



# How to Fix Low Participation in Employee Recognition Programs in Under 30 Days

The Ultimate Guide for HR Leaders, People Ops, and HRBPs

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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](https://RecognizeApp.com)), Alex has spent over a decade engineering the "Human API", using technology to scale the fundamental psychological need for appreciation.**





# Welcome & Webinar Orientation

## Who This Is For

HR leaders, People Ops pros, and HRBPs dealing with low platform usage, weak manager participation, uneven recognition habits, and slipping employee engagement.

## Our Approach

This session skips the soft culture talk. We use a data-driven approach focused on measurement and operations, treating low participation as a **fixable infrastructure and process issue**, not a morale problem.

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# The 30-Day Turnaround Roadmap

Five progressive steps, from diagnostics to execution:

01

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## Measuring Success First

Set the HR North Star Metric, isolate the RES delta, and spot departmental "ghost towns."

02

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## Pinpointing Adoption Barriers

Break down the post-launch usage drop, manager friction, and frontline exclusion.

03

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## Strategic Platform Remedies

Shift from "kudos" to win-logging, connect workspaces, and add Admin Gamification.

04

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## Leadership-Driven Operations

Bring in Director-level sponsors, build value-badge ecosystems, and use Manager Portals.

05

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## Budget Optimization & Action Plan

Tiered pricing options, the week-by-week Revitalization Calendar, and Culture Committees.

# The Macroeconomics of Appreciation

Recognition is a **key performance driver**. A lack of it is still a top reason people leave. **66%** of employees say they'd quit if they felt unappreciated.

**23%**

## Profitability Increase

High-engagement organizations outperform peers

**18%**

## Productivity Increase

More output from engaged workforces

**78%**

## Absenteeism Decrease

Fewer missed days in high-recognition cultures

**31%**

## Turnover Decrease

Voluntary turnover drops 21%–31%



# The HR North Star Metric

## The Problem with Lagging Indicators

Annual engagement surveys and eNPS scores tell you what employees *felt months ago*. They are historical sentiment snapshots, not actionable signals.

## The Leading Indicator Advantage

The **HR North Star Metric** tracks active, week-over-week recognition behavior in real time. It monitors platform usage, peer interactions, and value reinforcement as they happen. That gives you a fast read on cultural health and early warning signs of flight risk.

## Traditional vs. Modern Analytics

**Lagging Analytics** (Annual Surveys, eNPS)

→ Tells you what employees felt months ago

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**Leading Analytics** (HR North Star Metric)

→ Tells you what employees are doing *right now*

# Reach vs. Engagement: Isolating the RES Delta

The **Recognition Engagement Score (RES)** has two parts. Many HR teams mix up broad reach with real participation.

## Recipient RES (Reach)

% of unique employees who **receive** a badge.

Healthy quarterly target: **80%–100%**


## Sender RES (Engagement)

% of unique employees who **send** a badge.

Healthy quarterly target: **50%–60%**

$$\text{Recipient RES} = \frac{\text{Unique Recognition Recipients}}{\text{Total Active Employees}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Sender RES} = \frac{\text{Unique Recognition Senders}}{\text{Total Active Employees}} \times 100$$

 **The Delta Trap:** A high Recipient RES, like 90%, can hide low adoption if system-automated birthday and anniversary eCards inflate it. Real culture only shows up when the **Sender RES is high too.**

# Departmental "Ghost Towns", Finding Gaps in the Field

## Why Averages Mislead

Organization-wide averages can hide small pockets of disengagement. Admins can segment RES data by team, department, role, country, or manager to surface "ghost towns."


## The Frontline Operational Gap

Manufacturing and deskless floor segments often show **~48% active participation** versus **70%** in corporate back offices, a major gap.

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## Unrecognized Report

Admins can pull an **Unrecognized Report** to quickly see which employees got fewer than one recognition in the last quarter, giving HR a clear target list.

