



**Engaging a Global Workforce
Through Rewards and Recognition**

In today's global business environment, it is becoming clear that job satisfaction is not enough to help forge the link between employee performance and positive business results. ¹

The key to business success is engaged employees: engaged employees produce results because when they are in a thriving environment, they are motivated to achieve. While many companies aspire to master engagement, for global businesses, this feat is not easy to accomplish. International workforces are faced with additional challenges such as cultural barriers, unique departments and separated organizational units. Furthermore, every employee is motivated differently, calling for an individualized and specific strategy to truly capture the engagement of a global workforce.

As building a global culture occupies the minds of today's HR professionals and business leaders alike, companies are coming to realize that engagement solutions play a critical role in linking a global workforce. Based on the direct correlation Rewards and Recognition have on business results, more and more companies are moving in the same direction in hopes of overcoming hindrances global distance incurs. Employee engagement is a strategic initiative, but doesn't have to be administratively taxing or financially straining. It should, however, free up administrative time, save the company and consolidate costs, as well as make employees happy, engaged and productive.

Creating a Community Among a Global Workforce

With the onset of globalization, most organizations find themselves thinking about how to engage employees from different countries, in different languages, with different ideas of what constitutes a "Reward." To complicate matters, engagement initiatives need to portray equality across borders, be transparent, and have traceable results. The Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study identifies the different means of engaging a global company, "The people practices that matter most to employees in one country won't necessarily be as important to employees in another country," as noted by Julie Gebauer, Managing Director, Towers Perrin.

Cultivating culture throughout a global workforce should be one of the leading factors considered when it comes to driving business results. Of course the corporate culture will be different in various countries, but identifying the importance of engaging employees

is universal. Employees are after all the ones responsible for growth and revenue. Connecting to employees on a deeper level is necessary to achieving results and fostering engagement. Your employees are your company's competitive advantage. People will affect how your company is perceived, spoken about, written about and reputed.

Elements to a Successful and Relevant Global Rewards Program

Implement a Culture Portal

Bringing a dispersed workforce together and enabling a transparent community can be achieved through the application of a Culture Portal. A Culture Portal is a web-based page, accessible worldwide, that is typically designed into a Global Rewards and Recognition program. Company updates, announcements, videos, Live Recognition and tweets are consolidated into one user-friendly page. This feature captures what your people say and do every day—in the workplace and on social media—in one accessible place that shares company information in an authentic and relevant way.

Locally Relevant Rewards

Providing employees with rewards that are culturally and personally meaningful to them is the first part of the engagement equation. This ensures that rewards are not only diverse and culturally relevant, but also maximize the effect of the rewards and in turn, continue to drive key positive behaviors that get business results. With Global Rewards, companies make engagement the universal language of their people. Working with a global provider means that your employees receive a meaningful reward in a timely manner, and that the recognized behavior gets repeated.

Remove Administrative Burdens

Cloud computing is the future. Today, software doesn't sit on a server in the office—it's being hosted, which means HR professionals can do things in new and innovative ways. Gone are the days when recruiting was a mile-high stack of paperwork stack. As HR professionals adopt this trend, the administrative burdens of reward fulfillment in a global workforce can be transitioned into the hands of professionals. By recognizing that HR's role as an administrative gatekeeper is over, HR can focus on democratizing the workforce. An effective Global

Solution is one that is web-based and accessible anywhere—even on a mobile or tablet device, provided in multiple languages—and encompasses multi levels of fulfillment including virtually fulfilled rewards. An online Rewards and Recognition solution alleviates the transparency issue that dispersed workforces battle, and provides employees with a tool to openly see what’s happening at the company across the globe. An online program allows employees to come together to share relevant information globally, exuding transparency from the top down. As technology continues to prevail and dictate our global communication abilities, an online platform for your employees to recognize each other beyond borders, coupled with locally and culturally relevant rewards, is the most effective way to capture employee engagement and share information that pertains to company culture.

