

# The Recognition Effect

A Leadership Blueprint for Emotionally  
Intelligent Workplaces

**Great Place To Work.**



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# From the Leader's Desk

At the centre of every high-performing organization lies a shared truth: people thrive when they are genuinely seen and valued. Recognition is one of the most powerful ways to show this. It says: you matter here, and what you bring makes a difference.

It's a simple idea with a significant impact.

Our latest study explored what happens when recognition becomes part of everyday culture – trust grows, pride strengthens, and teams work better together. Employees in such environments report a richer workplace experience because recognition strengthens the human ties that drive everything else.

This report, created in partnership with Vantage Circle, brings those insights to life.

Our data shows that recognition becomes meaningful when it reflects four experiences: Appreciation, Acceptance, Validation, and Accomplishment. These moments stay with people – that say, we see not just your work, but your presence, your intent, and your impact.

We've learned that recognition isn't the result of great performance – it's what helps make it possible. When people feel appreciated, they show up with more energy, more ideas, and more heart. They look forward to working together. They take ownership. They contribute – not because they must, but because they want to – because they feel connected to their team, purpose, and themselves.

This report reflects that potential. It brings together voices and stories that remind us: recognition doesn't need to be grand. It needs to be thoughtful, sincere, and regular. It means noticing the quiet efforts, the acts of courage, and the unseen support.

It also calls on us to see recognition as something for everyone, not just for managers or formal systems, but something shared by peers, teams, and a culture that values appreciation. The most vibrant workplaces are those where recognition flows freely, without hierarchy, with intention, and where everyone plays a part in this shared responsibility.

As leaders, we have the chance to shape that kind of workplace. One where recognition is part of how we work, lead, and grow. Where people don't wait to be acknowledged – they feel it, every day.

That's the kind of culture people choose to stay in. And that's what carries an organization forward – with strength, trust, and pride.



**Balbir Singh**

CEO,  
Great Place To Work® India

# From the Leader's Desk

At Vantage Circle, we've always believed that the real power of Recognition & Rewards lies not in what is handed out—but in what is felt. Recognition, when practiced with intention, becomes more than an HR initiative. It becomes a cultural signal. It tells people they matter. And it shapes how trust, pride, and belonging take root within an organization.

That's why we're proud to partner with Great Place to Work® India on this landmark research. This collaboration is grounded in a shared belief—that recognition, when done right, drives not just emotional outcomes, but measurable business impact.

Our work with hundreds of companies across the globe, and particularly in India, has revealed a consistent insight: most organizations acknowledge that recognition matters—but few treat it as a culture-defining force. That's the gap this report addresses. It doesn't stop at asking whether employees feel recognized—it goes deeper to explore what recognition really means, why it's not always landing, and what leaders can do differently.

Two themes from this report stand out to me.

First, the insight that recognition is most powerful when it delivers four emotional outcomes: Appreciation, Acceptance, Validation, and Accomplishment. These aren't just feel-good sentiments—they are signals that shape an employee's decision to stay, perform, and advocate.

Second, the reality that recognition is experienced unevenly across roles, generations, and identities. The emotional gap is real—and it affects engagement, retention, and trust. Recognition must evolve from being a perk to becoming a design principle embedded into leadership behavior and organizational systems.

At Vantage Circle, we've built our AIR<sup>e</sup> framework around these principles—ensuring that recognition is not just timely and visible, but deeply human and culturally intelligent.

I hope this report prompts leaders to ask not just "Are we recognizing enough?" but "Are our people truly feeling recognized?"

And more importantly—what would our workplaces look like if every employee didn't just feel seen, but felt recognized for what truly matters?

Because when that happens, recognition stops being a moment—and becomes momentum.



**Partha Neog**  
CEO,  
Vantage Circle

# Leaders Can't Afford to Overlook Recognition as a Key Cultural Strategy

*It's the pulse of a thriving workplace.*

Great cultures are built through everyday moments—the ones where people feel noticed, valued, and connected to something larger than themselves. At the heart of these moments is **recognition**.

Today's workforce, driven by purpose and energy, is aware of how they are treated in the workplace. They are not just seeking a job, but a meaningful experience. Recognition, in this context, is not just a formality but a powerful tool that shapes their work experience.

When delivered with intention, recognition goes beyond applause. It reinforces trust. It strengthens belonging. It cultivates pride. Organizations that understand this aren't simply rewarding outcomes; they are building ecosystems of appreciation where people feel empowered to bring their best selves to work.

The opportunity is clear: by making recognition a consistent leadership behaviour and cultural practice, organizations can unlock performance, enhance retention, and foster resilient teams not just through grand gestures, but through small, sincere acts of acknowledgement that align with values and business goals. Recognition is most effective when it becomes a daily norm—not an exception, but an expectation, when it is embedded in how teams operate, how leaders lead, and how success is defined.

This report introduces a framework for creating a culture of recognition—an approach that links recognition to four essential emotional outcomes: feeling appreciated, accepted, validated, and accomplished. This year, we partnered with over 2000 organizations representing the voice of 5.7 million employees from over 20 industries in India, sharing their experience.

Throughout the report, we explore how recognition:

- Strengthens trust, commitment, and motivation
- Reflects cultural values and drives alignment across the organization
- Can be integrated into systems without compromising authenticity
- Is amplified when practised consistently by leaders
- Must be inclusive, ensuring equity across roles, generations, and identities
- Becomes a powerful lever for shaping culture and sustaining performance

When recognition is practised with intention and care, it transforms the employee experience. It builds teams that are not only productive but also proud. It fosters cultures where every individual knows that their work matters—and so do they.

Recognition affirms that people are seen. And when people feel seen, they shine.

**Most organizations know recognition matters. Few treat it as a culture-defining force. Even fewer build it into the architecture of how they lead, grow, and sustain performance.**

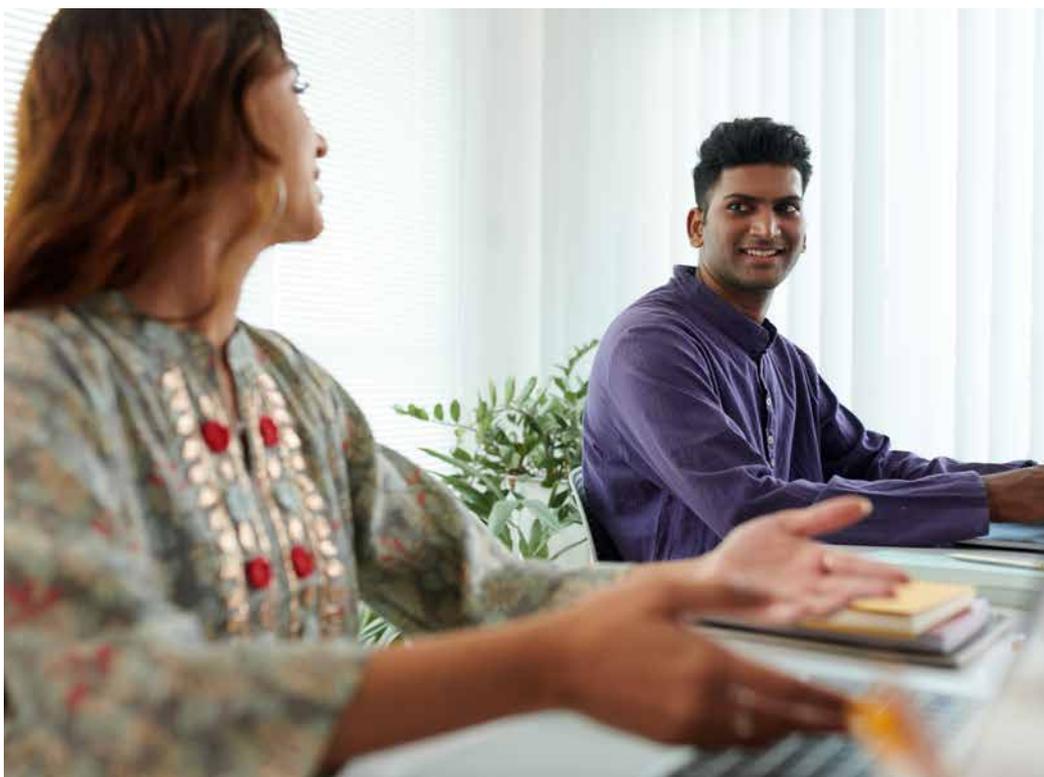
That's the opportunity.

