



Company Values Aren't Built in Workshops

Operationalizing Culture Through Everyday Recognition

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Alex Grande

Your Guide to All Things Recognition & Reward



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Alex Grande is a web developer with a passion for motivation and human behavior.

As the CEO of Recognize (RecognizeApp.com), Alex has spent over a decade engineering the "Human API", using technology to scale the fundamental psychological need for appreciation.



The Drift from Workshop Aspirations to Operational Reality

Executive teams invest heavily in offsite workshops and branding agencies to define core values, yet culture is treated as a periodic event rather than an ongoing system. When values live only on posters and annual slide decks, they function as aspirational rhetoric, not behavioral expectations.

This creates **culture drift**: daily operational reality progressively detaches from stated philosophy. Employees quickly spot the gap between executive messaging and frontline reality, breeding skepticism and psychological detachment. Leadership must transition from passive value definition to active behavioral operationalization.

Aspirational Culture

Annual workshops, static posters - passive compliance and rising cynicism

Operationalized Culture

Everyday recognition, peer feedback loops - alignment, accountability, reduced turnover

Agenda

Four strategic modules to bridge aspirational statements and everyday workplace behaviors:

1

The Diagnosis

Culture drift, culture washing, and the economic cost of disengagement

2

Behavioral Framework

Codifying values, activating managers, and the Four-Pillar Framework

3

Technology & Execution

Operationalizing culture with Recognize across hybrid and frontline teams

4

Measurement & ROI

Analytics, the 90-day roadmap, and strategic imperatives for leadership

The Core Value Paradox - Stated Values vs. Lived Experience

Gallup research reveals a severe structural disconnect between corporate value definition and daily execution. The data paints a striking picture of workplace disalignment:

27%

Believe in Values

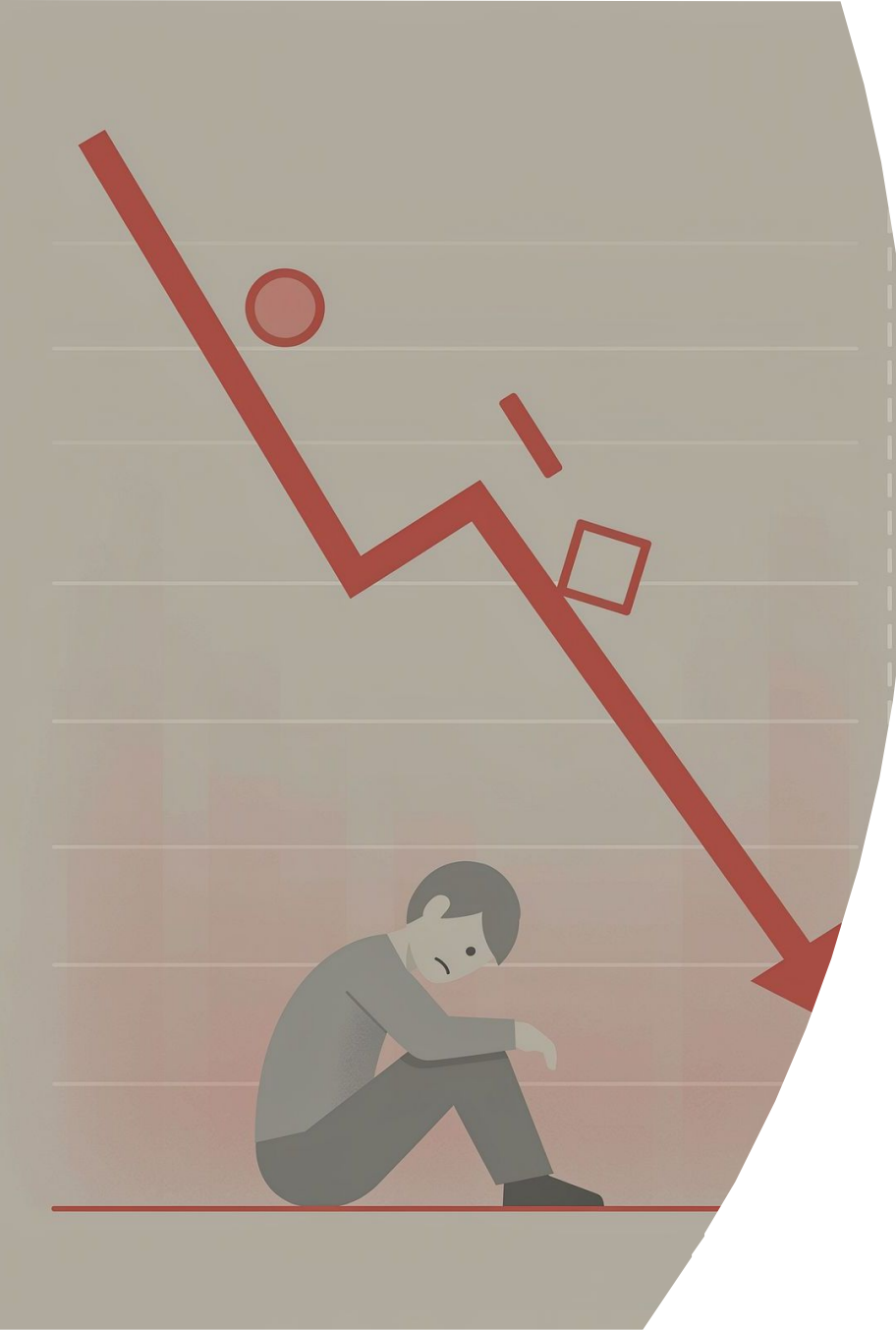
Employees who strongly agree they believe in their organization's values

