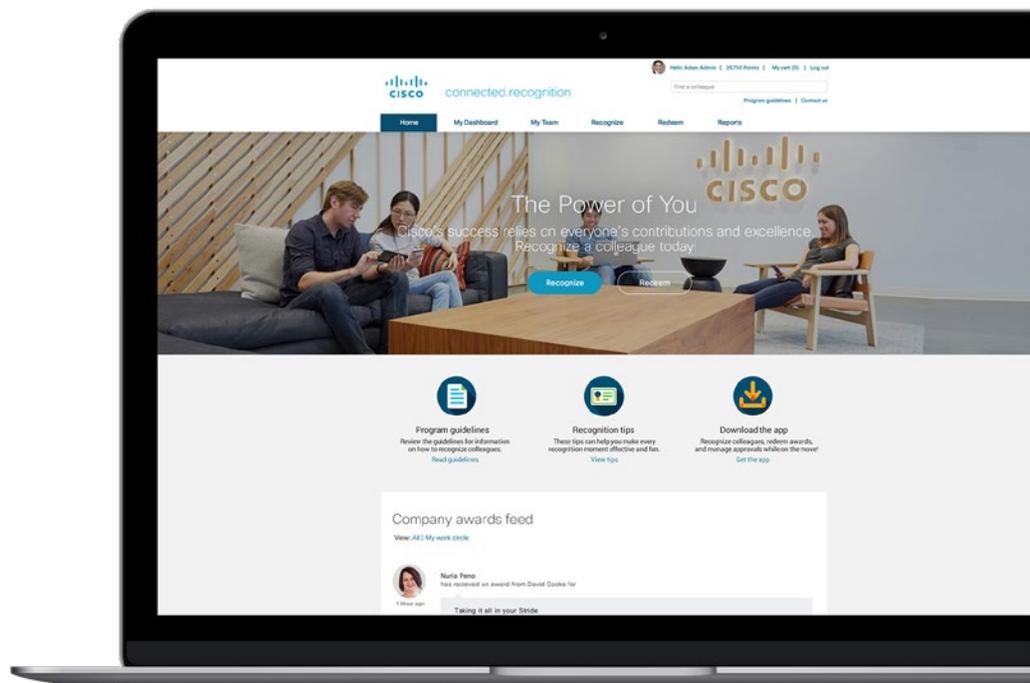


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GABRIELLE THOMPSON
Former Senior Vice President,
Acquisitions & Total Rewards, Cisco

The result was Connected Recognition, a Cisco-branded employee recognition and reward program based on core values and funded at 1% of payroll. This level of investment enabled Cisco to create the best possible recognition experience for all employees, as well as reap quantifiable results.

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The result

In the first year alone, 85% of Cisco employees gave or received Connected Recognition awards. “Getting 85% of a 70,000-person company to do anything that they don’t have to is impressive. This is all optional,” says Claire.

What’s more, nearly half (48%) of awards given are from individual contributors, demonstrating a profound shift from manager-only nominations to more peer-to-peer nominations.

Participation and momentum remain strong after five years of the program, with more than 1.2 million awards given.

From Portugal to Peru, Canada, and Chile, Cisco has been recognized globally for its enviable culture and amazing employee experience. “Our Connected Recognition program is one element of many things that are important to caring for our people and their families,” says Gabrielle. Several employees have blogged about how Connected Recognition has impacted their lives, from using rewards to take a vacation in Thailand, to giving back to charities. In 2018 alone, \$32,000 were redeemed in global charities through Connected Recognition.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Program design, leadership support, and modeling:

Frequency: 600+ awards given per day for a total of 1.2M awards given over 5 years

Range of award values: from \$25 to \$500

Peer-to-peer giving: 48% of Connected Recognition awards are between team members

Strong manager participation: 90%+ of people leaders gave nominations in 2018

Executive participation and modeling: 92% of executive leaders gave nominations in 2018

A broad base of givers: the most engaged Cisco employees receive 10+ awards per year from 10+ unique nominators

Connected Recognition also has a proven impact on employee engagement. The team recently analyzed data from nearly 60,000 employees who received Connected Recognition awards. **They found a strong positive correlation between engagement and more frequent, smaller awards received throughout the year.**

In fact, the most engaged Cisco employees receive an award every 30 to 40 days and from at least 10 unique nominators throughout the year. The data also shows Connected Recognition awards valued at \$25, given by peers and redeemable in Workhuman's robust e-commerce store, are much more powerful drivers of engagement than larger cash awards.

How exactly does Connected Recognition boost engagement? When a Cisco employee receives a Connected Recognition award, they're much more likely to agree with the following two statements on Cisco's engagement survey:

- **"I have a chance to use my strengths every day at work."**
- **"I know I will be recognized for excellent work."**

As Ashley Goodall, senior vice president of methods and intelligence at Cisco, explains, “**Recognition acknowledges [people’s] strengths**, which is the number one secret of high-performing teams.” Even better, as the number of unique nominators increases, so does the employee’s engagement level. “Once you hit that sixth nominator, meaning that sixth person giving you recognition, your engagement goes up significantly. And then it goes up from there even further,” says Gabrielle.

To learn how recognition can drive retention and engagement at your company, get in touch.

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