

# HOW TO BUILD AN EMPLOYEE SOCIAL RECOGNITION SYSTEM THAT GETS RESULTS

John O'Brien, Vice President, Employee Performance Group,  
BIWORLDWIDE

## 7 Seven Steps for Getting Started

Choosing to build an employee social recognition system for your organization is an important strategic business decision. A well-designed, comprehensive system that provides flexibility, accountability and transparency can have a powerful and long-lasting impact throughout the company. By crafting an enterprise-wide system, instead of running many ad-hoc programs, your organization can significantly improve employee engagement and impact its bottom line.

### Social Recognition System Stakeholder Benefits

Social recognition systems help all levels of the organization achieve their goals:

- ✔ **Executive Leadership.** An ongoing system drives corporate objectives, builds an enterprise-wide culture of appreciation and validates investment expenses.
- ✔ **Business Units.** Systems can provide autonomy and flexibility to accommodate geographical and departmental objectives, serve as a flexible management tool and offer data on a more granular level.
- ✔ **Human Resources.** A system provides a consistent recognition experience for all employees, drives targeted behaviors that help a company achieve its desired culture and drives employee participation.
- ✔ **Employees.** With a comprehensive system, employees have one resource for all initiatives; they benefit from the ability to accrue award earnings and are better engaged and satisfied.
- ✔ **Supply Chain.** Auditors, compliance and legal are better supported through budget control processes, vendor consolidation and savings in time and dollars by having to interact with only one system for all employee initiatives.

### 7 Steps to Build a System to Fit You

Here are seven important steps to take to ensure the system you build serves your needs and helps you achieve maximum employee engagement to meet enterprise-wide business objectives.

#### ONE

#### Create a Cross-Functional Advisory Board

As a busy HR executive, you simply can't do this alone. A key to your success will be gaining ownership among a wide range of your internal customers and constituents. As you well know, everyone will have opinions on what you should or should not do because it can impact how they currently operate and how they may need to support the system on an ongoing basis. By creating an advisory board, you can get initial input as you design your system, receive feedback, test

ideas, ensure that you are respecting current programs already in place and integrate the wide range of needs your company must meet to engage employees.

**Board members should include representatives from:**

- ✓ Executive leadership
- ✓ Business units or department groups such as sales, marketing, customer service, manufacturing, distribution, etc.
- ✓ Human resources staff from locations outside of corporate headquarters to give a different perspective
- ✓ Employees from a wide range of job functions and locations for grass roots input
- ✓ Legal and compliance to ensure that tax reporting is accurate and reward structures meet any regulatory guidelines
- ✓ Finance and accounting to make sure that rewards payments follow policies and procedures
- ✓ IT, as you most certainly will be needing their support to integrate the social recognition system into your company intranet and to provide support to your external supplier

## **TWO**

### **Build Your Core Team**

This will likely be key members of your staff, but it can also include representatives of your advisory board – especially those who will have to help you implement the system such as IT. Some key subject matter experts you'll want to include on your core team:

- ✓ Database contacts who can help you define how your current employee information is structured so you can leverage this information into your social recognition system. You'll want to be able to access hierarchal data and payroll data for tax reporting purposes on award earnings.
- ✓ IT contacts who can help to integrate your current employee intranet with any outside supplier services you use.
- ✓ Employee communication contacts to help you create collateral, web copy, environmental and other media messages internally or with an outside supplier.

## **THREE**

### **Inventory All Employee Initiatives Currently in Place**

Depending on how large your organization is and how it is structured, there could literally be hundreds of ad-hoc recognition programs in place, in addition to the corporate-wide program you sponsor such as anniversary awards. By creating an enterprise-wide system, you will want most of these programs to be blended into your new strategic approach.

Sponsors of these programs may welcome the change to a broad-based system, be indifferent or be unhappy having to give up what could be working well for them on a local basis. Knowing what's out there, what is working and what isn't will give you valuable input.