Hundreds of Locations, One Goal

In worldwide organizations, multiple locations make it difficult to keep employees aligned to one goal. But without a unique reminder of the company’s vision, not only do employees often lose sight of goals, but they also may not be aware of what the mission is. Statistics show that only 14% of people are engaged and willing to go above and beyond their role’s expectations for the greater good of the company.² This integral component to employee engagement can result in serious implications if lacking. When employees are not aligned to corporate goals, the company is not on track to succeed. Donald Lowman, the Managing Director of Towers Perrin HR Services, comments, “We now know that engagement transcends geographic, economic and even cultural differences. Highly engaged people—regardless of where they work—have a similar set of emotional and rational connections to their jobs.”³

Tools to Achieve Alignment

It’s one thing to recognize your employees; it’s another to liken their successes to your company’s values. Formal Global Rewards and Recognitions Programs professionally align a global team’s results and the overall organizational goals. By assigning corporate values

2 <http://www.towersperrin.com/tp/getwebcachedoc?webc=HRS/USA/2006/200602/GWS.pdf>
3 <http://www.towersperrin.com/tp/getwebcachedoc?webc=HRS/USA/2006/200602/GWS.pdf>

to recognition criteria, employees' positive performance is attributed to the business's objectives. Now, not only are corporate goals transparent, but they also are instilled in an employee's everyday work. Furthermore, employees become aligned to the overall vision of the company through values, while also validating the results of their hard work through recognition. A formal program allows corporate values to serve as a unique reminder of what constitutes success. Values can become an important component of your global workforce, not just a plaque on the wall.

Empower employees to reward success with Peer-to-Peer Recognitions. A formal Peer-to-Peer Recognition tool equips employees to recognize exemplary behavior and hard work, which further helps teams bond regardless of geographical locations. Peer-to-Peer Recognition unlocks discretionary effort and sends a strong message that both people and performance matter. Peer-to-Peer creates a community where employees can recognize their colleagues easily, whether they work in the same office or an ocean apart. More and more, employers are implementing a Rewards and Recognition solution to heighten employee engagement scores and financial performance by recognizing and reinforcing positive behaviors and rewarding results.

An effective, formal Global Recognition solution will provide a Live Recognition Feed, which tells an international workforce about your business' success in one singular and easily accessible spot. The Live Recognition Feed openly celebrates employee accomplishments, outlining specific details of the success achieved. Furthermore, a proper tool will provide employees with the opportunity to actively participate in meaningful peer-to-peer interaction with commenting and one-click hat tips. Tools like a Live Recognition feed transform your company into a community by sharing wins and encouraging focused conversation around success—no matter where in the world the achievement has occurred. What gets recognized gets repeated. Public recognition and celebration company-wide will not only bring a culture together, but it will also drive results and foster knowledge sharing.

Overcoming Cultural Differences

The decision to implement a Global Rewards and Recognition program typically serves two purposes: first, to recognize and

reward the accomplishments of employees and second, to align the company to a common goal. Commonly, what the C-Suite and Program Ambassadors overlook, is that though there is one common goal, there are many different means to aligning a global workforce. Insights from Mercer's What's Working™ research affirms that "companies that make the best use of employee-engagement research also take cultural differences into account as they implement initiatives and develop management practices geared towards increasing the engagement of their global workforces."⁴ Accepting cultural differences while still adhering to the company's corporate culture—while developing employee engagement—is a challenge that companies must master to meet the unique needs of a diversified workforce.

Understanding and respecting cultural differences is critical to engaging a global workforce. By implementing a formal Global Rewards and Recognition Program, a business removes the ambiguity of gift-giving and leaves it in the hands of professionals. An effective Global Rewards and Recognition program has catalogs that vary country to country, which reflect respective cultural norms. Furthermore, working with a global partner ensures a timely process and shows employees everywhere that they are a priority. With employees around the world, a Global Rewards and Recognition Program can effectively engage the workforce in different countries and in multiple languages.

Case In Point: Starbucks

Maintaining a strong company brand and unique culture in a global company is no easy feat. For global employee engagement, it is not about reinventing the wheel—it's about following best practices.