Because when recognition is systemically practised, it becomes more than a moment of appreciation—it becomes a signal of what a company values, how it builds trust, and who gets to thrive.

So we ask:

What happens when recognition is no longer reactive, occasional, or symbolic—but deliberate and strategic?

That's where we begin—by positioning recognition not as an initiative, but as a foundational culture strategy.



## The Business Case

*Recognition-Driven Cultures Outperform on Every Front*

# Recognition-Driven Cultures Outperform on Every Front

*Cultural recognition isn't just appreciation – it's a catalyst for trust, commitment, & performance at scale.*

In every high-performing company, one truth holds: how people feel at work fuels how the business performs. Our research shows that organizations that embed a culture of recognition outperform peers across emotional, cultural, and operational metrics—not in isolation, but as part of a connected system of performance.

In high-recognition cultures, employees don't just feel better—they perform better. 91% feel motivated and 94% believe their organization is a great workplace. In contrast, emerging recognition cultures report much lower scores—73% and 78%, respectively.

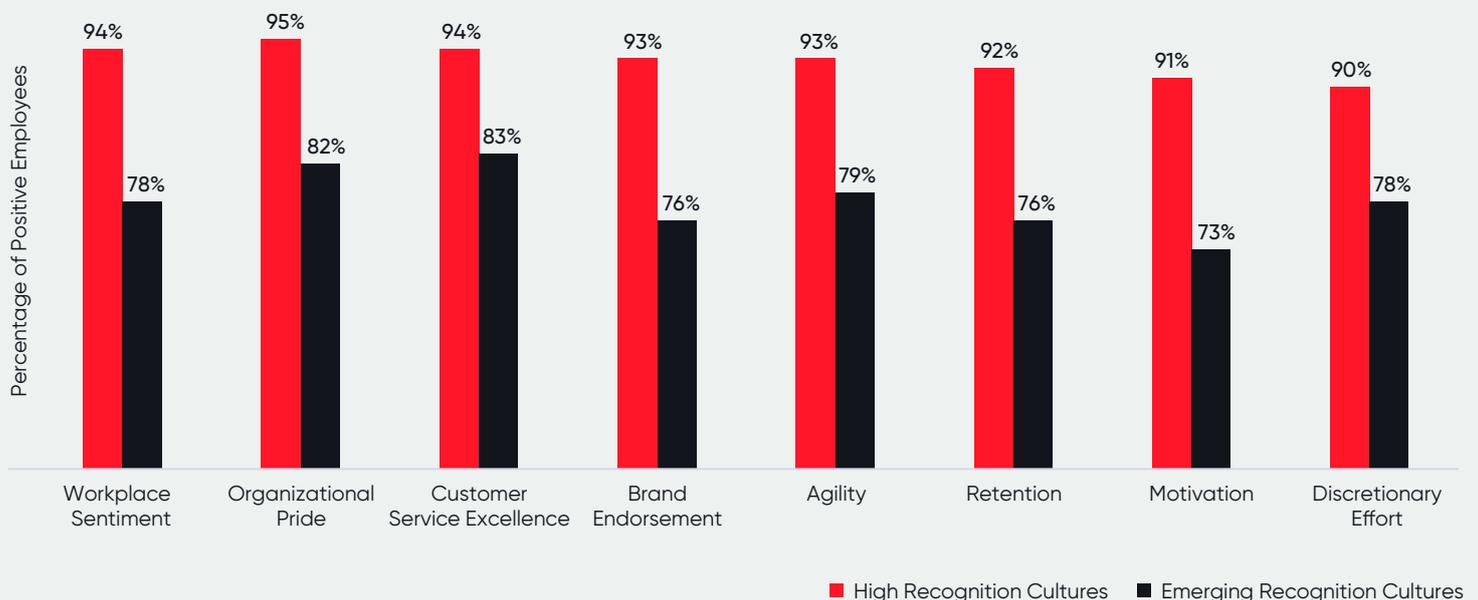
The business impact is equally clear; in high recognition cultures the payoff is significant:

**94%** say their organization delivers excellent customer service—driving loyalty, enhancing experience, and boosting revenue.

**93%** believe their organization is agile—able to adapt quickly, innovate faster, and navigate change with confidence.

**92%** express intent to stay—reducing attrition, retaining expertise, and strengthening long-term capability.

## High-Recognition Cultures Outperform Across Key Business Metrics



# Recognition's ROI by Industry – 4X Advantage in Workplace Experience and Motivation

## Major Industry Segments

Likelihood Increase  
Great Workplace Experience

Likelihood Increase  
Employee Motivation



### Pharma, Biotech and Healthcare

Recognition sustains purpose, pride, and focus across critical functions.

4.1X

3.6X



### Manufacturing

Appreciation boosts morale and connects work to a greater purpose.

4X

3.9X



### Professional Services

Recognition re-energizes top talent amid pressure and high expectations.

4X

3.7X



### Information Technology

In fast-paced tech, recognition drives retention, care, and performance.

3.8X

3.8X



### Banking, Financial Services & Insurance

Recognition builds trust, motivation, and security in high-compliance environments.

3.2X

3.2X



### Retail

Recognition powers energy, pride, and better customer service delivery.

2.6X

2.6X



### GCCs

Recognition unites global teams, driving pride, agility, and ownership.

2.6X

2.4X



# The Current State of Recognition

*Unpacking the Recognition Gap in Workplaces*

# Recognition is Rising – But Hasn't Yet Reached Everyone

30% of employees still feel unseen at work.

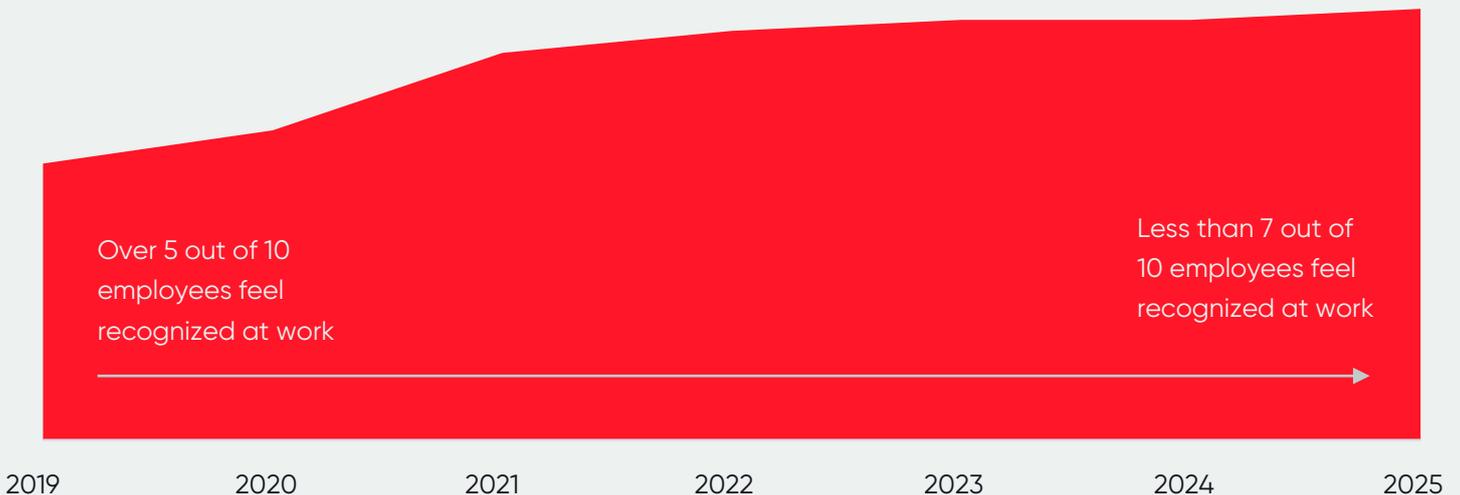
**Culture is changing—and recognition must evolve with it. It's not about saying thank you, it's about saying 'you matter.'**

Recognition becomes powerful when it's not just given, but truly felt—transforming into a signal of trust, alignment, and belonging. This alignment is built on four emotional outcomes—that tell people they're in the right place: Appreciation, Acceptance, Validation and Accomplishment.

