

Reward and Recognition



Declaration

We believe the information in this document to be accurate, relevant and truthful based on our experience and the information provided to us to date. All information is provided in good faith, in confidence and in the best interests of SDI and our clients. Please contact Daniel Wood on + 44 (0)1689 889100 to discuss any questions or further requirements or email research@SDI-europe.com

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Introduction

Life on a service desk can often be a thankless task. People only tend to speak to us when they're experiencing an issue or problem, which often means that they're frustrated and harried. This means that service desks can become the target of blame for IT issues that are often beyond our control. In an environment such as this, how can we keep people motivated and engaged? How do we ensure that our desk is willing to keep providing excellent customer service and keep striving to reach the metrics targets that we have set? Part of this comes down to managing people effectively and inspiring them to keep improving and developing. The other part is to recognise people for a job well done, and reward them for what they do well and inspire them to keep on improving. This guide will identify how you can create a reward and recognition programme that is based on Service Desk Institute best practice, one that is sustainable, and will push your team to keep improving.

Reward and recognition also offers a great reference point for one to ones and appraisals. Any rewards can be identified as a key topic for discussion and can be incorporated into performance improvement plans and personal development plans.



What should the desk be rewarded for?

Sometimes, this can prove the most difficult part of a reward and recognition strategy. It may sound obvious that people should be rewarded for going above and beyond what is required of them and putting in the extra effort and working longer hours (maybe even at a weekend) to get the job done. Aren't these the type of people and the behaviours that we want to encourage and reward? They are, but there is also a wider consideration. It's great if we have the type of people on our desk who are willing to go above and beyond, but what about the people who go about their jobs diligently and deliver an excellent service? Should we not reward them too?

Reward and recognition really comes down to criteria – so just what should we reward people for? The best way of thinking about setting the criteria is to ask your team what they would like to be rewarded for. Having staff decide on what constitutes outstanding behaviour that is deserving of a reward is a great way to ensure that the criteria is fair; that everybody understands what the rewards are for; and that everyone has bought into the concept. As we will see later, getting people's buy-in is a crucial component of ensuring the success of a reward and recognition programme.

Another crucial component of reward and recognition are those parts that are tied directly to service improvements. It's worth considering rewarding people for service improvements such as adding articles to the knowledgebase or creating a new service improvement (such as a change to a process to make it work more effectively). For knowledge articles you could create a competition whereby the person who creates the most articles in a month is rewarded (providing the articles actually work and have been thoroughly tested). For service improvements, you could have an idea/improvement of the month award.



How to create the criteria

Criteria should always be defined and easily understood. The reason for doing this is that everyone is then aware of what is required to receive a reward and, perhaps as importantly, why those chosen have received it. Without clear criteria, there can be resentment in the team as there might be a perception that the same people win all the time, or it's simply not clear why certain people keep winning.

What the criteria are will be entirely dependent on what type of behaviours and attitudes you want to encourage. If it's going above and beyond, then you might want to establish some criteria around teamwork, taking initiative, providing innovative solutions, or providing exceptional customer service. For customer service, a typical list of qualifying criteria might be:

- Has received personal feedback from x number of customers
- Has scored full marks in call monitoring
- Has handled difficult customers responsibly and has followed up on dissatisfied responses
- Has answered x% of calls (above target)
- Has logged x% of calls correctly

Establishing the criteria in this way makes it clear exactly what is required and what targets have been achieved. Again, a good way to establish the criteria is to ask people what constitutes award-winning behaviour, and what demonstrable evidence should be highlighted as worthy of a reward. The criteria is a delicate balance because you want them to be achievable but also aspirational. You don't want lots of people winning every month, but equally you want to make sure that the criteria are achievable. You want them to stretch your team, not demotivate or exclude them.



How should the desk be rewarded?



Equally as important as the criteria for the reward, is to establish what the rewards should be. There are many different considerations here, most notable of which is that not every reward will be appropriate for the person. If the reward was a bottle of wine or champagne, then you need to consider that not everyone would appreciate alcohol, and therefore the reward would be unwanted and not motivating. Again, it's important to involve the whole team in deciding what the rewards should be as this will ensure that they are inspirational and aspirational. Of course, you'll also want to either state, or offer a large hint, as to what the budget for the rewards is as otherwise there will be suggestions that are not realistic.

Also, not all rewards have to be monetary. You do not need a budget to operate a reward and recognition programme, as with a bit of creativity rewards can be offered that don't actually cost anything. Some good examples include a VIP parking space for the week (maybe alongside the directors or senior management) which will not only be convenient for the recipient, but will also offer them an elevated status and an increased stature. Other examples could include mentions in newsletters or other promotional material; an afternoon or day off; being excluded from tea-making duties; and many others. LANDesk's recent benchmarking report also points to opportunities for promotion, career planning and away days and teambuilding, and help towards qualifications as key incentives for service desk staff, and none of these are directly monetary. Lack of budget does not mean that there cannot be rewards, it just requires some creative thought, and again the service desk team will provide a good source of inspiration.



Marketing and gaining buy-in

The marketing component of reward and recognition is two-fold. Firstly, there needs to be a concerted internal marketing effort to ensure that everyone on the team is aware of the reward programme and what the criteria are. If the reward and recognition programme is not promoted (and that everyone knows what the criteria are) then it is likely to fail and will not complete its objectives.