In Howard Schultz's book "Pour Your Heart Into It," he discusses how Starbucks "grew big but stayed small" by remaining committed to their unique culture and sustaining it at any cost. "Whether you are the CEO or a lower level employee, the single most important thing you do at work each day is communicate your values to others," Schultz proclaims.⁵ Starbucks took a people first, profits last mentality as they expanded globally to ensure that their expansion did not come at the loss of their culture, their vision and, most importantly,

4 http://www.mmc.com/knowledgecenter/Engaging_Employees_To_Drive_Business.pdf
5 Schultz, Howard. "Pour Your Heart Into It." 81

The Medicines Company

The Medicines Company, a global business in the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry, invested in an informal recognition program to foster employee engagement. While they noticed that associates were motivated by rewards and recognition, the informal program was difficult to track and did not project equality or uniform celebration across the company. The Medicines Company modeled their program after industry best practices and assigned their corporate values to recognition criteria. This gesture brought core values to the forefront of employees' everyday work and infused autonomy. As a result, the formal online solution transcended all global barriers. Within the first week of implementation, the Medicines Company achieved a 93.2% activation rate allowing employees to recognize each other worldwide.

their people. Schultz recognized that as the company grew, so did the chance that an employee was not being treated fairly, negatively affecting engagement scores. "If we can't attend to that problem," Schultz said, "We are facing a failure worse than any shortcomings Wall Street can detect." Human Resources quickly became the most important department at Starbucks, which is attributed to their ability to maintain the small coffee comfort shop across the globe. Schultz said that Starbucks learned to "communicate the mission better" to create a work environment employees wanted to be a part of. The Starbucks employee rewards and recognition platform encompasses goals and values, and rewards employees with award nominations to celebrate milestones and moments that are significant to the company.

Conclusion

Whether you're a part of an international organization or on the verge of expansion, there are many obstacles to consider when it comes to rewarding and recognizing your workforces' accomplishments. Transparency, corporate alignment, and cultural differences are only a few of the challenges global businesses encounter. The trials that international companies face can be conquered by implementing a formal Global Rewards and Recognition program. Based on the challenges and successes the businesses featured in the mentioned case studies endured, it's proven that a formal Rewards and Recognition program is sensitive to cultural differences and works as an engagement tool that bridges the gaps of a dispersed workforce.

Key Takeaways

1. Don't Just Create a Window; Open the Doors

In a dispersed workforce, where it's more difficult to foster transparency, the trust of the workforce is more difficult to capture. Use a Culture Portal to bring teams together, enabling transparency and creating community. Don't just show employees the business goals and major decisions—invite them to participate. Use a provider who understands cultural barriers and who provides culturally relevant rewards in a timely manner. A Global Rewards and Recognition strategy creates transparent culture where company wins and reward redemptions happen worldwide in real-time.

2. Alignment Cultivates Autonomy

It's easy for employees to become consumed by their individual workload and not understand what their contributions are attributed to on a larger scale. In a global workforce, this problem is magnified. Creating alignment is not only important in achieving business results, but it's crucial to employee engagement in an international workforce. Alignment to corporate goals and values infuses your employees with autonomy so they work towards something greater than themselves. A Global Rewards and Recognition program will use a company's corporate values as recognition criteria to reinforce the company's goals.

3. "Thank You" has 6,500 languages

There's nothing wrong with expressing your gratitude, but cultural differences can cause messages to be misconstrued. Saying "thank you" to employees should be about the receiver, not the giver. Implementing a formal Global Rewards and Recognition strategy ensures that recognition is multilingual and that rewards are culturally relevant. Leaving a Global Rewards and Recognition solution in the hands of the professionals ensures that your company offers a diversified program that maximizes engagement and boosts business results.

Take a proactive approach to the Global Rewards and Recognition strategy: rollout a professional program that instills autonomy and meaning within employees, while aligning the company to one vision. Globally dispersed workforces have their challenges, but engaging employees shouldn't be one of them.