- **Appreciated** – “I am noticed for who I am, not just what role I am in.” Employees genuinely feel valued and included, regardless of role; it shows their presence and efforts matter here.
- **Accepted** – “I can show up as myself.” Creating a sense of belonging, ensuring employees can be themselves at work.
- **Validated** – “What I do has real meaning.” Employees feel a deep sense of purpose in their work. It tells people their contributions matter in ways that go beyond tasks.
- **Accomplished** – “I can see the difference I make.” Employees feel proud of the impact they create. It reflects growth, reminding people they're not just working—they're moving forward.

These four signals form the baseline. They tell employees whether their presence, effort, and ideas truly matter. And they're what separate cultures that retain talent from those that reward it.

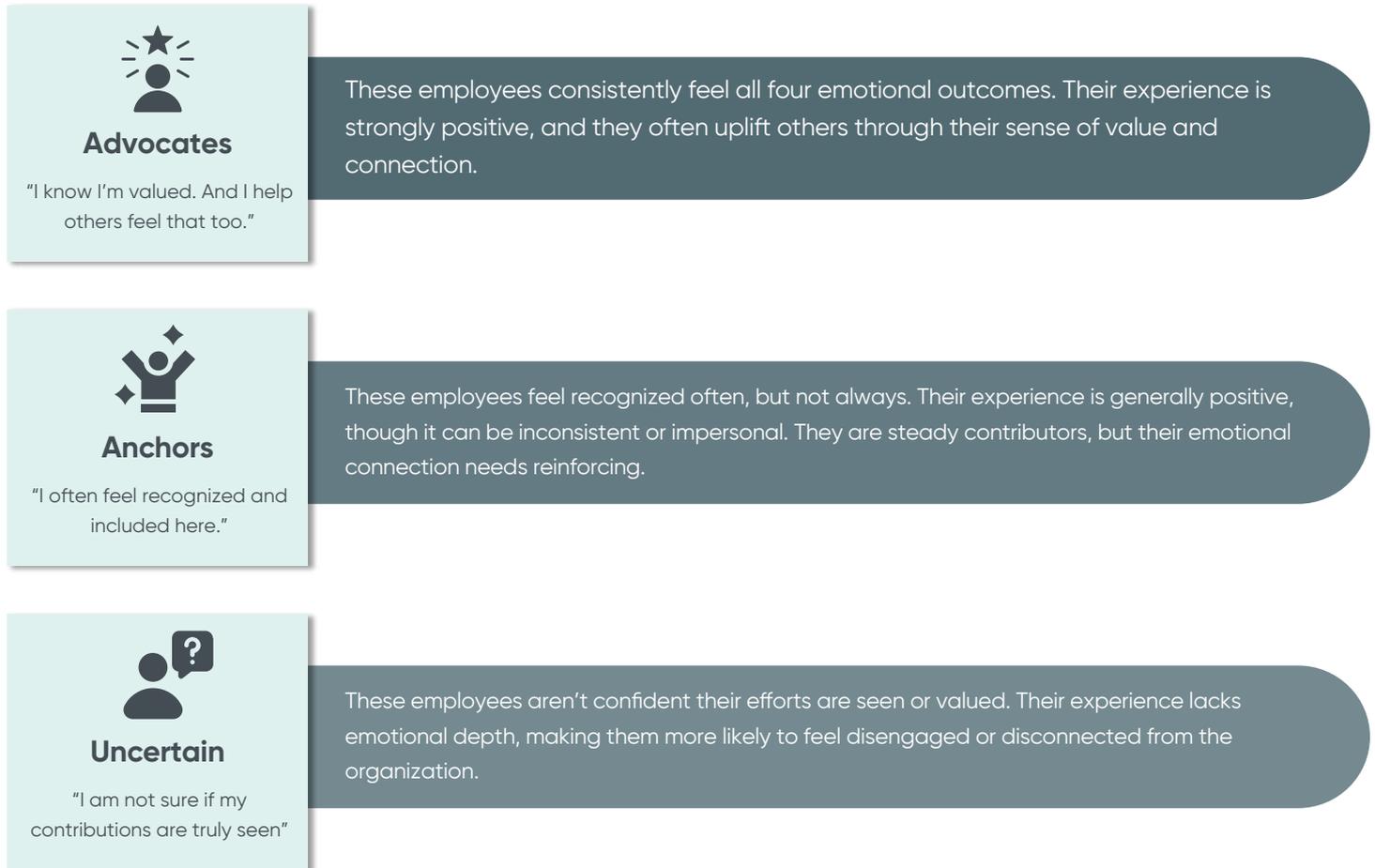
## After Early Gains, Recognition Levels Have Plateaued Below 70%



## The Current State of Recognition

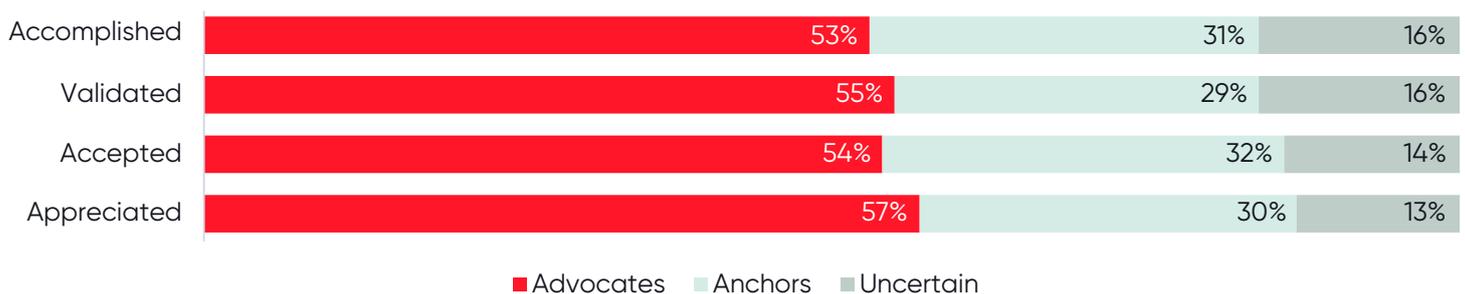
*Recognition is one of the most visible ways culture speaks. While perceptions have improved since the pandemic, a deeper challenge is surfacing: a widening gap between recognition that is given and recognition that is truly felt.*

The emotional drivers that make recognition meaningful—Appreciation, Acceptance, Validation, and Accomplishment—are beginning to weaken. Our research reveals three distinct employee segments, shaped by how deeply they experience these emotions and how that influences their connection to the organization:



This is a fluid spectrum—employees move between categories based on experiences. A missed moment can push an Anchor into uncertainty. A well-timed, thoughtful recognition can lift someone towards advocacy. Recognition, when done right, turns effort into belief—and participation into ownership. On average, just 55% of employees experience the complete emotional impact of recognition—becoming Advocates who uplift others. The rest remain Anchors or Uncertain, lacking consistency or emotional depth in their recognition journey.

### Only Half of Employees Feel Fully Seen and Uplifted



# Gaps in Recognition Equals Missed Potential

When recognition is absent, the emotional balance sheet starts to show signs of strain.