23%

Apply Values Daily

Employees who strongly agree they can apply values to their work every day

Nearly three-quarters of daily workplace decisions occur in a **values vacuum**. Without actionable behavioral guidelines, workers default to localized habits, and during strategic pivots or market volatility, the absence of an internalized behavioral compass causes total organizational misalignment.



The Economic Impact of Workplace Disengagement

Global employee engagement hovers between **20-21%**, representing a persistent systemic challenge. The financial consequences are staggering:

\$438B-\$10T Lost Annually

Global productivity loss from disengagement, roughly 9% of global GDP

16-17% Actively Disengaged

Workers who report miserable experiences and undermine engaged peers

+23% Profitability

Top-quartile engaged units outperform bottom-quartile on profitability, productivity, sales, and customer loyalty

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Defining and Identifying "Culture Washing"

What It Is

Organizations aggressively promote human-centric values in public branding while maintaining internal environments characterized by unrewarded high output, toxic management, or systemic misalignment.

What It Causes

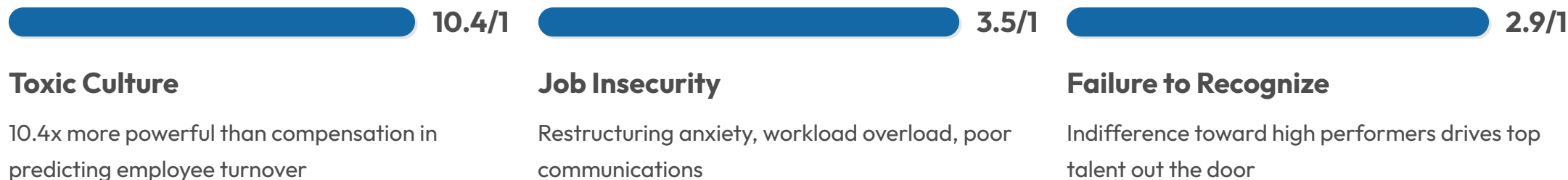
When new hires encounter a sharp contradiction between onboarded values and daily reality, the psychological contract collapses, leading to rapid disillusionment, "malicious compliance," and withdrawal of discretionary effort.