 Segment by: Team · Department · Role · Country · Manager



## Diagnosing the Barriers Behind the Data

# Why Does Participation Drop?

Initial excitement fades **6–12 months after launch**. Novelty, HR-led marketing, and big announcements drive early momentum, but once the work gets more complex, habits start to break down.

### The Post-Launch Usage Cliff

If sending recognition means leaving daily work, filling out manual forms, or logging into another site, the friction gets in the way and turns appreciation into a chore.

### The Overwhelmed Manager Trap

**75% of HR leaders** say supervisors are overloaded by growing responsibilities. Manual, scattered systems, like spreadsheet anniversaries, local gift sourcing, and corporate card expenses, can make managers stop participating entirely.

### Frontline & Deskless Isolation

Employees without company email, corporate workstations, or desktop access are often locked out of intranet-based programs, splitting the employee experience by role.

# The Friction Cost: Isolated vs. Integrated Platforms

## ✗ Isolated Platform

Login → Navigation → Multi-step Forms →  
**200% drop-off**

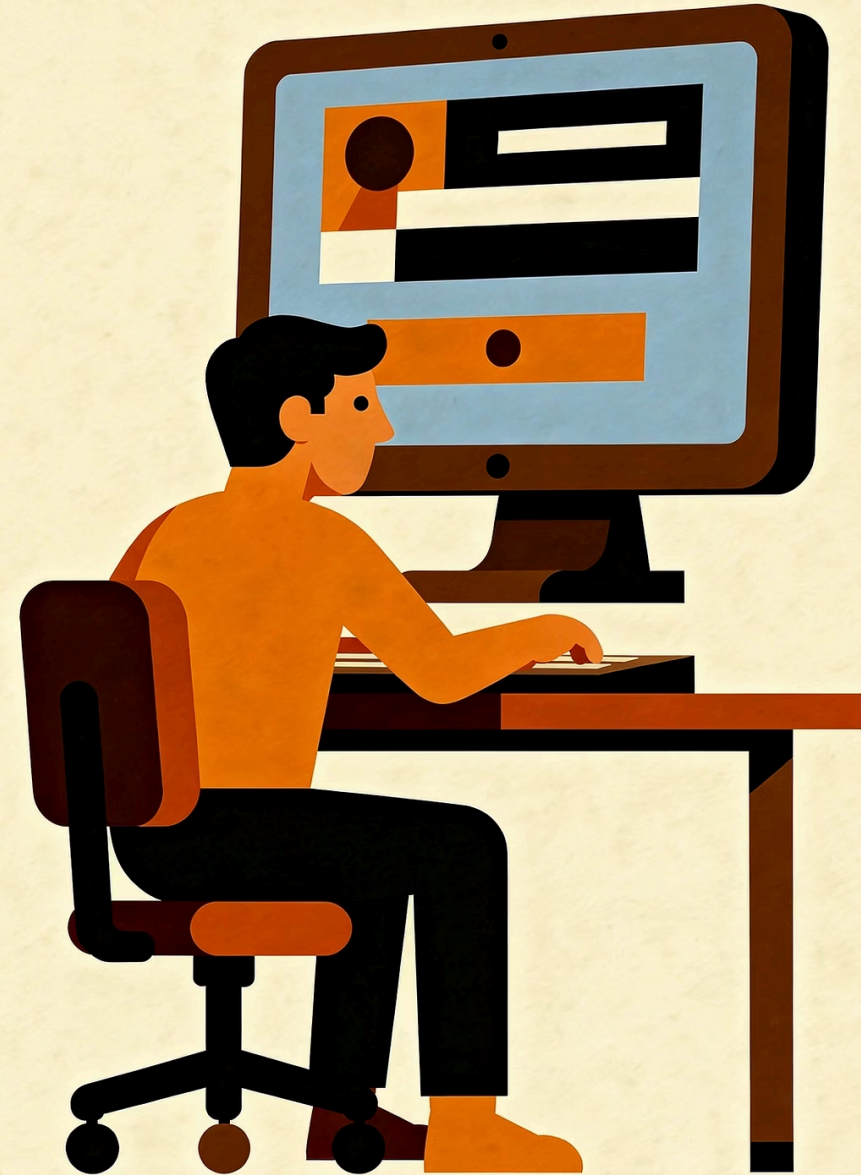
Extra clicks kill recognition.