**“When recognition is unequal, so are the outcomes. The few who feel seen give their best. The rest? They give what’s left.”**

We know employees sit across a spectrum—from feeling uncertain to stepping into advocacy. But are leaders intentionally guiding that journey? What signals are we reinforcing—and which ones are going missing?

When recognition is fully experienced—when employees feel all four emotional signals: Appreciation, Acceptance, Validation, and Accomplishment—they thrive. They give more, stay longer, and adapt faster.

At this level, the results speak for themselves:

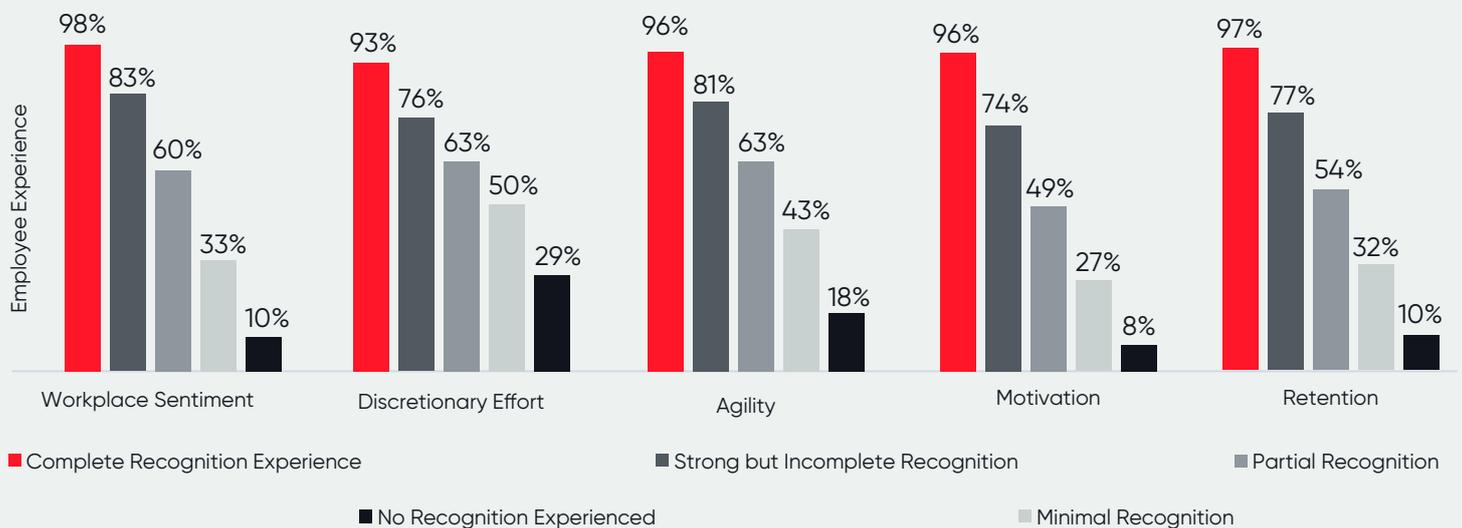
- 98% report strong workplace sentiment,
- 96% feel motivated and agile, and
- 97% intend to stay.

But not everyone feels all four.

- Some employees feel three out of four signals—and the shift is already visible. Sentiment drops to 83%.
- Others feel only two, and it falls further to 60%.
- With just one signal, sentiment plunges to 33%.
- And when none are felt, only 10% report any emotional connection to their workplace.

**The pattern is clear: every missing signal weakens the recognition experience—and with it, trust, motivation, and retention.**

## Sharp Decline in Outcomes Without Full Recognition





## The Underlying Science

*Understanding the Science Behind Feeling Recognized at Work*

# The Underlying Science of Recognition That Elevates People and Performance

Behavioral science reveals that recognition only works when it aligns with an employee’s emotional state and readiness.

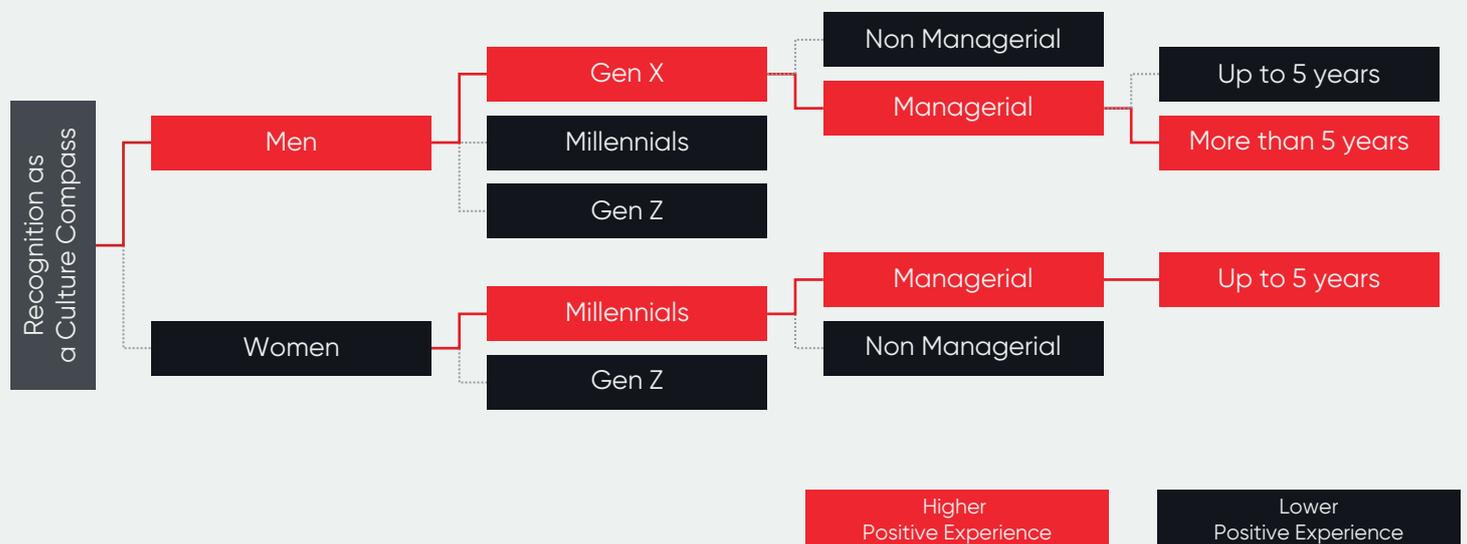
Amy Edmondson’s work on psychological safety shows that in environments where people feel exposed or judged, recognition can backfire. Neuroscience adds that under stress, the brain shifts into protection mode—tuning out praise and focusing instead on fairness and predictability. Interestingly, Maslow’s hierarchy reminds us that unless basic needs like safety and belonging are met, recognition won’t feel like affirmation—it will feel out of place. For thriving employees, recognition inspires growth. But for those just surviving, it often doesn’t land at all.

Even when employees are emotionally ready, not everyone gets the same chance to feel recognized. Our data shows that certain demographic groups are consistently more likely to feel recognized at work:

- Gender gap: In 2025, 70% of men feel recognized vs. 65% of women—a persistent 5% gap that signals fewer women feel seen at work.
- Generational divide: Gen Z lags at 64%, while Millennials reach 69% and Gen X leads at 78%, highlighting a need for a more consistent experience.
- Hierarchy effect: Recognition rises with rank—78% for senior leaders vs. 66% for non-supervisory employees—showing visibility still skews toward authority.
- Tenure trend: Recognition increases with time—71% for those with 5+ years vs. 69% for new employees—suggesting recognition is earned, not embedded.

These trends reveal that recognition remains influenced by access rather than equity—shaped by tenure, title, and visibility more than contribution alone. Closing these gaps is essential to building a culture where every employee, regardless of role or identity, feels genuinely seen.

