

# YOUR WORKPLACE



*Inspired People. Outstanding Results.*

## WHAT ROCKS and WHAT SUCKS with EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

MAKING PEOPLE FEEL VALUED IS CHEAPER  
AND EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

**+ Recruit Top Talent  
by Stepping Up Your  
Wellness Game**

**+ How to Welcome  
New Canadians**

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# It's the Thought that Counts


In researching this edition of *Your Workplace*, which features employee rewards and recognition, we came across some information on automated recognition. In the same way that Facebook congratulates you on friend anniversaries or your phone company might send you a form letter thanking you for being a loyal customer, recognition software can now send automated acknowledgements to employees on events like birthdays or work anniversaries. Although automation is undoubtedly the wave of the future, at least in big organizations, this kind of recognition seemed, well, disingenuous to us. There's nothing wrong with some degree of automation if it makes your life easier per se, but if there's one thing we've learned, it's that for recognition to be successful it has to be sincere and personal. In fact, as long as you're expressing sincere appreciation for your team through a gesture that is personalized and thoughtful, it's pretty hard to make any of the mistakes employers commonly make.

In this issue, we take a look at what rocks and what sucks when it comes to employee recognition. Recent research from The Conference Board of Canada shows that this is a point of common concern – while most people professionals are in agreement that recognition is essential, more than half of organizations are dissatisfied with their recognition programs. The good news? Improving employee appreciation is easier and cheaper than you might think.

Also in this issue, we consider name-blind hiring, investigate fat-shaming, reveal the winner of our reader's choice recipe contest and learn how to avoid the holiday-season slump in workplace productivity. In "Welcoming New Canadians," Lesley Taylor discusses hospitality and how to avoid potential misunderstandings and conflict when welcoming immigrants into your organization. We take a look at recruitment strategies – organizations are using everything from wellness programs to algorithms to find the best talent. And we also share some of the worst employee gift ideas we've ever heard of.

As you read, we hope you take away the same lesson that we did: this season, as you plan your office parties or dole out holiday gifts, remember that recognition needn't be expensive or flashy – more than anything, it's the thought that counts. In the spirit of appreciation, we'd like to take this moment to thank our community for being awesome and wish you all a happy, healthy holiday season.

Enjoy this issue, and remember we always enjoy getting your feedback, so drop us a line: [editorial@yourworkplace.ca](mailto:editorial@yourworkplace.ca).

Happy working, happy reading, and from all of us at Team YW – make work better! 



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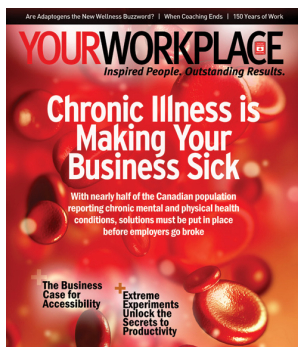
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I am not exactly sure where I picked up *Your Workplace* magazine, but I am sure glad that I did. The article “Chronic Illness is Making Your Business Sick” was totally on-point. I appreciated the acknowledgement that many employees do get sick and it is not their fault. I showed my boss at work and he not only read the article but the whole magazine. We are a commercial construction company and thought the accessibility article was interesting and relevant to what we build, and the 50+ labour pool article was good for our hiring practices. Now that I am a subscriber, I am looking forward to the next issue.

M. BRYANT, CONSTRUCTION FOREMAN  
EDMONTON, AB

Your July/August issue of *Your Workplace* continues to sit on my desk. The cover image (of people jumping) reminds me that our workplace can also be an exciting and engaging place to work and learn. Your conference looks totally awesome and I will be checking it out for 2018. Hopefully I will be one of those people jumping in the air! Please send me some info on the conference when available. Thanks.

S. JONES  
HALIFAX, NS

For four issues in a row I really liked the Conversations article on new research that comes out on workplace topics. From psychopaths and sex to stupidity and extreme productivity experiments, I am now wondering what you are going to come up with next. Well done! Fun to read.

P. SINGH  
TORONTO, ON

## QUESTIONS ABOUT COACHING ?

Every issue, Lisa Sansom, trainer and certified coach, offers advice to our readers with a coaching case study. Send your most challenging issues to [editorial@yourworkplace.ca](mailto:editorial@yourworkplace.ca) and receive invaluable expert advice from a basis of applied positive psychology. Of course we will respect confidentiality.



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**Got something to say?** Tweet @yourworkplace, send your letters to *Your Workplace*, 23 Queen Street, Kingston, ON, K7K 1A1 or email letters to [editorial@yourworkplace.ca](mailto:editorial@yourworkplace.ca). Please include your name, address and telephone number. Comments may be edited for length, grammar and clarity.

