

Needs Assessment

To build an effective recognition program it is important to ask employees what their needs and preferences are, and to gauge their level of interest. To ensure a program's success, it must reflect what employees consider to be important. In addition, it is important to understand the workplace culture and business needs of your department and/or division.

Recognition is a tool that can be used by managers and supervisors to positively reinforce performance and behaviours that contribute to business goals and department values. That said, it is important in the needs assessment stage to clearly identify what the purpose of the recognition program will be and how it relates to achieving business goals and values, and ultimately a more supportive workplace environment for all. By tailoring programs to business priorities, based on knowledge of employee needs and preferences, your recognition program and related activities can impact employee motivation, the achievement of business priorities, client service and ultimately organizational success.

What is a Needs Assessment?

The process of gathering and examining information to obtain an accurate and thorough picture of the environment around you. Once analyzed, the information is then used to set goals, develop a plan of action and allocate resources.

Performing a needs assessment is a necessary step in developing employee recognition programs that are relevant and effective. By assessing employee needs and preferences, business objectives and priorities and your workplace culture, you can determine a focus and direction for your recognition activities.

Steps in Conducting a Needs Assessment:

Clarify the purpose and draft a plan for carrying out your needs assessment

What do you know? What do you want to know?

What are you trying to measure?

What will you do with the information collected?

Who will be included in planning and conducting the needs assessment?

What are the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the needs assessment?

Where will the information come from?

You should collect and review the following:

- ★ **Baseline information** – what recognition activities are currently taking place in your department and corporately? What have the employee surveys told us? What does the general research and literature say?
- ★ **Employee needs** – what type of recognition is most meaningful to employees? In what way do employees prefer to be recognized? Who do employees prefer to receive recognition from? Do they prefer public or private praise?
- ★ **Department/division business needs** - What types of behaviours do managers want to promote to meet business objectives? What are the corporate values? What are the department's/division's top priorities? If client service is the #1 priority, then tailor recognition activities to support that priority.

★ **Organizational culture** – assess the climate or culture of your department, division or unit. Low morale? High turnover? What are the demographics of your employees? Work-life balance? What are the underlying issues that affect satisfaction and feeling valued? Employee survey results may shed some light on this subject.

Identify your target population

Who will be surveyed? - All employees should have an opportunity to provide input into recognition programs and activities. If conducting a needs assessment for all employees is not feasible, it is important to ensure that the sample population be random and representative of the whole population.

Determine how you will collect information for the needs assessment

There are a variety of methods that can be used, either alone or in combination, to collect information from employees. Time and resources will play a role in determining your method of information collection. Examples include:

★ **One-on-one or small group discussions** - Informal meetings with employees, managers and other stakeholder groups can provide an opportunity to discuss recognition preferences and objectives and to share ideas. It also provides an opportunity to drill down results from aggregate surveys such as government's employee surveys.

★ **A suggestion box** - Allows employees to make anonymous comments through either an actual box placed somewhere in the department/division/unit or through a generic e-mail account.

★ **Employee survey/questionnaire** - This process is more formal and can be offered in hard copy, via email or on-line

★ **Focus group sessions** - This process is a semi-structured discussion with 8 – 12 stakeholders, typically led by a facilitator who follows and outline and input is recorded. This process provides you an opportunity to network and build relationships with stakeholders and better understand their attitudes and opinions.

Determine what information already exists that would be useful to analyze. For example:

Employee survey action team documents

Communication surveys

Information from staff meeting roundtables

Comments received at other forums – business planning sessions, healthy workplace initiatives, etc.

Anecdotal Information gathered through staff networking events, news bulletins, comment cards, etc.

Other sources of department-specific and corporate information – employee survey reports, governments business plan, Corporate Human Resource Plan, etc.

Also, look at external studies, literature, reports and articles on recognition.

Gather and manage information

Determine baseline information - if it exists.

Determine how the information will be organized – e.g. organized by categories/themes.

Remember, personal information should be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of conducting a needs assessment

Analyze information

What are the areas that require improvement? Where do gaps exist?

Do you see any trends when reviewing the information?

What are employees requesting?
Do employees feel that their needs are being met?
Are business needs being met?
Does a supportive work culture exist?
What are the root causes of problems?
What types of activities/programs are needed?

Use the results

Determine short and long term goals
Develop a recognition work plan (See Step in the Tool Kit)
Request Resources