## ✓ Integrated Platform

Open Workspace → 2-Click Recognition →  
Success (<30 seconds)

Less friction can boost weekly  
participation by up to **200%**.

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## SECTION 3

# Structural Turnaround Strategies



## Kudos → Win-Logging

Turn the platform into a simple log of workplace wins. Employees keep a lasting record of contributions for reviews and career check-ins.



## Seamless Workspace Integration

Recognize plugs into Microsoft Teams, Slack, Outlook, SharePoint, and Viva Engage. In Slack, a quick `/recognize` command keeps praise under 30 seconds.

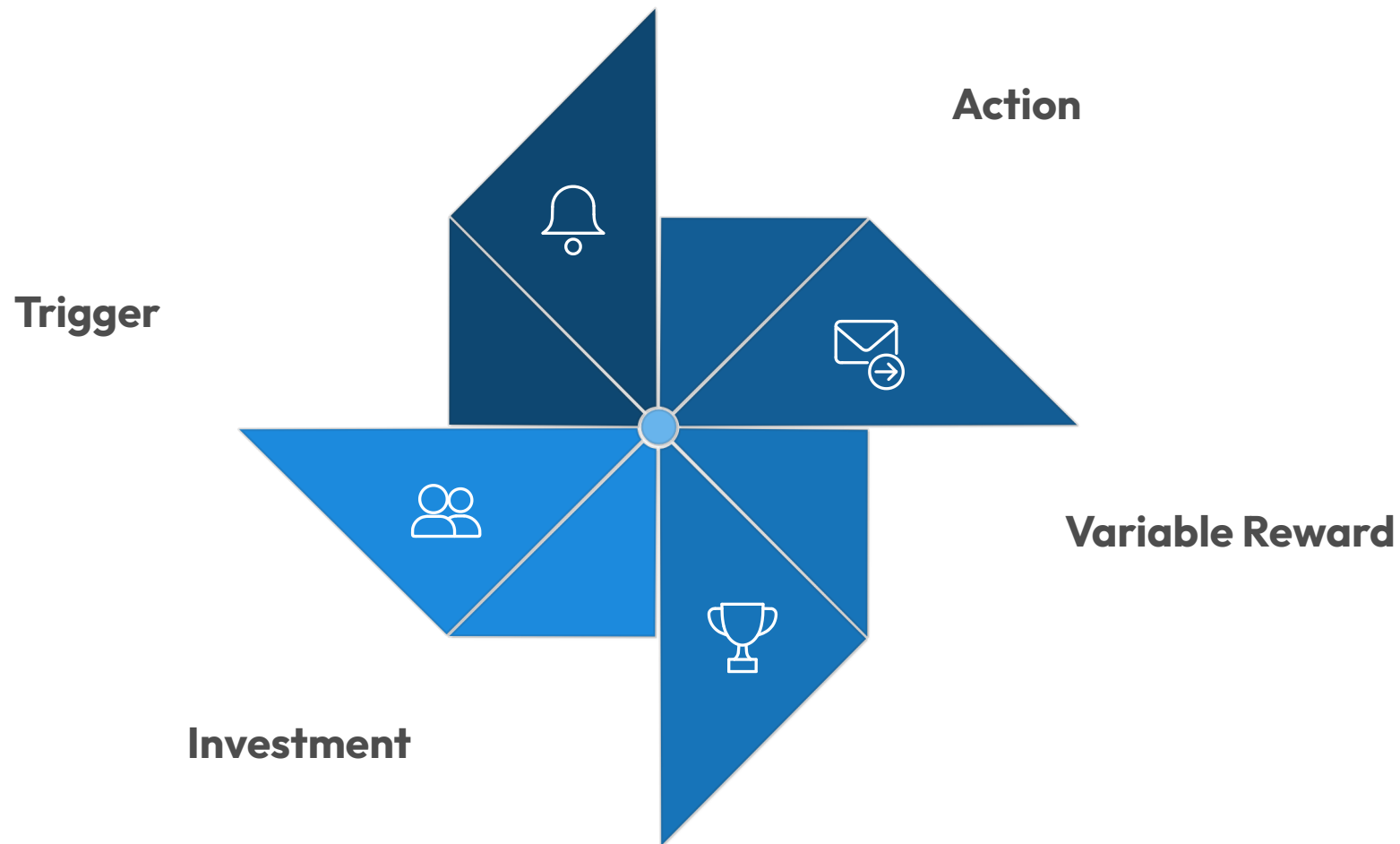


## Admin Gamification

Admins unlock Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum "Program Health" milestones for audits, hub connections, and keeping quarterly Sender RES above 50%.

# The Behavioral Loop & Peer Social Proof

Rather than cash bonuses, which are often forgotten or spent on routine bills, gamification uses a structured behavioral loop to build lasting recognition habits.



Public visibility drives organic adoption. When employees see "Culture Champions", active, well-liked colleagues, sharing appreciation and unlocking milestones, **peer-level social proof** pulls others in naturally.

## SECTION 4

# Leadership-Driven Ownership & Operations

## Director-Level Sponsorship

When senior leaders use the platform, it signals that participation is a **core business priority**. Directors get distinct Point Budgets, for example, **5,000 points annually**, to launch custom Workplace Challenges and Nomination Campaigns. Their praise shows up in public feeds.

## Corporate Values Badge Ecosystem

Instead of generic praise, organizations customize recognition badges around core values like *customer obsession*, *safety*, *collaboration*. That makes appreciation more specific and better aligned with long-term goals.

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# Activating Managers via the Manager Portal & AI Summaries

The **Manager Portal** helps supervisors support team culture with direct access to engagement analytics, pending approvals, and reward redemptions.



## Monitor Team RES

Track engagement scores by sender and receiver, split by value badge.