## Need To Create a More Consistent Experience Across Demographic Groups



## The Underlying Science

To truly understand why recognition works—or why it doesn't—we need to look beyond isolated moments and into the systems that shape them. Recognition may appear simple on the surface, but its impact is deeply influenced by the environment in which it's given, the meaning employees assign to it, and whether it feels earned. This is where research and theory offer powerful lenses to unpack the emotional and behavioural dynamics of recognition in the modern workplace.

Research by Vantage Circle reinforces that recognition, when done well, doesn't just boost morale—it shapes how employees interpret their value within the organization. In today's complex workplace ecosystems, even small gestures can signal trust, inclusion, or—when mishandled—tokenism.

Ecological Systems Theory reminds us that recognition doesn't exist in a vacuum. It's a micro-interaction shaped by broader patterns of communication, leadership, and culture. A thank-you means little if the surrounding system doesn't support it.

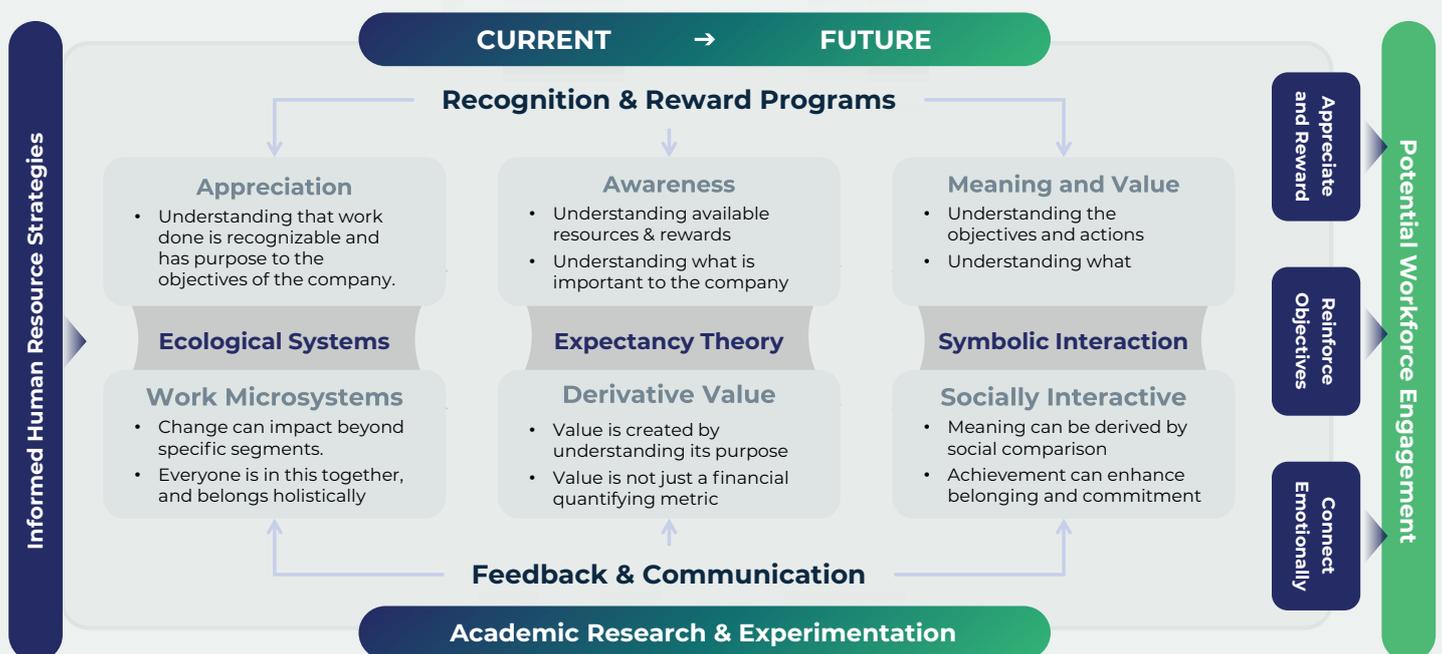
And this is where Symbolic Interactionism adds another layer of insight. This theory suggests that people act based on the meaning they assign to things, and these meanings are derived from social interaction. Employees filter recognition through their personal context, emotional state, and social history within the organization.

Building on this, Vroom's Expectancy Theory reminds us that recognition only motivates when it feels earned and linked to outcomes people care about. If employees sense that their efforts aren't truly seen—or that recognition is random—it leads to disillusionment. In such moments, recognition doesn't inspire; it erodes trust.

Taken together, these frameworks reveal a critical truth: recognition is not just about intention—it's about perception. For it to be meaningful, it must be grounded in fairness, aligned with individual context, and supported by a culture. When organizations approach recognition with this depth and intentionality, it becomes a force that builds trust and strengthens connection.

To build an inclusive culture of recognition, leaders must move beyond one-size to For All systems. So the question remains: When recognition feels inconsistent, where do you intervene—people, platforms, or processes?

## Enhancing Employee Engagement Through Informed Recognition & Rewards



# Reboot Your Culture and Rewire Trust by Focusing on the Recognition Circuit

*Recognition works when it is intentional, behavior-led, system-based and designed to scale.*

**We found that recognition is experienced unevenly across the workforce—a misalignment that's inevitable when different parts of the organization operate on different definitions of what they value.**

Most leaders aim to build cultures where appreciation is genuine, equitable, and motivating. But without a clear structure to guide it, recognition becomes a matter of individual intent. One department may reward effort and team contribution, while another may recognize only outcomes. One manager might publicly acknowledge inclusion efforts, while another may overlook them entirely. Employees navigating these varied cultures don't just adapt—they interpret. And when those interpretations don't align, belief in fairness starts to erode.

This is where a structured framework becomes essential.

A framework that offers a way to shift from fragmented, intent-driven appreciation to a consistent, organization-wide experience. By aligning everyday leadership behaviours with system-level enablers, the framework helps standardise what good recognition looks like—without stripping it of authenticity. It ensures that appreciation approach is not left to interpretation but guided by shared principles that reinforce effort, inclusion, and impact across roles and functions. In doing so, it restores trust in how recognition is earned, perceived, and delivered—making fairness visible and cultural alignment achievable.



# Leadership Behaviours

The interpersonal actions leaders take shape the emotional climate of work. These signals communicate care, trust, and value—establishing the psychological readiness for recognition to resonate.

## Key Behaviours

- Demonstrating genuine care
- Celebrating experimentation and learning
- Actively listening and responding to feedback
- Clarifying goals and setting expectations
- Acknowledging efforts and contributions



# Organizational Channels

The formal structures and cultural routines that embed recognition into the fabric of the organization. These ensure that recognition is not left to chance—it is designed, distributed, and experienced consistently and fairly.

## Key System Enablers

- A culture that celebrates milestones and people
- Growth Orientation
- Equal opportunity to be recognized
- Equitable reward and profit-sharing systems

# What it Takes to Build a Culture of Recognition

Leadership behaviours that build the emotional and structural support for recognition.

