

## RANDOM recognition

In order to foster a culture of recognition, employees should be reminded frequently that they are doing a good job. But managers are busy people, and often do not have - or make - the time to reinforce good employee behavior. If employees do not get recognition, how will they know what behaviors to repeat? Without frequent, ongoing, constructive feedback, a culture of recognition does not exist.

One tool that overworked managers can use is a “tickler file” for recognition. A simple way to help with “randomizing” the recognition is to put all of your staff’s names on small pieces of paper, fold them up and put them in a box. Draw them out randomly (like bingo) and arbitrarily place them on a blank monthly calendar page. Unfold the papers and write down the names of employees on the corresponding dates. Then use the calendar as a reminder. While there are plenty of ways to do this (Excel has a random number generator feature which can be helpful for tech-savvy managers), it is a sure way to recognize each of your employees with no employee receiving any more or less “random recognition” than another. You can also employ a simple and fun [recognition technique](#) as part of it. Remember to be discreet about your calendar. You do not necessarily want employees to know that you need the reminder to recognize them!

Here is an example of how it might work. Sherry is a manager of 12 employees at the Department of Transportation. There are four engineers, six engineering assistants and two office assistants that report to her. She has randomly assigned each of her staff members’ names to a calendar for May as follows:

Employee Recognition Calendar for May				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1	2 Linda	3	4 Frank
7 Grace	8	9 Margaret	10 Pam	11 Don
14	15 Will	16	17	18 Erica
21	22	23 Carl	24 Dennis	25
28 Fred	29	30 Marie	31	

For the purposes of this example, today is Wednesday, May 23. Sherry's electronic calendar sends her a reminder that she needs to "randomly recognize" Carl today. Carl is an engineering assistant that Sherry has little contact with on a daily basis, so she asks Erica, one of her engineers, what Carl has been working on lately. Erica tells her that Carl finished verifying data on a site map for her two days ahead of schedule last week. Armed with that knowledge, Sherry strolls down to Carl's office, pokes her head in, and tells Carl that she heard about the good work he had done, and how much it was appreciated. The exchange takes about two minutes, but it makes Carl's day.

This is a simplistic example, but the point is that feedback to your employees should not occur only during required performance management reviews. In order to foster a culture of recognition, it should happen as often as is feasible.

For added effect, a manager can have a higher-level supervisor occasionally stand in for them during a random recognition event. Managers with a large staff can also keep "reminder cards" on their employees to help generate talking points. Jot down things you know about their personal lives, such as hobbies, the names of their spouses, pets, children, etc. Knowing these details and bringing them up in conversation lets the employees know that you care about them personally and that they are more than just employees.