## **FOUR**

### **Research What Others Are Doing and Find Best Practices**

Leverage what other like-minded companies are doing with their social recognition systems. You can find this information in a number of ways:

- ✓ Human Resources journals

- ✓ Human Resources industry groups such as Society for Human Resource Management
- ✓ Recognition journals such as *Incentive*
- ✓ Industry groups in your same line of business
- ✓ Recognition and rewards consultants
- ✓ Incentive and recognition service companies
- ✓ Informational interviews with HR colleagues at non-competitive companies
- ✓ Outsourcing resources such as *HRO Today*

Try to learn how your company is both similar and different and how you can adapt best practices to your system.

## FIVE

### Develop a Social Recognition System Blueprint

Create a blueprint that includes all the features your system would have in a perfect world with unlimited budget. While you probably won't include everything on your initial launch, an "ultra-deluxe" plan will give you aspirations for enhancing your plan as it grows and gains acceptance throughout your organization.

Your blueprint should:

- ✓ Set specific and measurable goals. Outline the specific behaviors you want your social recognition system to impact. These can include:
  - Reinforce company values
  - Reinforce specific business practices
  - Promote wellness
  - Impact safety
  - Encourage cost-savings
  - Promote innovation
  - Improve productivity
  - Reduce turnover
  - Increase employee engagement and satisfaction
- ✓ Define which employee groups can impact each goal
- ✓ Identify how you could measure each goal
- ✓ Assign a dollar value to each goal and determine how much you are willing to spend for goal improvements
- ✓ Outline a broad, conceptual implementation structure that discusses:
  - What employees would have to do to be recognized and rewarded
  - How you would communicate to employees
  - How you would administer the programs

## SIX

### Review Your Blueprint with Your Advisory Board

Explaining that your blueprint is based on a "perfect-world" scenario, present it to your advisory board for feedback and a reality check. Their feedback will help you prioritize what to include first and what legal and compliance situations you must consider. You'll also discover who your champions will be in helping you secure budget and accessing resources when you are ready to implement your program.

## SEVEN

### Hire an Expert

After getting buy-in from your advisory board, you're now ready to put together a more detailed social recognition plan to present to senior leadership. This can be a long and complex process. Hiring an expert (either a consultant or an incentive and recognition company) to help will make it easier for you to create a good plan that works for your company. The experts can help you craft a plan based on best practices and help you determine which components you can implement in-house and which would be better handled by an outside supplier. Using experts also gives you additional credibility with senior management, showing that you have done your due diligence.

### Social Recognition is Strategic

Like any good business practice, thinking strategically about social recognition systems is critical. A system you build requires broad-based input, buy-in and ownership to ensure that it provides flexibility, accountability and transparency.

BI WORLDWIDE is a global leader in helping organizations build social recognition systems. We use the latest technology and behavioral economics theory to create programs that help organizations meet their strategic business goals.

Our leading recognition solution, G5, is the most advanced social recognition system on the market today. G5 has been specifically designed to deliver behavior change to achieve our customers' engagement objectives.

This highly-advanced system incorporates forward-thinking technology with industry best practices that make it:

- ✔ Accessible to any user, anywhere, using any device
- ✔ App-driven to support a wide range of employee engagement initiatives
- ✔ Socially-adaptable to integrate program messages into social networks including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn®
- ✔ Playful, offering a gamification app utilizing popular badging systems
- ✔ Personally-focused using our patent-pending recognition PURL™ (personalized URL) app to celebrate employee achievements in a social networking environment, and our proprietary U Draw It™ app to create personalized eCards
- ✔ Globally responsive with BIW offices in Australia, Canada, China, India, Latin America, the United Kingdom and the United States
- ✔ Data-driven, focusing on benchmarking and providing actionable data to help improve program results.

For more information on **BI WORLDWIDE** and **G5**, visit:  
[BIWORLDWIDE.com/G5](http://BIWORLDWIDE.com/G5) or email us at [info@BIWORLDWIDE.com](mailto:info@BIWORLDWIDE.com).