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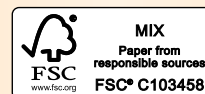


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# Beat the Holiday Productivity Slump

Three strategies to keep employees engaged despite the distractions of the season

BY KELLY S. THOMPSON

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he holidays bring excitement over vacation time to be spent with friends and family. The anticipation can be akin to children waiting for Santa's arrival, and yet that same giddiness can also lead to slumps in productivity. Many employees are overbooked, stressed out and distracted this time of year. While the season should be a time for relaxed rules and frivolity it can also be a nightmare for managers. Imagine this: 53% of workers shop online for holiday gifts at work, according to CareerBuilder's 2016 annual Cyber Monday survey.

Equally problematic is productivity being impeded by employees not taking enough time off. According to the 2016 ADP Sentiment Survey, most Canadian workers don't use their annual vacation entitlement resulting in unmotivated, unengaged employees who feel frazzled in their work without the reprieve of a break.

How do organizations ensure employees get the rest they need and deserve while ensuring they stay motivated and productive during the holiday season? Two speakers from 2017's Imagine Your Workplace Conference, Celese Fletcher and Corry Robertson, give us their insights.



## **I** SHARE YOUR VISION

Goal-setting is vital in any business, not only for senior management but for entry-level employees. Ensure that these objectives are shared from the top down, so that everyone is on board and understands their part in achieving organizational goals.

"Knowing the 'why' is inspiring and engaging. When you attach a message as to how each person's contribution plays a role in achieving the greater good, that gives people a sense of purpose," says Corry Robertson, executive coach with Corry Robertson Alive From 9-5, a corporate coaching company.

If you fear productivity might slope downwards during the holidays and don't know where to start, Robertson suggests a workplace coaching session might be the ticket. She notes that November is the perfect time for companies to conduct coaching sessions, before the holiday madness sets in but with an eye towards the New Year and planning new initiatives.





## 2 COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

The key to an engaged workplace is to have open communication. Fostering an environment of openness, in which employees can share triumphs and critiques without fear of reprisal, makes for a more meaningful work experience for all staff.

It's natural to want to start the New Year fresh. The post-holiday season is a chance to touch base with staff on a personal level, face to face, to hash out any issues or future planning to best support the employee. "Starting with a one-on-one chat, the manager can welcome back the employee by listening to holiday highlights — if the employee is interested — and then update the employee on what has gone on in his or her absence," says Celese Fletcher, Principal at the Fletcher Consultancy, which helps companies increase their own productivity.

The holiday season is also an ideal time to host a brainstorming session for staff, where everyone is able to provide their input. An open town-hall atmosphere is more likely to create an environment in which employees are willing to share, but consider this a chance to explore what works and what doesn't within your business, and help staff generate ideas for solutions.

Communication is also key in terms of mitigating the impact of workplace and personal stressors for staff. The holidays can be stressful for many, impacting an employee's work. December is a time that involves calendar-juggling, financial struggles (with the added cost of gifts, travel and child care) and family challenges. Robertson advises that this is an opportunity for managers to be mindful of the challenges facing their staff and have frank conversations about mitigating that stress.

## 3 GIVE YOUR EMPLOYEES SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO

A holiday party can frazzle already overscheduled staff, and what is meant to be a thanks for a year of hard work can instead cause undue pressure. Robertson has an alternate idea. "Instead of the annual office party in December, I suggest you host your festive party in January when everyone is back to work. This is a great way to kick off the New Year with positive energy," she says.

Offering a positive event to look forward to upon returning to work can provide a respite from the back-to-work rush and help stave off the winter doldrums. Additionally, many venues consider January to be off-season and offer discounted rates, potentially saving you money. Scheduling your party after the holidays can also encourage novel themes, like a winter wonderland or carnival.

The holidays are a time for everyone to let loose. Ruining everyone's fun isn't likely to make people more productive, but not having a plan isn't a wise move either. Avoid the holiday season productivity slump by sharing your vision for the future, practising open communication and ensuring that your office festivities are something to look forward to, not a drag. Additionally, Robertson and Fletcher both note that a healthy, productive and engaged workplace culture is something that should be maintained year-round, not just over the holidays. "To achieve engagement any month of the year, leaders must be genuinely concerned about employee engagement ... 24/7/365," says Robertson.

A positive workplace is one that staff look forward to returning to once they've had their fill of gingerbread and eggnog, which is a huge reason to celebrate. **W**

*Kelly S. Thompson is a former officer in the Canadian Armed Forces and now a writer and editor. She has written for magazines, newspapers, and several books.*

Bozena Fulawka - Gingerbread man / Licensed by Ingram Image

# Three things not to do

## 1 Don't schedule too many meetings for the New Year

No one wants to come back from vacation to an entire week of back-to-back meetings. Leave breathing room to set goals without overwhelming employees.

## 2 Don't launch new plans right before the holidays

To prevent stress in staff and loss in momentum, Robertson recommends no new initiatives be launched in December.

## 3 Don't waste people's time with lame holiday gimmicks

"Organizations should avoid using gimmicky exercises that have little to do with the business and are perceived to be time-wasters," says Fletcher. So leading up to the holiday season, don't run an *Amazing Race* pool or force fun that makes employees roll their eyes, not celebrate.