## Approve Redemptions

Review and approve reward redemptions right from the portal.



## AI Employee Summaries

Download AI-made summaries of peer and value badges received, giving you objective, real-time data for **unbiased performance reviews**.

An illustration on a light brown, textured background showing several gift boxes and cards. The boxes are wrapped in orange, black, and white paper with various patterns and ribbons. Some boxes are open, revealing white cards with orange and black accents. The overall style is flat and modern.

# Consolidated Gifting & Swag Governance

## Centralized Reward Management

Built-in integrations with **Amazon Business** and swag providers like **Axomo** make it easy to source, store, and ship physical rewards. Employees can redeem points in two clicks for:

- Thousands of international gift cards
- Experiences and branded merchandise
- Charitable donations

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## Key Operational Benefits

- Automates reward delivery end to end
- Eliminates shipping delays
- Prevents budget leakages
- No manual expense tracking needed

# Cost Breakdown: Average Rewards and Subscription Investment

Two main cost drivers make up a healthy recognition program: your software subscription and your reward payouts. Here's how it breaks down.

## Platform Subscription

\$2-\$4 per employee/month

### Covers:

- Automated milestone syncs
- MS Teams & Slack integrations
- Manager Portal access

## Rewards Budget

\$20-\$75 per employee/year

**Note:** This goes directly to employees via gift cards, experiences, or swag - not to us.

📌 Total annual cost: \$30-\$80 per employee per year (platform + rewards + admin overhead)

- Pay face value for rewards - zero markups or transaction fees
- Integrates with Amazon Business and major gift card networks
- Fully predictable budget, no surprises

# The 30-Day Revitalization Calendar

## Week 1: Diagnosis

Run user audits, check workspace integrations, and spot low-participation teams. Kick off **Admin Gamification**.

*Deliverable: Friction Audit & Admin Gamification Board (HR Admin)*

## Week 3: Campaigning

Launch "5-Minute Friday" reminders. Work with Directors to launch custom challenges that drive key business behaviors.

