

Why Reflection, Recognition, and Celebration Energises a Workplace

It's estimated that the average person spends a third of their lives (90,000 hrs) at work. If you subtract the time spent sleeping, this amounts to a significant portion of our 'awake' time. For most people, work is their dominant mental landscape and chief energy consumer. Therefore, their daily experiences at work colour the quality of their life.

This has sparked several new studies into the elements that make up a positive work environment. And we now know how important it is that, as leaders, we can provide enough mental challenge, autonomy, collaboration, flexibility, connection, and sense of ownership/buy in for team members to thrive.

Yet, there are two often-overlooked ingredients in the recipe for a "happy" workplace: and they are the need to spend time reflecting upon what we've experienced, and to recognise and celebrate each other.

Over the years of refining leadership development and team-building learning experiences, Performance Frontiers facilitators have come to understand the importance of encouraging our clients and partners to pause, take stock, appreciate, and call out what they've achieved. When we're all playing the infinite work game, our routine often doesn't always include automatic place markers for this – we must consciously create them.

So, how does reflecting, recognising, and celebrating energise us?



Growth Through Reflection

Reflection is an essential tool for personal and professional growth. By pausing to consider our experiences, we allow the time for our brain to assimilate, assess, and adjust. This in turn leads to less emotional reactivity and improved levels of critical thinking. We all need fallow time to digest the learnings that will help us better navigate our future – as individuals, and as teams and organisations.

And as leaders, our ability to reflect on the professional development of our team members is crucial in their career development, drives their engagement levels, and will impact our succession planning.

How good we are at practising reflection though, is influenced by a variety of factors, including:

Our Emotional Intelligence

- How in touch are we with our emotions, thoughts, and actions and the connection between them?
- How well do we understand the way we impact those around us?

Our individual mindset

- Do we have a desire to improve?
- How do we receive feedback?

Our leadership style

- Do we micromanage our teams?
- How do we value "thinking" time?

Our workload

- Can we make space for self-reflection in our BAU routine?
- What effect are fatigue and burnout having on our self-awareness?

Being aware of these factors will allow us to potentially remove the interferences to our ability to self-reflect, and the pay-off to building a regular reflexive practice will be considerable. We will have improved focus, a way to reinforce positive behaviours by tracking our progress, a process to reduce mental clutter, and a boost to our creativity. The combined impact will elevate our energy and appetite for work and life. Performance Frontiers [Think Pics](#) creative thinking cards have been a valuable tool for prompting regular reflective practice for our clients.



But self-reflection isn't the only way to tap into our energy wellspring at work.

Appreciation and Recognition

We also largely underestimate the power of appreciation. Some research, indicates that almost 70% of employees believe they would work harder if they were shown more appreciation. [Another study](#), shows that recognition is the largest driver of engagement, significantly exceeding pay, promotion, inspiration and autonomy. And businesses that formalise their appreciation and recognition incentives, experience over 30% less employee turnover.

While the statistics make a convincing case, we only need to look to our own personal experience to support this evidence. Consistently working without any positive feedback, flattens our drive and motivation. A leader who is willing to offer recognition has a stronger and more engaged team.

If your own workplace is affected by lack of recognition and appreciation, it could be time to introduce a formal recognition system and take stock of the informal feedback channels as well.

Formal recognition initiatives might include a range of feedback loops, such as peer-to-peer recognition, tailored service awards, ethical perks such as paid time off, and inclusive gatherings.

Acts of informal recognition are just as important but often more spontaneous. They can show up in a range of ways, such as impromptu public recognition, gifting small tokens, leaders spending time at coffee or lunch, small perks such as extra break time, private shout outs, and personalised thank you notes.

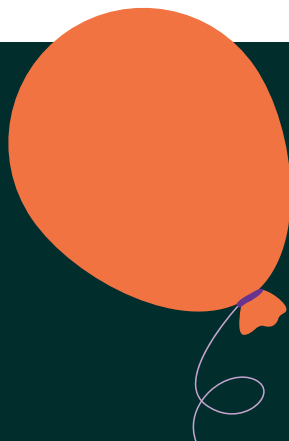
Celebration – what and how

Generally, celebrations are known to “promote perceived social support.” In the workplace though, the value is even more specific. It not only refers to celebrating the work wins, but people’s personal contexts. A 2022 study determined that when a team member’s values, culture, and community are celebrated, it is likely to create an ideal work setting because work is:

...an opportunity for people to express who they are, and to discover, know, and understand themselves. Work can become a means where workers not only protect each other’s bodies but help nourish each other to thrive emotionally and psychologically. For people to bring values to their work, it is important to honor the human context where their values reside. For they cannot be assigned to the intellect alone, but instead must also be honored in the personal and subjective realm of core values—the human, creative realm where people live, experience, and interpret their own personal lives.

Practically, there are numerous ways we can activate these kinds of celebrations if we see them as a process not an ending or a bookmark. This might be as simple as regular team lunches, self-care packages, celebrating personal events such as birthdays, weddings, births, or wellness events and mentorship opportunities. The idea is that it fits into the natural operating rhythm and becomes part of the social architecture of the organisation.

If our workplace, or team feels a little disconnected or lacklustre then take a moment to reflect. How long since you truly celebrated a win (small or large)? When was the last time you informally gave a team member a boost? What rewards are in place to show appreciation? The answer to reenergising your many hours at work may lie in these answers.



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