**When leaders consistently acknowledge effort and progress, and systems reinforce that behavior through fair and visible practices, recognition becomes embedded in the culture.**

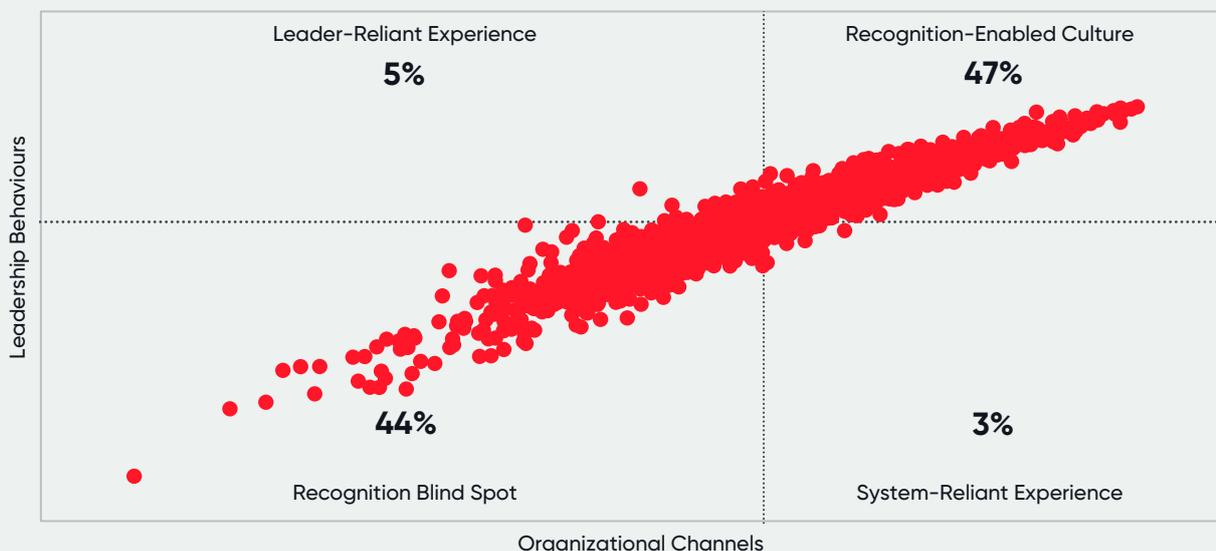
Creating a recognition-rich workplace requires more than isolated initiatives—it demands the alignment of two essential forces: leadership behavior and organizational design.

However, most organizations fall short by focusing on one pillar in isolation. In some cases, recognition is driven by strong managers but lacks consistency because it's not supported by a structured approach. In others, systems exist but feel impersonal, as leadership fails to activate them meaningfully.

While nearly half of organizations enable recognition through both systems and leadership, 44% still operate in the blind spot. We observe the same imbalance across industries.

The insight is clear: Organizations that intentionally align people practices with everyday leadership behaviors don't just improve morale—they build cultures where people feel seen, supported, and motivated to stay and grow.

## Recognition Culture Maturity is Inconsistent Across Organizations



Note: Values may add up to 99/101 due to rounding.



## From Intent to Action

*Closing the Gaps in How Recognition is Designed, Delivered and Experienced*

# Navigating Through the Recognition Blind Spot

*Understanding how rituals, inclusion, and technology anchor recognition in culture.*

A strong culture of recognition begins with reframing it not as a gesture, but as a strategic driver of trust, performance, and belonging. We explored how meaningful recognition produces four core emotional outcomes—feeling appreciated, accepted, validated, and accomplished—and how these emotions are essential signals of an inclusive, high-trust workplace. Yet recognition is not equally felt.

Our analysis revealed demographic and role-based disparities, with younger employees, women, and non-managerial staff often under-recognized, despite their contributions. This makes the case for a deliberate approach—where recognition is driven by design, not discretion.

The Recognition framework offers this structure, activating emotional outcomes through everyday leadership behaviours and systemic enablers. When leaders show up with intention, and systems reinforce what matters, recognition becomes not just an experience—but a culture-building mechanism that scales. This shift of recognition being a sporadic gesture to becoming a vital part of the organizational “operating system” is critical.

A growing number of organizations are evolving their approach to recognition to reflect five key shifts:

- **From periodic to continuous:** Recognition is becoming frequent and real-time, not confined to annual cycles.
- **From exclusive to inclusive:** Programmes now reach across roles, tenures, and teams to ensure broader visibility.
- **From top-down to shared:** Appreciation is increasingly peer-driven, not limited to leadership or HR.
- **From results to behaviours:** Recognition is tied to values and actions—not just end outcomes.
- **From transactional to emotional:** The focus is shifting from rewards to meaningful, personalised appreciation.

Vantage Circle's AIR<sup>e</sup> framework offers a unique and structured approach to making this shift possible. The framework helps organizations transform recognition from a checkbox activity into a genuine driver of behavioural and cultural change.

## AIR<sup>e</sup> framework



### Appreciation

Acknowledging the inherent worth/value of an employee or the behaviour/result demonstrated.

### Incentivisation

Making recognition attractive enough for employees, so they aspire to receive it.

### Reinforcement

Guiding employees towards desired behaviours or results, through recognition.

### <sup>e</sup>Motional Connect

Attaching strong personal feelings to boost the power of recognition.

# Recognition Playbook for Leaders

*A leader's guide for recognition – align it with purpose, personalise it by design, and let it reflect what truly matters.*

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## 01. Start with Purpose

Recognition works best when it's aligned with the organization's mission and cultural priorities. Anchor it in your core goals. Ask: What impact are you trying to create? Is it more collaboration, innovation, or belonging? Let that drive your approach.

- Define the behaviours and values that drive your business outcomes.
  - Clearly communicate the 'why' behind recognition to all.
  - Use recognition to reinforce what success looks and feels like within your team.
- 

## 02. Set Clear Objectives

Recognition works best when it reinforces the right things. Tie recognition to the values and outcomes that matter. Without clear goals, recognition becomes generic and forgettable.

- Link recognition to specific behaviours, not just results—like resilience, creativity, or mentoring.
  - Align recognition moments with performance and culture-building goals.
  - Co-create team-level recognition criteria to ensure relevance.
- 

## 03. Measure What Recognition Really Delivers

Recognition works best when it creates a clear line of sight between what is valued, how it's recognized, and the change it inspires. Go beyond traditional ROI as metrics miss the emotional and behavioural effects of recognition.

- Use the ROE (Return on Expectations) model to evaluate impact across:
    - Reaction (Did it feel meaningful?)
    - Learning (Did people understand what was valued?)
    - Behaviour (Did it drive positive action?)
    - Results (Did it improve outcomes like retention or morale?)
  - Collect feedback through quick pulse surveys or recognition-specific follow-ups.
-

## From Intent to Action

### 04. Design with Intention and Inclusion

Recognition works best when it reflects the diversity of contribution—not just the visibility of performance.

Recognition programs should be broad, balanced, and fair. It is most powerful when it is thoughtful, consistent, and reaches across the full spectrum of contributions.

- Use the **AIR<sup>e</sup> Framework** to balance
    - **A**ppreciation for effort
    - **I**ncentivisation for outcomes
    - **R**einforcement of values
    - **E**mootional connection and belonging
  - Make space for all voices—celebrate everyday efforts, behind-the-scenes excellence, and leadership alike.
  - Use tools like Vantage Circle's Digital Badges to help identify consistent contributors and rising talent—based on behaviour, not just output.
- 

### 05. Balance Your Recognition Portfolio

Recognition works best when it is both structured and spontaneous—blending everyday appreciation with milestone moments. Design and implement a robust mix of recognition types to ensure that appreciation is both frequent and meaningful.

- Create a recognition rhythm that includes:
    - **Everyday:** Peer-to-peer, real-time thank-you
    - **Exclusive:** Quarterly/annual awards, top performer spotlights
    - **Affiliative:** Milestones, birthdays, personal or team celebrations
  - Ensure recognition flows across all levels—from team members to managers and leaders.
- 

### 06. Embed in the Flow of Work

Recognition works best when it happens in the moment—visible, accessible, and integral to how work gets done. For recognition to be consistent, it must be easy to give and naturally integrated into daily habits and rituals.

- Integrate recognition into collaboration tools like Slack, Teams, or Outlook.
  - Use mobile-friendly tools or QR-based cards to make it easy to appreciate in real-time.
  - Blend digital and physical (phygital) touchpoints—like cards or social shout-outs—to reach diverse teams.
- 

### 07. Track Progress with Lead & Lag Indicators

Recognition works best when it is informed by both people's experiences and measurable patterns over time. Tracking & measuring brings clarity to recognition efforts—helping you amplify what's working and adjust where needed.

