



CONNECTING PEOPLE: HOW CISCO USED SOCIAL RECOGNITION TO TRANSFORM ITS CULTURE



Co-founded in 1982 by Leonard Bosack and Sandy Lerner, Cisco Systems is a worldwide IT leader that designs, manufactures, and sells networking equipment. While its headquarters is in San Jose, California, Cisco has more than 70,000 people in nearly 400 sites globally. Its mission is to shape the future of the Internet by creating unprecedented value and opportunity for customers, employees, investors, and ecosystem partners.

The People Deal is Cisco's vision for the kind of experience it hopes to create for employees. Embedded within the People Deal are Cisco's values of Connect Everything, Innovate Everywhere, and Benefit Everyone.

“We wanted to increase our employee satisfaction and employee engagement, and our program has greatly contributed to that.”

CLAIRE GRAY
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL COMPENSATION



THE CHALLENGE

As a 30-year-old company, Cisco had a very strong culture, but it “needed to be refreshed,” recalls Claire Gray, senior director of global compensation. “If we described the old culture, it was a little stodgy.”

In addition to a culture refresh, Cisco needed to re-vamp its reward program, which was a very traditional spot bonus program for people who completed big projects. It was “more reward than actual recognition,” says Claire. The challenge was that there was not a lot of publicity around the program—only people on the team would know if someone received a reward. And only managers were able to give rewards to their team members.

Cisco’s ambition was to better align employees’ recognition and reward experience with the cultural experience that the People Deal promised employees.

THE SOLUTION

To create a better experience for employees, Cisco set out to create a global, peer-to-peer recognition and reward program based on its core values. Some of the goals of the program were to:

- Increase participation and frequency
- Create positive employee interactions and connections
- Improve productivity of teams and individuals
- Reinforce Cisco’s core values
- Increase employee engagement and satisfaction

Ultimately, Cisco chose to partner with Globoforce to bring this vision to life. Claire explains why the partnership works so well: “Globoforce is a really powerful innovator. The company has a great global presence. It also has the social presence we were looking for. And then what we came to really appreciate and partner on is the innovation and co-design. Globoforce also brought a lot of other ideas as part of our partnership. The video, the mobile capability — those were things that Globoforce brought to us.”

The result was Connected Recognition, a Cisco-branded employee recognition and reward program based on core values and funded at 1% of payroll. This level of investment enabled Cisco to create the best possible recognition experience for all employees, as well as reap quantifiable results.

THE RESULT

“So far we’ve had great numbers,” says Claire on the results of the program. “We have 80% participation — up from 29% before we implemented Connected Recognition. Getting 80% of a 70,000-person company to do anything that they don’t have to is pretty impressive. This is all optional.”

In the first year, 185,000 awards were given across the organization. The momentum continued with 186,000 awards given in the second year and participation by 98% of countries. Cisco also improved employee satisfaction scores by 100% and employee engagement scores by 5% in one year. Feedback from employees has been very positive, with 97% saying they “love the new program.”

One Cisco employee said, “It’s very gratifying to see a real and monetary ‘thank you’ when I do something for someone else. On those days, I always go home really happy and tell my girlfriend how I got a CR [Connected Recognition]. Also, it feels like I accomplished something whenever I get one, rather than just a nonstop continuous grind.”

QUICK RESULTS

185,000 awards given

in the first year of Connected Recognition

100% improvement

in employee satisfaction scores

5% increase

in employee engagement scores in the first year



To learn more about how social recognition can improve engagement, give us a call.

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