



Recognition Professionals
International

WELLS FARGO & CO.—Technology Information Group Building a World-Class Recognition Program in One Department

**2007 RPI Best Practice, Best-In-Class
Recipient**

A Recognition Professionals International White
Paper



WELLS FARGO & COMPANY'S TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION GROUP BUILDING A WORLD-CLASS RECOGNITION PROGRAM IN ONE DEPARTMENT

2007—A Recognition Professionals International White Paper

Recognition Professionals International (formerly The National Association for Employee Recognition) chose The Wells Fargo Technology Information Group (TIG) as a 2007 Best Practice Award recipient, for its well thought-out communication plan and comprehensive recognition training program.

The first documented recognition reward at Wells Fargo dates back to their 1860s stagecoach days when James Wales Miller saved a \$30,000 payroll shipment from an attempted hold-up. Wells Fargo gave him a two-pound silver watch on a two-pound silver chain as a thank-you gift. Their recognition programs have only gone uphill from there.

Wells Fargo executives believe that, in order to be effective, the recognition program needs to increase the company's bottom line – most especially with a lower turnover rate. Company statistics show that the average time to fill a position is 41-51 days, with tangible hiring and training costs ranging from \$10,000 - \$50,000 per position. They also believe that by 2008 there will be a significant skilled and unskilled labor shortage in the U.S.

Other financial benefits they've noticed are:

- Improved attendance,
- Higher efficiency, and
- Higher productivity

TIG's vision: *To be the first choice; proud contributors who continuously innovate and are always on,* meshes well with the Wells Fargo company vision: *Satisfy all our customers' financial needs, help them succeed financially, be known as one of America's great companies and the number-one financial services provider in each of our markets*

Wells Fargo & Company is a diversified financial services institution providing banking, insurance, investments, mortgage and consumer finance through more than 6,000 stores, the Internet and other distribution channels across North America and internationally.

They have \$486 billion in assets and are headquartered in San Francisco. With 159,000 team members working in more than 80 businesses, Wells Fargo is one of the 40 largest private employers in the U.S.

Forbes magazine ranks Wells Fargo as the world's 26th leading company based on a composite of sales, assets, profits and market value. They are in the top 20 among all U.S. companies in profits and market value.

Each year, in choosing Best Practice Award recipients, RPI looks for companies whose recognition programs excel in the one or more of Recognition Professionals International 7 Best Practice standards of recognition program excellence, which are:

1. Recognition strategy,
2. Management responsibility,
3. Recognition program measurement,
4. Communication plan,
5. Recognition training,
6. Recognition events and celebrations, and
7. Program change and flexibility.



Overall Program

At Wells Fargo, the goal is that all employees understand they are valued by the company. One of the tools used to convey this is the “Team Works” homepage on the company’s website.

Company Chairman and CEO Dick Kovacevich said, “We all work very hard to create a positive experience for our Wells Fargo customers; we must also take steps to ensure that those we work with enjoy a fulfilling and rewarding experience as team members. The attitude of our team members is the single biggest influence on the attitude of our customers. When we feel good about ourselves, we make our customers feel good too – and they, in turn, are much more likely to entrust us with all of their business.”ⁱⁱ

In 2006, the Technology Information Group introduced the Take Five informal recognition program, designed to provide a daily venue for peer recognition. A thank you box was set up in each work group and both the person sending the thanks and the receiver are eligible for prizes. The company produced posters with Take Five messages such as:

- Take Five seconds to say thank you. Again.
- Take Five minutes to find out how someone likes to be recognized.
- Take Five minutes to send a thank you or e-card note.
- Take Five hours a month to devote to diversity events, ideas and shared values.
- Take Five team members and set up a recognition committee.

Wells Fargo has a wide range of recognition programs. Incentives include certificates, gift cards, shopping points, and/or points toward attending an annual conference. For example, the recipient of an On-The-Spot award, which recognizes outstanding performance on a significant project, receives a certificate, 50 shopping points and 50 points toward attending the conference

Every year, Wells Fargo holds a Sales and Service Conference (SSC), which is a national recognition event for “extraordinary achievers.” At this company-wide event, employees are honored and recognized, network with fellow achievers, and enjoy two days of recreation, relaxation, entertainment, and inspiration in such sunny spots as Oahu, Hawaii and Cancun.

Participants either earn their way through points accumulated from formal awards during the previous year, or are selected by the senior management team.

In addition, the Technology Information Group (TIG) holds its own Excellence Conference. The theme of the 2006 San Diego conference was Growth, Possibilities, and Success. Employees who consistently demonstrate the four TIG Vision elements are invited to attend. The elements are:

1. Striving for excellence.
2. Being a proud contributor who finds innovative solutions.
3. Managing an always-on approach.
4. Exemplifying first choice for business partners.

The TIG recognition system tracks all formal awards and processes and provides reports to managers, recognition coordinators, and the recognition team. Every year TIG administrators provide each of the senior leaders with allocations for various award categories. Then they track and report quarterly on allocations, performance ratings, and the number of team members recognized.

“It can be really tough to get IT departments onboard because the mindset is very much about numbers and metrics,” said Cheryl Miller, team member experience marketing manager for the



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technology information group. “They are focused on technology and solutions. They love doing code, developing websites, managing projects, and being innovative – this program was created to provide tools and move the needle in terms of their thinking.

“We had to teach them that recognition is not just about the formal awards. It’s about building a relationship, knowing your team members, about zeroing in on what’s important to them. There were so many elements to recognition that they were unaware of. They thought it was time-consuming and didn’t see the real benefits of making you team members feel valued and appreciated. They’ve come a long way.”