- Track lead indicators like:
  - Recognition participation by department, level, and role
  - Frequency of recognition touchpoints
  - Usage of platforms or digital tools
- Monitor lag indicators such as:
  - Engagement and eNPS trends
  - Retention rates
  - Promotion and internal mobility metrics

# Putting the Playbook into Practice

*How leading organizations bring the recognition playbook to life—through systems, stories, and everyday moments that matter.*

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## **Share the Pie: Recognition by the People, for the People**

*A global product-based tech company puts recognition in the hands of its people—turning daily appreciation into a culture of shared pride and ownership.*

This company uses a peer-to-peer reward system. In a very real sense, employees operating their own recognition and rewards system is a type of employee ownership—a type of stock ownership and shared capitalism. Having an employee ownership plan helps to increase the trust, respect, fairness, and pride index. Every month, employees of specific business units get an allowance. With that allowance, they can give small bonuses to their peers, direct reports, and managers to recognize their contributions in real time. Even if the bonus value is small, the recognition is invaluable. Employees can redeem the points they've earned through the extensive digital reward catalog. The catalog is full of rewards options like gift cards and charitable donations and is completely customizable. With automated recognition and rewards administration in one intuitive platform, employees can redeem rewards instantly, minimizing the administration time needed to turn recognition into tangible, memorable perks.

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## **Recognition that Reflects What Matters Most**

*A logistics and supply chain enterprise designed the Values Tree to help employees recognize peers for value-driven behaviours, anchoring appreciation to the roots of organizational culture.*

This Logistics and Supply Chain company has a unique initiative called the 'Values Tree' to recognize employees for living & upholding the organizational values. Under this initiative, leaves of different colors are circulated among employees across various businesses. Employees can use these leaves to write the name of their colleague (whom they want to recognize) and pin them on the values tree for everyone to view. Through this, they foster a culture of recognition and reinforce values at the organizational level.

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## **From Local Impact to Global Recognition**

*Cultural Ambassador Award honors value-driven leaders with visibility, validation, and a personal connection to the company's global vision*

This multinational company's Cultural Ambassador is a role model who always takes initiative and ownership of projects, tools, and issues without hesitation. The person is passionate about results, and they always set goals and put in the extra effort to make them happen. An employee who effortlessly embodies the company's core values is a cultural ambassador. Nominations for the award are sought from all employees. The person is recognized with a certificate at an Annual Day event in front of all the employees. The award is a visit to the company's headquarters in Amsterdam with a detailed program for a week, which includes interacting with the CEO and co-founder and being a part of learning sessions.

## From Intent to Action

### **Appreciation at Scale, with Heart**

*With iAppreciate cards and a gamified leaderboard, Gratitude Week turns employee recognition into a vibrant, visible, and inclusive celebration*

Crafted by the Rewards and Recognition Council, Gratitude Week is an engaging initiative that underscores its unwavering commitment to fostering a culture of gratitude and appreciation. Hosted annually, Gratitude Week offers employees the opportunity to recognize their colleagues and peers for their contributions. Activities include sharing iAppreciate cards and messages. Metrics such as the number of appreciations sent, exchanges, and employee coverage are tracked to measure the success of the initiative. The introduction of a gamified leaderboard makes it more engaging and encourages participation.

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### **A Week of Wholesome Appreciation**

*From coffee catch-ups to team huddles, Gracias brings gratitude into everyday relationships—one themed day at a time.*

Gracias is a week-long celebration focused on sharing appreciation and recognition. Each day of the week is designed around a specific theme, such as 'Thank You Buddy,' 'Boss, You Inspire,' 'Client Shout-outs,' 'Hand-in-Hand with Enablers,' and 'Team Huddles & Accolades.' During this week, teams enjoy fun activities like catching up over coffee and playing a leisure game or two.

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### **Recognition That Connects the Dots**

*Through virtual shout-outs, tenure appreciation, and values-based rewards, Heartbeat helps build a culture of connection, celebration, and collective momentum.*

The Heartbeat program, part of the rewards initiative, allows anyone in the organization to recognize and appreciate colleagues or leaders. This 360-degree rewards mechanism enables virtual shout-outs across locations, celebrating great work and acknowledging service tenure through recognitions. Winners in four categories—Company, Client, People, and Community—receive vouchers and cash prizes. This initiative creates a culture of recognition, connection, and collective growth.

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### **Saying 'WOW' to Those Who Shape the Culture**

*A system that translates appreciation into measurable rewards for team members who lead by example, contribute broadly, and drive excellence from within.*

WOW Points are used to recognize and acknowledge the extra effort and time dedication of those who demonstrate initiative, innovation, and a commitment to excellence beyond their regular job responsibilities. Awarded to team members who take on additional roles, such as conducting training sessions and actively participating in the interview process, these points express the organization's appreciation for their dedication. These are paid quarterly to the interview panel and annually to others.

# The Future of Recognition is Intelligent, Human, and Built to Evolve

*Recognition has always mattered. But how it shows up at work needs to change.*

Recognition is entering a new era—one that blends emotional insight with digital capability. As work becomes more hybrid, fast-paced, and purpose-driven, organizations must move from reactive recognition to systems that are intentional, inclusive, and continuous.

At its core, the need remains timeless: people want to feel seen, valued, and connected. But how we deliver that must change.

Two questions are at the core of this evolution:

What will recognition mean to tomorrow's workforce?

And how can emotional intelligence guide recognition in digital-first teams?

Recognition will be shaped by three converging forces that redefine it not just as a cultural gesture, but as a strategic lever for performance, belonging, and adaptability:

- The growing demand for emotionally intelligent reinforcement
- The ability to deliver recognition seamlessly and at scale through digital tools and AI
- The opportunity to leverage recognition data for strategic insight and organizational development

Younger generations—especially Gen Z and Gen Alpha—are bringing new expectations to the workplace. They've grown up in environments where feedback, emotional safety, and inclusion weren't bonuses—they were the baseline. So, when it comes to recognition, they're not just looking for applause. They want to feel seen for who they are, not just what they deliver.

# Future Shifts in Recognition and How to Respond



Recognition is no longer about just performance metrics. It's about acknowledging intent, growth, and personal values.

## Shift 1: From Output to Identity

Recognize the person, not just the outcome. Celebrate the 'how'—resilience, creativity, inclusion—not only the 'what'.



Employees are less moved by generic praise and more by recognition that feels sincere, thoughtful, and grounded in shared values.

## Shift 2: From Transaction to Trust

Equip leaders to recognize with emotional intelligence. Make appreciation specific, timely, and tied to what matters most.



Appreciation isn't just about engagement anymore—it's becoming a pillar of psychological safety and mental wellbeing.

## Shift 3: From Boosting Morale to Supporting Wellbeing

Build recognition into your wellbeing strategy. Use it to create safe emotional spaces and reinforce connection in hybrid teams.



The rising workforce wants their work to reflect larger social, environmental, or ethical goals—not just financial outcomes.

## Shift 4: From Business Results to Shared Purpose

Recognize contributions to DEI, sustainability, mentorship, and other purpose-led initiatives. Link recognition to impact, not just tasks.



Recognition preferences vary by role, personality, generation, and geography. Uniform approaches miss the mark.