When leaders preach values but promote those who violate them to hit short-term targets, high-performing, values-aligned employees resign while cynicism cements across remaining staff.

MIT SLOAN RESEARCH

Toxic Culture as the Leading Attrition Driver

Research by Sull, Sull & Zweig (MIT Sloan Management Review) analyzed 34 million employee profiles and 1.4 million Glassdoor reviews. Their findings challenge the assumption that compensation drives resignations:



⚠ Failing to distinguish high performers from laggards is **2.9x more predictive** of voluntary attrition than compensation.

Psychological Frameworks of Value Internalization

Grounded in Self-Determination Theory and Dan Pink's *Drive*, sustainable engagement relies on autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Social recognition validates an individual's sense of purpose. Research from the Achievers Workforce Institute and Qarrot demonstrates the impact of structured appreciation:

12x More Meaningful

Appreciated employees find their daily work deeply meaningful

56x More Connected

Recognized employees feel strongly connected to core values

64.4% Less Burnout

Regular value-based recognition directly mitigates employee burnout

Translating Abstract Values into Observable Behaviors

The primary cause of culture failure is defining values using abstract nouns - "Integrity," "Excellence," "Customer First" - without an explicit behavioral taxonomy. HR teams must translate ideals into observable, repeatable micro-behaviors.

Abstract Value	Observable Micro-Behavior	Recognition Criteria
Customer First	Proactively resolves cross-departmental bottlenecks to fulfill urgent client requests ahead of SLA timelines	"Customer First" badge citing specific ticket IDs and time saved
Agility & Innovation	Identifies redundant manual steps and implements a streamlined, automated workflow fix	"Evolution" badge detailing process improved and hours reclaimed
One Team	Mentors cross-functional colleagues or publicly celebrates peer contributions	"One Team" badge with narrative of support provided
Integrity & Security	Identifies and escalates compliance risks or vulnerabilities prior to system failure	"Fraud Buster" badge highlighting proactive risk mitigation

The Manager Effect in Culture Reinforcement

The Critical Statistic

Managers account for **70% of the variance** in team-level employee engagement (Gallup). Yet 58% of employees cite complacent, passive leadership as their primary reason for disengagement.

Culture reinforcement cannot succeed as a centralized HR project. It depends on activating frontline managers.

What Activation Looks Like

When organizations equip managers with structured recognition platforms:

- **31% lower voluntary turnover** vs. organizations with weak appreciation programs
- Recognition frequency metrics integrated directly into leadership performance evaluations
- Managers held accountable for consistently acknowledging core value embodiment across direct reports

Evolving Recognition Architecture

Legacy programs – tenure milestones, annual manager awards – are episodic, transactional, and backward-looking. Nearly **70% of enterprise organizations** are actively exploring peer appreciation programs to increase recognition frequency.

Legacy Tenure Awards

Frequency: Every 1–5 years

Direction: Top-down only

Alignment: Attendance & longevity

Impact: Minimal effect on daily engagement

Modern Peer Recognition

Frequency: Real-time, daily/weekly

Direction: Multi-directional, cross-functional

Alignment: Observable micro-behaviors tied to values

Impact: 31% turnover reduction; 12x work meaningfulness

The Four-Pillar Framework for Operationalizing Core Values



Codify

Translate broad values into clear, role-specific behavioral taxonomies



Embed

Integrate recognition directly into native workflows - Teams, Outlook, mobile apps



Recognize

Empower every employee to send public, value-tagged badges with contextual descriptions



Analyze

Track badge telemetry to measure cultural health, recognition deficits, and retention correlation

Bridging Cultural Divides Across Hybrid, Remote & Frontline Workforces

Gallup data shows remote workers (31%) and hybrid staff (23%) report higher engagement than on-site workers (19%) - yet remote staff face heightened isolation risks. Deskless frontline workers in manufacturing, healthcare, and retail often feel disconnected from corporate initiatives entirely.