The second part is to market reward and recognition externally throughout the organisation through whatever channels are available. There is scope here to market within the IT department, and maybe extend the rewards to other departments. It's also important to market the rewards externally to ensure that the entire organisation is aware of the initiatives that you are taking in regards to rewarding your staff and encouraging excellent behaviour and attitude. External marketing of rewards should also feed into a broader marketing strategy to really 'sell' the value of your service desk and expound on the excellent service that you offer. Promoting the achievements of your desk and supplementing it with the rewards programme will really help to set your desk apart and create a core message.

Gaining buy-in is an essential part of any successful reward and recognition programme – if people are not interested in what the rewards are (and what they are for) then they will not engage with what you are doing. But buy-in also refers to the organisation as well and you'll want them on board with what you are doing – this is especially true if they have control over the budget as they will decide how much of the budget should be given to the reward programme.



What works?

Once a reward and recognition programme has been established it's important to give it time to bed in. Any programme will inevitably need to be tweaked and modified to ensure that it's working as intended. It's also important to note that a reward and recognition programme that works for one desk may not work as well for another, due to the many differences that can exist between desks such as the customers that they serve, the levels of service that are expected from the desk and the attitudes and deliverables that we expect from them and want to encourage. So what works for your desk might not work for another and vice versa.

However, there are some tried and tested rules that should be at the heart of any reward and recognition programme:

- The rewards should be aspirational
- The reward programme should motivate and stimulate your team
- The criteria should be clear, concise and easily understood
- The rewards should be decided by the team, working with a fixed budget
- The programme should be marketed throughout your team, the IT department, and the entire organisation
- Reward and recognition should be referred to in appraisals and one to ones
- Consider allowing team members to nominate each other but be vigilant against 'favouritism' or the same people continually being nominated
- Make an effort to recognise the achievements of people, even if their achievements do not qualify them for an award
- Consistently check and validate whether the programme has been effective and has produced the desired results



Review and revise

Like any service desk process, reward and recognition programmes should be regularly reviewed to assess their effectiveness and whether they are having the desired impact and outcomes. There are some tangible ways in which you can measure the effectiveness of reward and recognition. Formally, you can include a section on reward and recognition on the employee satisfaction survey and ask whether the team find the rewards motivating and if the criteria for earning rewards is clear, concise and whether it's easy to identify why people have won.

Another way of assessing the effectiveness of reward and recognition is look at the changes that it has made to your service desk. Have any of your metrics associated with the reward criteria improved since the introduction of the programme? Have call answer times improved? What about customer satisfaction? Not all of these changes will be immediately apparent, but over a period of time it should be easy to establish whether the reward has been effective in creating the right attitudes and behaviours. Also remember that reward and recognition is not only for the benefit of the desk but it's for the wider organisation's benefit as well as they should experience an improved service and a noticeable change in the attitude of the service desk. You'll be able to find out if this part of initiative has been successful through liaising with customers and gathering their opinions.

There is also scope to consider the intangibles, and these will include things such as the general attitude and 'feel' of the desk. Do people generally seem more positive and enthusiastic when they are working and dealing with customers? Has there been any noticeable change in the attitudes of any particular members of the team, perhaps especially those who seemed unmotivated or not engaged before the programme was introduced? Combining the tangible with the intangible will offer you a clear picture as to whether the programme has been successful and what tweaks and modifications might be needed to improve the programme further. Like everything, reward and recognition has a shelf life so it's important to designate a specified time to review the programme to ensure that it remains fresh, engaging and relevant. Reviews should be conducted after a set period of time (say six months or a year) with a view to address any issues and make improvements.



Conclusion

Every worker wants to feel appreciated for the job that they do. The service desk is certainly no different in this regard, so it's important that the correct reward and recognition programmes are in place to keep the team engaged, motivated and focused on delivering an exceptional service and customer experience.

The economic woes of recent years have put many reward and recognition programmes to the back of the queue in terms of priority. There is a perception that reward and recognition programmes cost money and that they are not applicable to desks who are already performing well. It's important that both of these myths are dispelled as reward and recognition does not need to cost anything, as with some creativity rewards can be conjured out of nothing, such as the VIP parking space. It's also important to remember that recognising people's accomplishments does not cost anything. Secondly, service desks can always improve and people can always push themselves further. Also, rewarding and recognising people for a job well done is not just about improving service, but it's about investing in people. If people feel valued and appreciated then they are much more likely to come to work with a positive attitude – one which will undoubtedly be reflected in their conversations with customers and other members of the team.

Investing in people is the underlying message of reward and recognition – appreciating and recognising people for what they have accomplished will motivate them to keep striving for future improvements in their own work, and the work that you perform as a service desk.



About The Service Desk Institute (SDI)

Founded in 1988 by Howard Kendall, the Service Desk Institute (SDI) is the leading authority on service desk and IT support related issues, providing specialist information and research about the technologies, tools and trends of the industry. It is Europe's only support network for IT service desk professionals, and its 800 organisation members span numerous industries.

Acting as an independent adviser, SDI captures and disseminates creative and innovative ideas for tomorrow's service desk and support operation. SDI sets the best practice standards for the IT support industry and is the conduit for delivering knowledge and career enhancing skills to the professional community, through membership, training, conferences, events and its publication SupportWorld magazine. It also offers the opportunity for international recognition of the support centre operation through its globally recognised Service Desk Certification audit programme.

