



Embedding Employee Recognition into Change Management for Offline-Heavy Workforces



Change is challenging for every organization. Gartner finds only 34% of all organizational change initiatives are considered a “clear success” and 50% are “clear failures.”

Traditional management practices are not keeping pace when it comes to helping offline, shift-based, distributed workforces adapt to new realities. To support frontline workers through times of transition, change management efforts are most successful when focused on people-centered strategies and creative approaches using offline outreach.

Traditional change management falls short for offline workforces

Reaching offline employees and managing them through organizational and industry-wide shifts presents a complex challenge for leaders. Change often affects frontline employees more significantly than their in-office counterparts, for multiple reasons:

- They are often closest to the disruption, experiencing new systems, processes, and customer reactions.
- They may feel that they have less control over how change happens.
- They are often more exposed to uncertainty and experience increased workloads.
- They are often measured on performance consistency, even under changing conditions.
- They experience increased error risk, cognitive overload, and emotional strain from the ambiguity that often accompanies change.

Traditional strategies for supporting employees through change, such as digital communication, manager-led cascades, and corporate town halls, often don't reach frontline workers, due to their limited access to technology and physical distance from corporate headquarters. And the resulting fall-out can lead to lower engagement for this critical segment of the workforce.

Only 19% of on-site, non-remote capable employees are engaged at work.

—STATE OF THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE 2025, GALLUP

Taking a people-centered approach to [change management](#) helps support and retain these vital employees. Employee recognition can bridge psychological and cultural divides, especially for frontline workers who lack access to key resources, experience low levels of autonomy and ability to voice their concerns, and perceive a lack of empathy from management.

Get all the data on people-centered change management in our [Global Culture Report](#).

The key to reaching frontline workers

Embedding strategic employee recognition into change management efforts can strengthen trust and enhance resilience for the 80% of workers worldwide who are frontline, offline, or deskless. These workers in particular may feel skeptical about corporate efforts and intentions, having experienced inconsistent change efforts in the past and a reduced sense of psychological safety on the whole.



Learn how [offline and frontline workers](#) feel about their experiences at work in our survey results.

When your people feel seen and valued, they can be more confident the organization is implementing change with them in mind. Employees at organizations with [integrated recognition](#) are significantly more likely to:

- Feel they have adequate support to deal with change (9x)
- Trust the organization (10x)
- Believe the organization cares about employees (9x)
- Think change is managed well (9x)
- Believe changes made are positive (8x)

Recognition is a tangible signal of respect and belonging that strengthens trust in leaders and increases the likelihood that workers will support organizational change.

Principles of employee-centered change management

Managing rapid and disruptive change requires a new framework centered on people, culture, and transparency.

1. Build a culture that supports change

Developing a company culture where employees have high trust in leadership and feel they are valued and included can mitigate negative feelings related to change. Start by incorporating the principles of [modern leadership](#)—mentoring, advocating, connecting, appreciating, and inspiring people rather than gatekeeping, commanding, or controlling. This will help employees feel a sense of community and lessen the sting of change.

39% less anxiety when employees see change as positive.

—GLOBAL CULTURE REPORT

Offline employees in particular need to be engaged early in the change process, not as an afterthought when decisions have already been finalized.

2. Share change narratives that are human and local

Messaging around change can feel insensitive when cultural and geographical nuances are not taken into consideration. When [Insurance Australia Group Limited \(IAG\)](#) embarked on a cultural transformation, they gathered feedback from employees at every level and in every region to understand what mattered most in different locales.



Their campaign was broadcast across multiple channels, providing clear communication which united the organization and brought individual voices to life. The success of this approach led IAG to create a standing committee of employees who meet regularly to share data and ideas with leadership, influencing cultural change across the organization.

Employees at people-centric organizations are 12x more likely to say their experiences with change were well managed and 11x more likely to say their experiences with change were positive.

3. Solicit employee feedback

Because frontline workers are often dispersed and disconnected from online channels of communication, it's important to solicit, use, and acknowledge employee feedback using multiple channels. Think surveys, focus groups, town halls, and one-to-one meetings. When organizations use all four of these methods of gathering feedback, the odds that a change will be perceived positively improves by 1,284%.

“Change cannot be put on people. The best way to instill change is to do it with them. Create it with them.”

—LISA BODELL, CEO, FUTURETHINK

4. Build a foundation of fairness and transparency

Develop a consistent communication strategy, and train leaders to communicate about change in a way that's transparent, builds connection, and allows employees to give feedback. Frontline workers need to hear that their concerns are acknowledged and that leaders recognize the emotional labor required of them during times of transition.

Embedding recognition at each stage of change management

One of the best ways to help frontline, deskless, and offline employees feel seen and valued is to ensure that the tools in your recognition program are easily accessible to them. Here's how to incorporate employee recognition throughout your change management planning.

Before change: building readiness

Before any changes occur, it's important to shore up employees with messaging that shows the organization sees their strengths and appreciates their contributions. Use recognition to:

- Highlight resilience, past wins, and capabilities
- Reinforce the organization's trust in frontline workers

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

Focus on leader-to-employee and [peer-to-peer recognition](#) moments to spark positive momentum. On-the-floor shout-outs in pre-shift meetings can help everyone on your team see and participate in recognition.



