



WELLBEING CONSULTING

Recognition for Leaders, Too! What PartnerWell's Workforce Culture Survey Is Telling Us

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At PartnerWell, we specialize in building cultures of wellbeing at work by addressing workforce culture, proactive wellbeing, and mental health. Through our Workforce Culture Survey, we support many clients in understanding the evolving needs of their teams.

PartnerWell's recent survey findings suggest a compelling trend: people leaders consistently score lower on feeling recognized for their work across many industries. These are the individuals responsible for motivating teams, driving performance, and fostering development in others. Research shows that only one in three managers are engaged at work (1).

At the same time, managers are the biggest factor in an employee's experience and job satisfaction, and a significant factor in overall wellbeing (2). This can feel like a hefty responsibility for managers to carry, which is why they cannot be alone in this effort to support employees. In turn, they need support from leadership and their peers to prioritize ongoing actions to develop and sustain a culture of recognition.

"In a recent Gallup workplace survey, employees were asked to recall who gave them their most meaningful and memorable recognition. The data revealed the most memorable recognition comes most often from an employee's manager (28%), followed by a high-level leader or CEO (24%), the manager's manager (12%), a customer (10%) and peers (9%)" (3). Like most organizational initiatives, building a culture of recognition requires understanding and buy-in across all levels to be successful. We encourage all leaders to lean into promoting and practicing recognition to instill this in the company culture.

In many organizations, recognition and career development efforts tend to focus on early-career employees or those in individual contributor roles. But what happens when someone steps into leadership? Recognition typically flows one way from a leader to their team, leaving the leader potentially lacking in supportive figures and acknowledgement for their own contributions. It is not the team's responsibility to recognize their own leader, and often peers of leaders are siloed into their own verticals and are not aware of each other's daily contributions. In other words, it can be lonely "at the top."

In our last issue, we highlighted how **prevalent burnout is among middle managers**, with over 78% of middle managers experiencing burnout (4). And research highlights “employees who receive high-quality recognition are significantly less likely to experience burnout. In fact, those who feel adequately recognized are up to 84% more likely to be thriving in their lives” (5).

Behaviors are contagious – when leaders are thriving, they are better equipped to show up with energy, empathy, and resilience. That is why it is essential to ensure that leaders’ wellbeing is being actively supported, so they can, in turn, support their employees effectively.

How can we start focusing on recognition for all employees?

- Learn about peers’ recognition styles
- Hold other leaders accountable for peer-to-peer recognition
- Train leaders on the value recognition
- On cross-divisional leadership meetings, share wins and celebrate successes
- Acknowledge leaders and employees in company town halls and/or larger meetings

Interested in learning more about recognition? Reach out to [Hayley and Katie](#).

Citations:

1. Clifton Jim, Harter, Jim. “Culture Shock: An Unstoppable Force Has Changed how We Work and Live. Gallup’s Solution to the Biggest Leadership Issue of Our Time.” Washington D.C., Gallup Press. 2023
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3. (2016, June 28). *The importance of employee recognition: Low cost, high impact*. Gallup.com. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236441/employee-recognition-low-cost-high-impact.aspx>
4. Brower, T. (2023, January 29). *Managers have major impact on mental health: How to lead for wellbeing*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tracybrower/2023/01/29/managers-have-major-impact-on-mental-health-how-to-lead-for-wellbeing/>
5. Gallup & Workhuman. (2022). *Amplifying wellbeing at work and beyond through the power of recognition*. Gallup, Inc. & Workhuman. <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/392540/unleashing-recognition-at-work.aspx>