

TURN KEY



Best Practices Pull-Out Section

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Employee Recognition Programs Serve To Honor Staff; Highlight Contributions, Expected Behaviors

Destinations CU & Freedom FCU Share Their Programs' Organizational Benefits

Writing for Forbes Magazine, Josh Bersin noted, "We just completed a comprehensive research project on employee recognition (saying "thank you") and the results are really astounding: organizations that give regular thanks to their employees far outperform those that don't."¹

Pretty sure that "really astounding" comment was intended tongue-in-cheek. After all, who would be surprised that recognizing employees for demonstrating organizational core values in the workplace is a good thing?

This issue of *TurnKey* features employee recognition programs from two local credit unions. Destinations Credit Union in Baltimore recently launched their new **PREFAce** recognition program. Freedom Federal Credit Union in Bel Air has been using their "Core Values Award" to honor employees since 2012.



Destinations' program grew out of their desire to institute a cultural shift within the organization. "We started our **PREFAce** program in conjunction with an effort to institute a cultural shift in our organization," said Destinations' Carol Szaroleta. "We wanted

to highlight employees who exemplify our core values and reward that behavior."

Freedom's quarterly awards have similar goals. "Our 'Core Values Award' helps us highlight leadership by example," noted Michael Dilworth, Senior Vice President, Marketing. "Showing associates how you expect them to interact with members and our own employees is much more impactful than just telling them."

Szaroleta and Dilworth sat with *TurnKey* to provide some Q&As on their recognition programs. Read their experiences on the reverse to see if your organization may benefit from a similar program.

Q&A



CAROL SZAROLETA
AVP, MARKETING
DESTINATIONS CU



MIKE DILWORTH
SVP, MARKETING
FREEDOM FCU

How did your recognition program get its start?

*CS: After hiring the Sandusky Group to help us redefine our core values and provide us with tools to evaluate employees, we asked staff to come up with what those values look like to them. Staff input and Sandusky Group tools were used to judge our **PREFace Award**.*

MD: Our President/CEO Rose Ann Lambert created the award as a result of input from employees at an all-employee meeting.

What has been your staff's response to the program?

CS: Very positive – we have 6 to 8 employees nominated each quarter by their co-workers. Staff does all the evaluation without management input. It's entirely a staff-based recognition program.

MD: It's been very popular! Each quarter we tend to have 10 to 15 employees nominated for the award. This translates into outstanding service for both members & employees.

How do you go about selecting your honorees?

CS: Any employee can nominate any other employee. The nomination form has a scoring sheet that the nominating employee is asked to fill out on the nominee. Then a staff committee (1 from each department) also scores each nominee. The highest scoring employee wins that quarter.

MD: A committee of employees is made up of previous winners and volunteers who serve for a period of time. Each quarter they collect nominations, and they vote on the one they feel is most deserving. Employees are encouraged to recognize and nominate each other for their actions related to the demonstration of Freedom's Core Values: respect, integrity and commitment.

How does the program recognize your employees?

CS: They have a crystal lighthouse to display on their desk during the quarter, get fresh flowers, balloons, an extra day off and a special parking spot.

MD: The winner gets two days of paid time off (PTO). They are featured in Freedom's newsletter, web site and in social media so members can see their honor. A press release and photo is also distributed to local as well as credit union trade press.

Any advice for colleagues starting or enhancing their recognition programs?

CS: Make it a very positive, upbeat experience. Make sure you are modeling the behavior you want from your employees. Constant reinforcement of the ideals and giving praise very freely are important parts of this cultural shift.

MD: Ours has been running for almost 4 years, so it may be time to tweak it to infuse some new ideas. Many times the same individuals are nominated repeatedly.