Desktop Workflows

Hybrid and remote employees engage seamlessly through Microsoft Teams, Outlook, and SharePoint integrations



Deskless Accessibility

Frontline staff engage via iOS/Android apps, SMS recognition, offline QR codes, and digital breakroom signage



Equity of Recognition

Analytics track recognition distribution across desk-bound and frontline cohorts, ensuring equitable appreciation

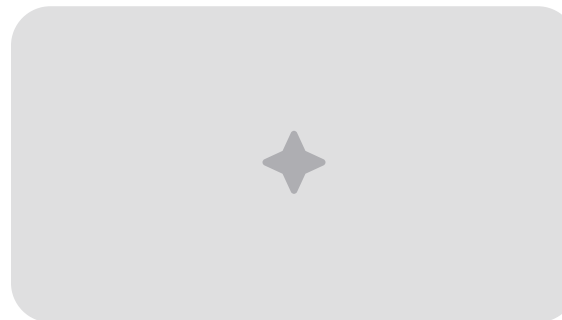
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Digitizing Values – Custom Recognition Badges as Behavioral Vectors

Platforms like **Recognize** convert abstract corporate values into digital assets called **Custom Value Badges** – visual, trackable markers that make organizational priorities tangible in daily digital communication.

Administrators configure badges with unique artwork, point allocations, and required submission rules. For example, a "Surprise and Delight" badge can require the sender to answer: *"Describe the specific action this employee took to exceed customer expectations."*

By requiring detailed context, the platform ensures recognition remains authentic rather than superficial, transforming abstract principles into a continuous stream of public, verifiable success stories.



Workflow Integration – Microsoft 365 and HRIS Connectivity

A primary cause of HR software adoption failure is "**portal fatigue**" - the friction of navigating to a standalone website to send appreciation. Recognition must integrate natively into existing enterprise ecosystems.

Collaboration Tools

Employees issue, view, and comment on value recognitions directly within **Microsoft Teams, Outlook, Yammer, and SharePoint**
- no context switching required

HRIS Synchronization

Real-time sync with **Workday, Azure Active Directory, ADP, and sFTP servers** keeps organizational hierarchies, job titles, and reporting lines accurate without manual effort

Automated Data Integrity

System-wide HRIS sync ensures employee movements, promotions, and departures automatically update recognition routing and manager permissions

Targeted Nomination Campaigns for Strategic Priorities

Beyond day-to-day peer recognition, organizations need structured mechanisms for quarterly priorities, safety drives, or annual award ceremonies. Automated nomination campaigns execute focused initiatives with minimal manual overhead.

1 Scheduled Workflows

Administrators configure nomination windows targeting specific departments or global cohorts with automated reminders and custom submission forms

2 Transparent Review Portals

Executive committees review, score, and approve nominated candidates through streamlined admin dashboards

3 Crowdsourced Intelligence

Campaigns surface high-performing, values-aligned employees who might otherwise remain invisible in traditional top-down performance reviews

CASE STUDY

Metro Bank's Customer-First Culture Transformation

Implementation

- **9 custom value badges:** "Exceeds Expectations," "Inspire and Nurture," "Surprise and Delight," "Zest," "One Team"
- Restricted "**Metro Man**" badge exclusively sendable by executive leadership
- Integrated directly into **Yammer (Microsoft 365)** - no separate login required

Quantitative Outcomes

- **34,210 public recognitions** transmitted over 5 years
- Sustained velocity of **500+ recognitions per week**
- Glassdoor **Best Place to Work** award
- HR Excellence Award, Most People-Focused CEO, and top national retail customer service ratings

Culture Analytics and Measuring Program ROI

Operationalizing values transforms culture from a soft concept into a measurable, data-driven discipline. Real-time analytics dashboards track cultural health across departments, regions, and job roles:

Analytics Dimension	Tracked Indicators	Executive Insight
Value Adoption Velocity	Volume and % distribution of value badges by department	Identifies which values are operationalized vs. require focus
Manager Activation Rates	% of managers actively issuing monthly value recognitions	Pinpoints disengaged management cohorts; correlates with team turnover
eNPS & Morale Pulses	Pulse survey eNPS scores crossed with recognition activity data	Validates statistical impact of appreciation on morale and retention

The 90-Day Implementation Roadmap

Phase 1: Codify and Design (Days 1-30)

Core Value Audit; translate values into behavioral taxonomies;
configure HRIS sync (Workday, Azure AD) and SSO; design
Custom Value Badges and point structures

1

2

3

Phase 3: Scale and Optimize (Days 61-90)

Full enterprise roll-out with multi-channel communications;
deploy baseline eNPS pulse surveys; launch first quarterly
Nomination Campaign; executive review of Value Adoption
Analytics

Phase 2: Enable and Pilot (Days 31-60)

Manager training sessions; deploy Microsoft 365 plugins and
mobile apps; launch 30-day pilot across corporate and frontline
cohorts to test workflows and user experience

Strategic Imperatives for Executive Leadership

Building an authentic, values-driven organization requires abandoning the myth that culture is created in periodic workshops. When values remain confined to posters and slide decks, organizations suffer culture drift, disengagement, and severe attrition.

1 **Reject Culture Washing**

Ensure internal operational recognition aligns perfectly with external employer branding, protecting trust and psychological safety

2 **Embed Values in Everyday Workflows**

Bring cultural reinforcement directly into Microsoft Teams, Outlook, and mobile apps, making recognition a seamless daily habit

3 **Measure and Manage Behavioral Adoption**

Leverage real-time people analytics to track value adoption, activate frontline managers, and measure the direct ROI of culture on retention and profitability

Values Lived, Measured, and Reinforced Every Day

By leveraging modern recognition platforms like **Recognize** to translate core values into observable behaviors, acknowledge employees who embody those principles, and track cultural health in real time, mission-driven organizations build resilient, high-performing cultures where values are not aspirations on a wall, but the operating system of the business.

Codify

Define behavioral taxonomies

Embed

Integrate into daily workflows

Recognize

Celebrate values in action

Analyze

Measure and optimize culture ROI

NEXT WEBINAR

Bridging the Divide: Connecting Hybrid Corporate Staff and Deskless Frontline Workers



WEBINAR

Bridging the Divide:
Connecting Hybrid Corporate Staff
and Deskless Frontline Workers

Tuesday, August 25

2 PM ET | 11 AM PT

Speaker

Alex Grande
CEO @ Recognize

Tuesday, August 25 | 2 PM ET | 11 AM PT

★ Key Takeaways

- Why deskless employees are often unintentionally excluded from communication and recognition programs
- The business impact of disconnected employee experiences on engagement, retention, and culture
- Practical ways to recognize and engage employees across shifts, locations, and work environments
- How to create a consistent culture for both frontline and corporate teams
- Strategies for ensuring every employee has access to recognition, rewards, and company values, even without a corporate email

REGISTER HERE:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/3717841360027/WN_yFOh2UfXS06PB_aX-J5ljg

LIVE DEMO

Making Recognition Actually Work for Your Team



👉 If improving engagement and retention is on your radar, this will be a high-value 45 minutes for you!

Thursday, August 27th - 12 PM ET | 9 AM PT

What you'll see:

In this 45-minute live session, you'll see exactly how modern organizations are making recognition visible, consistent, and impactful across remote, hybrid, and field-based teams.

Includes:

- + Real-time recognition feed
- + Automated milestones and celebrations
- + Manager insights and engagement tracking
- + Ways to drive adoption across distributed teams

Bonus: Live Q&A | \$50 gift card raffle | 🎁 \$500 in rewards credit for new customers

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