

Intuit provides business and financial management solutions for small and mid-sized businesses; financial institutions, including banks and credit unions; consumers and accounting professionals. Its flagship products and services include QuickBooks®, Quicken® and TurboTax® software. Intuit has approximately 8,200 employees in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and India.

## CASE STUDY

# “Spotlight” Global Strategic Recognition Program

### THE CHALLENGE

In 2001, Intuit launched an online employee recognition program, allowing managers to give awards that could be redeemed for merchandise. Employees could choose gifts from an online catalog containing about 2,000 items. Program adoption was uneven with multiple challenges.

Employees in the U.S. and Canada were dissatisfied with the merchandise catalog rewards program for many reasons. Catalog items were too expensive (i.e., awards in the \$250 category were much cheaper if bought in a store or online). Employees felt the company was spending too much money for their awards and it was not a good value proposition. The electronic products in the online catalog were outdated with batteries, cables, memory, and other necessary accessories often missing, requiring the employee to purchase the additional items. Merchandise was often broken during shipping. Delivery times were long, especially for out-of-stock items.

The merchandise catalog program experienced stagnant adoption rates and was never deployed in the U.K. (The India location not open at the time). Use of the merchandise catalog program remained static at 5,000 to 5,500 awards per year over the three years it was in place. Only 50% of employees received awards under the program.

Employees began to request gift certificates because of issues with the merchandise awards. Certificates for only 10 to 15 companies were added to the program, but quickly became 90% of award redemptions. However, the certificates took up to a month to be delivered.

### THE SOLUTION

To resolve these challenges, Intuit selected Globoforce to provide a best-practices based strategic global recognition platform. Intuit named its employee recognition program “Spotlight,” highlighting its purpose to “spotlight performance, innovation, and service dedication at Intuit.” Spotlight was rapidly adopted with 20,000 awards given in the first year, rising to about 26,000 awards the following year. Within two years, Spotlight achieved a high frequency and penetration of awards with 90 to 95 percent of eligible employees receiving at least one award. One reason for this rapid success was Intuit’s relatively low average award value of \$120.

Employees also appreciated the quick and easy reward redemption process in Spotlight.

- \**Easy to Use:* Employee feedback indicated that they found the redemption process very easy to use. Employees could combine awards and redeem for a larger denomination gift certificate.
- \**Rapid Delivery:* Since Globoforce specialized in gift certificate-based recognition programs even backordered certificates were promptly filled, arriving within a few days. The certificate delivery speed was popular with employees, particularly after their previous experience with deliveries that often took many weeks.
- \**Online Redemption:* Use of award money to purchase certificates for online stores, such as Amazon.com, was very popular. When awards were redeemed for online suppliers, the employee received an email response with a certificate code that could be used on the vendor’s online store.
- \**Charitable Donations:* Using awards for charitable purposes was popular, as many employees felt that they already had enough “stuff,” and preferred to use their awards for something they felt was more meaningful.
- \**Easy International Process:* Currency denominations defaulted to the employee’s local currency, but employees could use drop-down menus to select other currencies or gift certificates in other countries.

## THE RESULTS

In 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008, *Fortune* listed Intuit as the most admired software company in the United States. In a 2007 survey that included eight categories, Intuit ranked number one in people management, use of corporate assets, social responsibility, quality of management, and quality of products/services. *Fortune* also regularly included Intuit in its list of best places to work.

By the end of 2007, the Spotlight program was embedded into the company's culture and annualized spending on rewards jumped from \$1 million to \$6 million, a key indicator of high, ongoing program adoption throughout the organization. Most importantly, employees were

very pleased to be getting feedback through Spotlight on things that they did that were appreciated by others. Employees commented: "I get regular feedback from my manager," or "I am recognized for the work that I do."

Employee survey feedback on Spotlight was also extremely positive. Managers reported on how easy the system was to use, and how the rapid fulfillment created a positive experience for all involved. Surveyed by e-mail were 2,000 recipients of awards redeemable for gift certificates during November 2006.

### Award Recipient Responses (60% response rate)

	Agree/Strongly Agree
*I received my Spotlight Award(s) close to the time of my achievement/contribution.	96%
*I clearly understand why I receive Spotlight Awards.	99%
*Receiving Spotlight Awards helps motivate me to sustain high performance.	93%
*Spotlight Award senders take the time to personally recognize me for achievement(s).	95%
*I found the Spotlight Recognition Tool easy to use.	94%
*I received my gift cards/certificates/online PINs in the time frame communicated to me on the tool.	Yes: 92%
*How satisfied were you with the variety and selection of award redemption offers?	86% (satisfied/very satisfied)

### Award Issuer Responses (53% response rate)

	Agree/Strongly Agree
*I understand Intuit's philosophy on recognition.	99%
*I personally follow up with award recipients after I send them a Spotlight Award.	75%
*I was able to send a Spotlight Award that matched the level of recipient's achievement.	98%
*The Spotlight Recognition Tool effectively supports the recognition culture at Intuit.	98%
*I found the Spotlight Recognition Tool easy to use.	93%

## About the Stanford Graduate School of Business Case Study

David Hoyt prepared business case HR-31 "Employee Recognition at Intuit" (March 2008) under the supervision of Professor Hayagreeva Rao as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation. The full business case provides an in-depth history of Intuit, a summary of the employee recognition programs in general, the evolution of employee recognition at Intuit specifically, and a detailed discussion of the current "Spotlight" employee recognition program provided by Globoforce including program user satisfaction survey results. Full text of Case Study HR31, titled "Employee Recognition at Intuit," can be purchased from the Stanford Graduate School of Business ([https://gsbapps.stanford.edu/cases/detail1.asp?Document\\_ID=3073](https://gsbapps.stanford.edu/cases/detail1.asp?Document_ID=3073)) for \$6 per copy (\$2.95 for academic use). Or contact the Stanford Business School Case Writing Office by e-mail at [cwo@gsb.stanford.edu](mailto:cwo@gsb.stanford.edu) or by mail at: Case Writing Office, Stanford Graduate School of Business, 518 Memorial Way, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-5015.