*Deliverable: Director-Sponsored Challenge Launch (Directors / Culture Committee)*

1

2

3

4

## Week 2: Activation

Deploy Manager Portal training, and allocate points budgets. Train managers to frame recognition as **win-logging** for reviews.

*Deliverable: Performance Review Integration Guide (HRBP)*

## Week 4: Evaluation

Review week-over-week RES changes. Award Admin Milestones. Share success stories at all-hands meetings.

*Deliverable: Post-Launch Performance Scorecard (People Ops)*

# Sustaining Momentum with Culture Committees

## Cross-Functional Culture Committees

Build volunteer brand ambassadors across shifts, locations, and departments. Instead of leaving advocacy to HR alone, committees use **storytelling and peer testimonials** to keep adoption moving.

## The Power of Authentic Stories

Real, local stories, like a coworker helping during a busy emergency shift, get shared at town halls or pinned to company news boards. They give people concrete proof that peer appreciation is part of everyday work.

## Why Peer Testimonials Work

- Feels authentic and relatable to frontline staff
- Shows the emotional and professional value
- Reduces HR dependence for program advocacy
- Helps recognition culture grow on its own



# Gamified Recognition: Launching Contests

Introduce themed recognition contests to invigorate participation and focus on desired behaviors. These short, engaging challenges leverage friendly competition to boost program usage and highlight success stories.



## Themed Challenges

Drive specific behaviors with focused contests, such as "Teamwork Tuesday" or an "Innovation Spotlight."