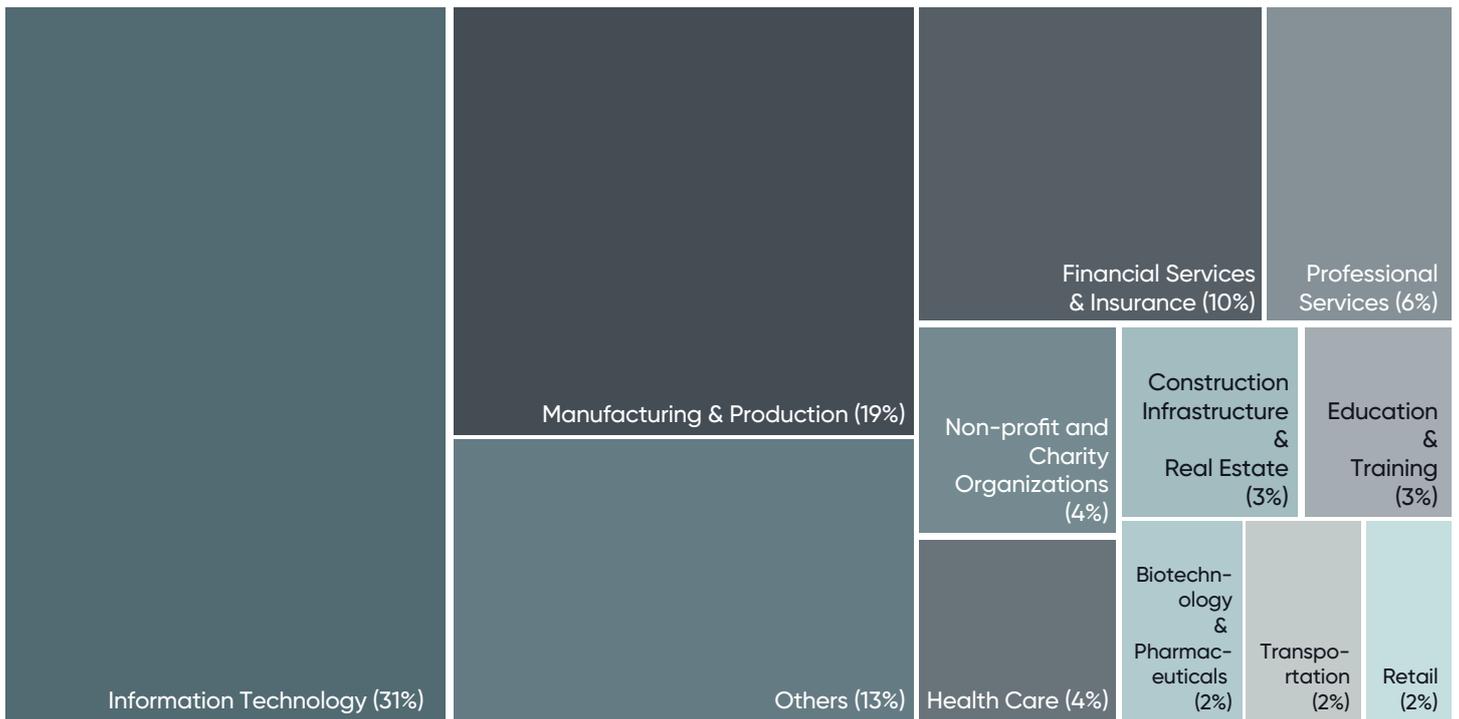
## Shift 5: From One-Size-Fits-All to Personalised Experiences

Design systems that offer choice—public or private, written or verbal, peer-led or manager-led. Let people be seen in ways that resonate with them.

# Participant Profile

**1810+**  
Organizations

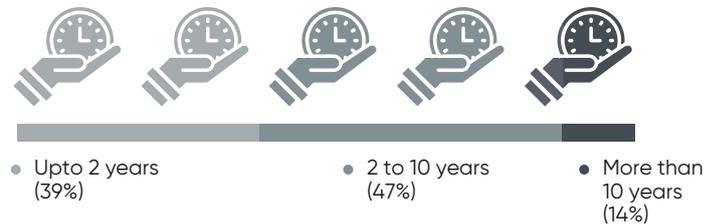
**5.7M+**  
Employee Voices Represented



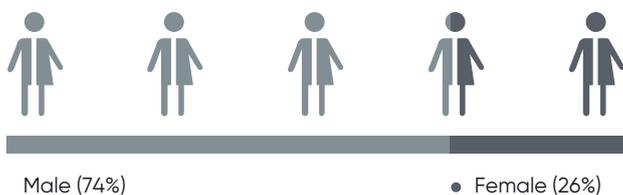
## Years of Operations



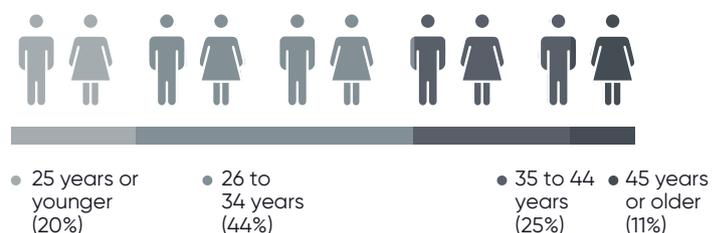
## Tenure



## Gender



## Age





## About Vantage Circle

Vantage Circle is the world's leading behavioral-science-powered employee recognition and rewards SaaS platform, trusted by over 3.2 million users across 700+ organizations globally. Designed to help organizations of all sizes create a thriving workplace culture, the platform leverages behavioral insights, innovative technology, and globally recognized frameworks to drive meaningful employee engagement.

For over 14 years, enterprises such as Wipro, Infosys, Bosch, Tata Communications, Tata Motors, and Cognizant have partnered with Vantage Circle to reinforce and scale productive employee behaviors. Through targeted recognition, personalized rewards, and in-the-moment appreciation, HR and business leaders can align recognition with core values and business outcomes.

With support for 16+ languages and localized rewards in 100+ countries, Vantage Circle ensures recognition is inclusive, relevant, and impactful—wherever your teams are. Seamless integrations with tools like Microsoft Teams and Slack make recognition frictionless and embedded in everyday work.

### Is Your Recognition & Rewards Program Designed for Real Impact?

The AIR<sup>®</sup> Assessment by Vantage Circle is a free, research-backed tool that helps you evaluate the effectiveness of your R&R program—not just in structure, but in emotional outcomes.

It takes less than 10 minutes to complete, and you'll receive an instant report with insights you can act on.

Take the free **AIR<sup>®</sup> Assessment**

To learn more, visit [www.vantagecircle.com](http://www.vantagecircle.com).

# GET RECOGNIZED FOR YOUR GREAT WORK CULTURE.

As a Great Place To Work Certified™ organization, you have the opportunity to feature among the most credible Best Workplaces Lists in India and globally. Organizations are recognized across more than 20+ industries, types, sizes and themes that matter to employees.

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Visit [www.greatplacetowork.in/contact-us/](http://www.greatplacetowork.in/contact-us/) or write to [in\\_getcertified@greatplacetowork.com](mailto:in_getcertified@greatplacetowork.com)

Note: Since the lists are announced throughout the year, there are process deadlines for each. Please reach out to us to know more.

## Great Place To Work Annual Calendar

	India's Best Workplaces™ For Millennials	AUG 2026		India's Best Workplaces™ in Retail	FEBRUARY 2026
	India's Best Workplaces™ for Women	SEPTEMBER 2025		India's Best Workplaces™ in Health & Wellness	APRIL 2026
	India's Best Workplaces™ in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belongingness	SEPTEMBER 2025		India's Best Workplaces™ in BFSI	APRIL 2026
	India's Best NGO's to Work For	OCTOBER 2025		India's Best Companies to Work For	JUNE 2026
	India's Best Workplaces™ in IT & IT-BPM	NOVEMBER 2025		India's Best Employers Among Nation-Builders	JUNE 2026
	India's Best Workplaces™ in Pharmaceuticals to Work For	DECEMBER 2025		India's Great Mid-size Workplaces™	JUNE 2026
	India's Best Workplaces™ in Manufacturing	JANUARY 2026			

# Great Place To Work®



## About us

Great Place To Work is the global authority on workplace culture. We give leaders and organizations the recognition and tools to create a consistently and overwhelmingly positive employee experience, fostering cultures that are proven to drive business, improve lives, and better society. Our mission is to help every place become a great place to work for all.

## Get Certified

Great Place To Work Certification™ is the most powerful way to elevate your employer brand, attract, retain, and engage the right people, and get the tools to unlock their potential.

**Tell us a little about your company and someone from our team will be in touch soon.**

## Contributors

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## Research from Great Place To Work

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