Communication Plan

The TIG recognition team believes they need to communicate constantly. They created a communications plan and take every opportunity to speak at staff meetings and off-site group meetings, teach recognition classes, send out marketing materials, present at monthly Manager Video Conferences and present to the management team.

TIG has the advantage of access to the latest technology, so they used everything at their disposal in order to communicate their recognition program. The result is a training program that includes online postcard notification, communications via their TIG home page and HR People Portal, brochures, photos, and learning and development online class sites.

“We really worked hard to convey to our managers the importance of valuing and recognizing people for the work that they do,” Miller said. “We used just about every medium that we could think of so that people would get the message and see it on a regular basis.”

A regular TIG employee survey includes three ratable statements about recognition:

1. My manager gives me useful feedback on how well I’m doing my job.
2. My performance on the job is evaluated fairly.
3. I am satisfied with the recognition I get for the work I do.

The most recent survey showed a 7 percent improvement over the year before.

Recognition Training

The centerpiece of the TIG recognition training program is “The Race for Recognition” – a comprehensive 2-hour course that was formulated in September 2005. The course is available both online and in-person. So far, TIG has trained over 1700 managers. They focus training on informal recognition and the value of recognition, but also touch on formal recognition.

“The Race for Recognition was fun,” Miller explained. “The whole goal was to train people in the shortest amount of time. Every manager feels that they are under time constraints. They have to take two hours out of their day to learn about recognition. To get them motivated to do that was a challenge in itself.

“We followed up with materials such as stories about what worked well in other groups. We created an online version – *webinar* - that is also about two hours so that we can reach all of our virtual managers as well. We know we have to keep energizing the managers.”

They train senior managers through meetings and provide condensed versions of the course to new hire and leadership development personnel. Some of the employee resource groups also request training.



A selection of power point screens used in “The Race for Recognition” course follows.

The four elements of recognition:

- Praise
- Thanks
- Respect
- Opportunity

Praise

- Be clear and concise about what you are praising.
- Make the praise proportional to the accomplishment, don't exaggerate or overdo it.
- Keep it timely. Don't wait six months for the performance review. When you see it, praise it!
- Know if your team member prefers public or private praise.

Thanks

- Be sincere
- Add variety such as balloons, a handshake, a smile, a hand-written note, an email or fax, express mail, etc.

Respect

- Team members want to be valued.
- Consider team members' needs.
- Provide a safe, pleasant work environment.
- Make allowance for personal crises.
- Get to know something about each person.

Opportunity

- Seek to learn new skills to teach to your team.
- Allow alternatives to how work is done.
- Mentor
- Ask for opinions on critical issues.
- Include team members in decision process.
- Encourage team members to train or coach others.

Team members not only want good pay and benefits, they also want to be:

- Valued and appreciated
- Treated fairly
- Given work that is important
- Provided opportunities for advancement
- Involved in the company.

Attributes of an effective program:

- Management commitment
- A link to bottom-line results of the company
- Recognize the value of awards for team members
- Fair and equitable distribution of awards



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- Simplicity of the program
- Continuous evaluation and improvement

A good reward is:

- Sincere and simple
- Meaningful to the team member
- Adaptable
- Relevant
- Timely
- Supportive of organizational goals/values

With the right recognition, you will find:

- Team members more willing to tackle problems on their own.
- Team members will show more concern about quality and reputation.
- Team members will be more willing to pitch in when things get difficult.
- Morale will go up, absenteeism will go down; your job will get easier.

Tips for recognitions that work:

- Provide clear expectations, validation, respect, loyalty and trust.
- Figure out what people have to offer and leverage those strengths.
- Individualize recognition. Make it personal.
- Encourage team members to recognize their peers.
- Give instant feedback.
- Celebrate as a team.

The class includes a video of CEO Dick Kovacevich stressing the importance of recognition and an interactive board game featuring questions specific to recognition at Wells Fargo.

Facilitators are encouraged to be concise, ask open-ended questions, listen actively, limit monopolizers, encourage relevant discussion, give participants opportunities to interact with each other, and rearrange groups periodically.

“We are working on an enterprise-wide program right now so that we will be consistent in terms of our awards,” Miller said. “The formal program was already in place when I walked in the door in April 2005. Six months later, our recognition was up 44.7 percent in terms of number of awards. We learned that it was a matter of communication and training people.”

Conclusion

The Wells Fargo TIG recognition team isn't content to rest on its laurels. Every month they work with coordinators to discuss needs, issues, and solutions. They regularly poll employees to see what is working and what programs and solutions employees would like to incorporate.

Because of their smartly planned recognition program that seamlessly meshes corporate components with their own initiatives, and because their communication and training policies are outstanding, Recognition Professionals International is pleased to name The Wells Fargo & Company as a 2007 Best Practice Award Recipient.

Wells Fargo takes advantage of the many benefits of being an RPI member, which include:



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- Cutting-edge education programs,
- Expert advice and assistance,
- An invitation to RPI's annual conference,
- A multitude of networking opportunities,
- A monthly e-newsletter and quarterly print newsletter,
- Instant answers to recognition program questions via the website, and more.

"I think a week after I started this job, I went to their annual conference where I learned so much and met many great people," Miller said. "RPI is a great networking opportunity and a great source for research and information. It gives you the resources that you can't find anywhere else. This is a very, very strong group and I appreciate that."

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About Recognition Professionals International (RPI)

Recognition Professionals International (RPI), formerly known as National Association For Employee Recognition (NAER), is the only non-profit professional association at the forefront of employee recognition through its sole focus on recognition innovations and education as a systematic method for improvements in the workplace. RPI is endorsed by top authorities in the industry, and is the only association offering Certified Recognition Professional (CRP) courses and designation.

ⁱ Excerpted from a letter to employees.