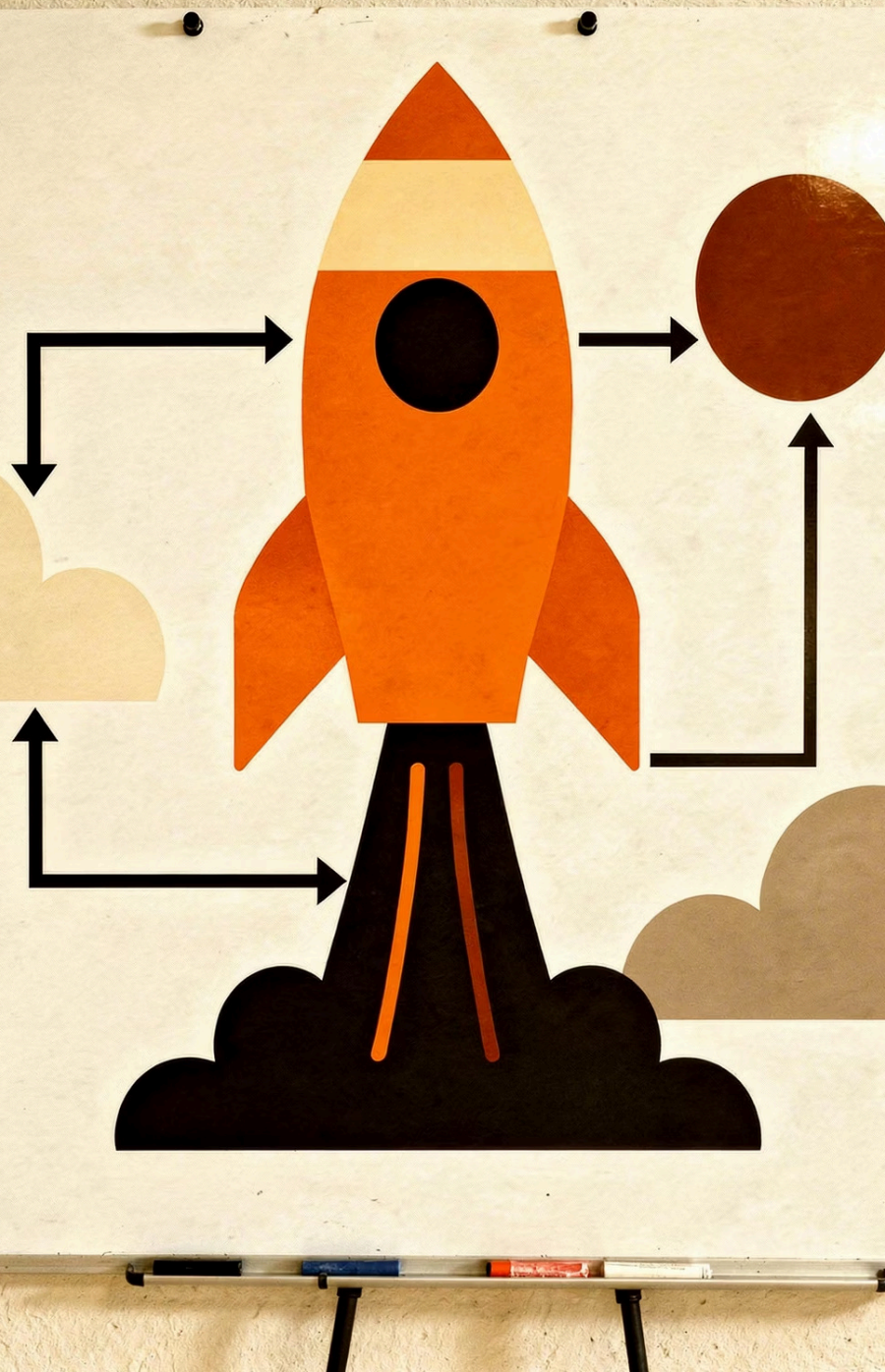
## Incentives & Leaderboards

Fuel friendly competition with public leaderboards and small, meaningful rewards that motivate engagement.



## Clear Communication

Ensure success with clear rules, consistent promotion, and regular updates on progress and winners.



# The Core Principle: Be Holistic

When programs are simple, fit into daily work, and use automated workflows, employee participation rises naturally.

## Simple

Recognition takes under 30 seconds, with no extra logins other than Microsoft or Google.

## Integrated

Lives in Teams, Slack, and Outlook, where work already happens.

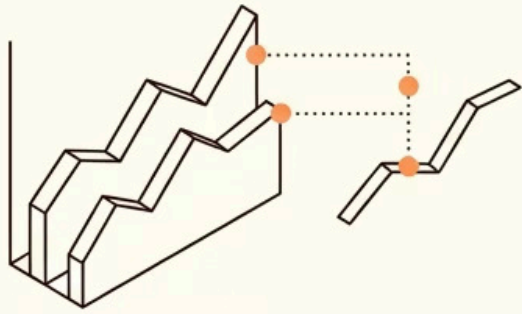
## Automated

Milestones, anniversaries, and admin tasks run without manual work.

## Inclusive

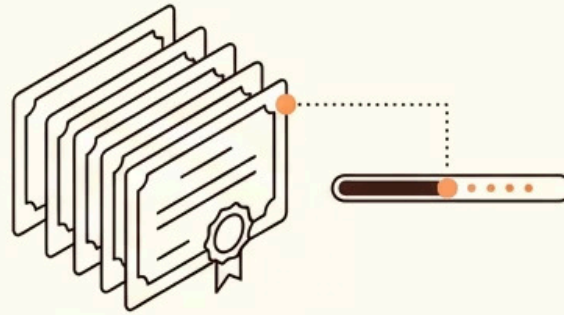
Frontline SMS packages make sure deskless workers are included.

# Key Takeaways at a Glance



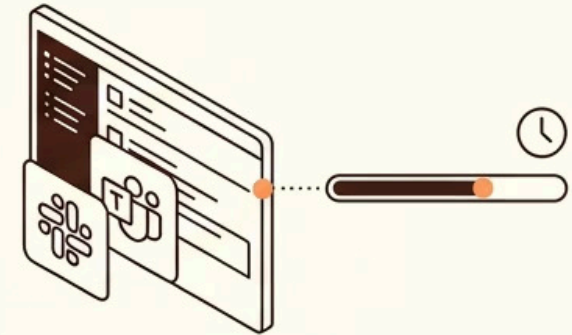
## Measure RES Delta

- **Sender RES**, not just Recipient RES



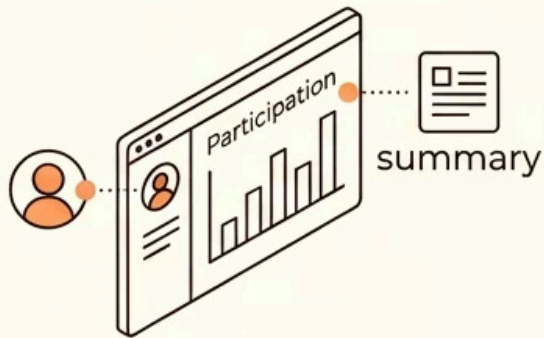
## Win-Logging

- **Badges** for reviews



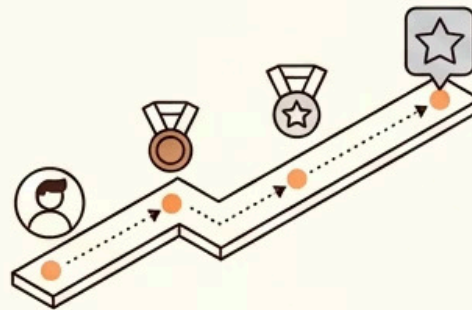
## Integrate Workspaces

- Teams, Slack, Outlook < 30 sec



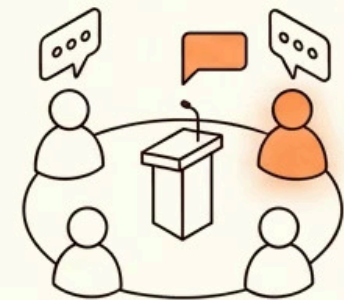
## Activate Managers

- Portal, AI summaries, unbiased



## Gamify Admin

- Bronze to Platinum milestones



## Culture Committees

- Peer testimonials, storytelling

These six priorities are the core of a solid 30-day recognition program turnaround.



# Your 30-Day Turnaround Starts Now

Low participation in employee recognition programs is not a culture problem. It is an **infrastructure and process problem**. Fix the friction, connect the tools, activate leaders, and measure what matters.

## Week 1

Audit & Diagnose

## Week 2

Train & Activate

## Week 3

Campaign & Engage

## Week 4

Measure & Iterate

# NEXT WEBINAR

## A Candid Conversation on Culture, Leadership, and Performance *with Kate McKinnon*

Thursday, June 18 | 1 PM ET | 10 AM PT

Managers drive culture. Great managers drive performance.

Join **Kate McKinnon** and **Alex Grande** for a fireside chat on empowering managers to lead with trust, accountability, and impact across remote, hybrid, and frontline environments.

### ★ Key Takeaways

- What separates average managers from truly effective leaders
- How to build trust, connection, and accountability across distributed teams
- Ways to better equip and support managers in real-world conditions
- How managers influence both culture and performance every day
- Practical insights you can apply immediately, no matter your team structure

### REGISTER

HERE: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/6117798966801/WN\\_OIFbgJLRRmSAEySdGAwIEA#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/6117798966801/WN_OIFbgJLRRmSAEySdGAwIEA#/registration)

## WEBINAR

### Activating Managers:

A Candid Conversation on Culture, Leadership, and Performance

Thursday, June 18th

1PM - 2PM EST

### Guest Speaker

Kate McKinnon  
Chief People Officer



**LIVE DEMO**

# Making Recognition Actually Work for Your Team

**Recognize**

## Making Recognition Actually Work for Your Team

📅 Thursday, June 25 ⌚ 1 PM ET | 10 AM PT

★★★★★

**JOIN US**

**David Jones**  
Recognition Solutions Partner

**Jess Vigorito**  
Director of Marketing

RecognizeApp.com

**Thursday, June 25 - 1 PM ET | 10 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
- \$100 gift card raffle
- 🎁 \$1,000 in rewards credit for new customers

### REGISTER HERE:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ICwMyjOxTSaieLHbBF8cDA#/registration>

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