During change: sustaining engagement and momentum

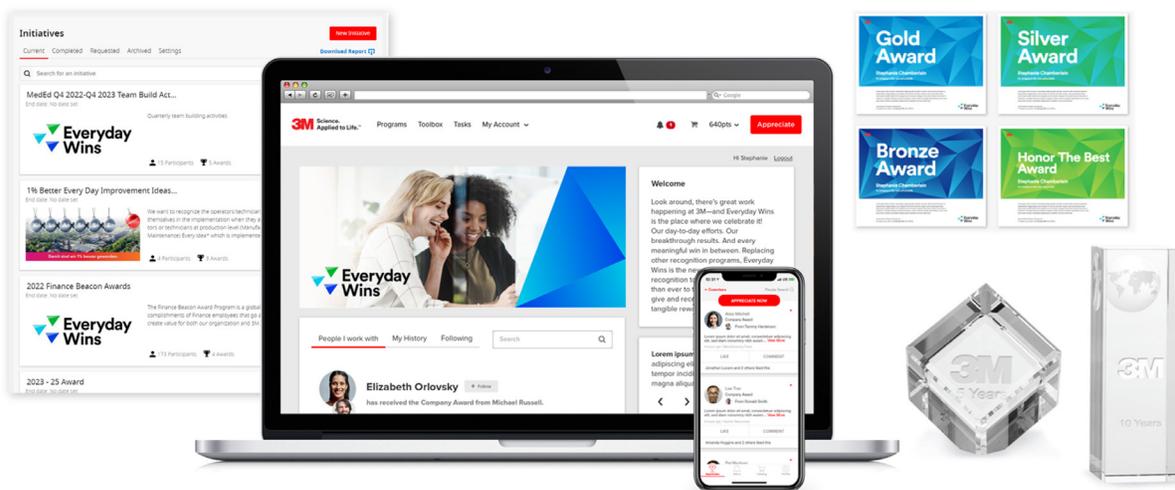
In the middle of change, employees can become tired, discouraged, and uncertain about the future. Use recognition to:

- Celebrate early adopters, safe behaviors, process improvements
- Reduce uncertainty by spotlighting progress

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

Ensure deskless employees can give and receive recognition through a mobile recognition platform (such as the Culture Cloud mobile app), through shared recognition kiosks, or using Outlook and other [integrations](#), as global manufacturing giant 3M provided for their production workers.

Manager Dashboard, available on Culture Cloud mobile, gives leaders at-a-glance recognition data for their team and reminds them to recognize great work.



After change: embedding and normalizing the new state

On the other side of change, it's important to keep employees looking forward with hope for the future. Use recognition to:

- Reinforce and reward behaviors aligned with new processes
- Prevent regression to old habits

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

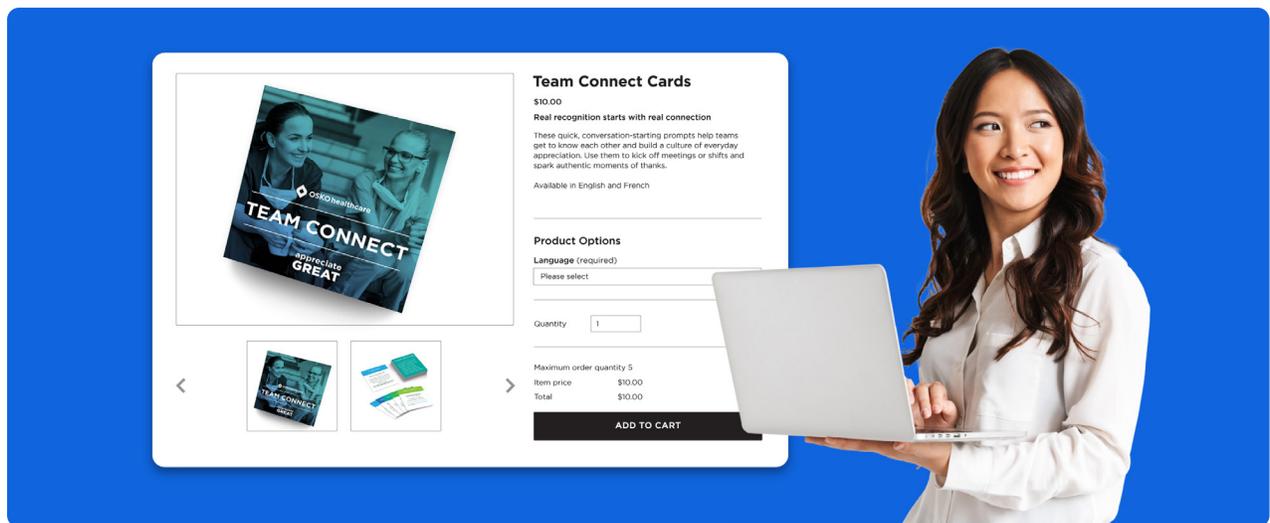
Give managers the tools they need to reinforce post-change wins.

Plan a milestone celebration to honor collective effort, and include a Group Points Deposit (all employees receive a set number of points) or a one-time

Event Store where employees can select a gift (choose from 5 pre-selected gifts) to maximize the positive, lasting effects of recognition.

Broadcast allows managers to share recognition moments via email with up to 500 people, spreading awareness of great work beyond their immediate team.

Use Incentives to reinforce and reward new behaviors or skill building, and give leaders access to company branded swag and other custom awards for their team through Manager Store.



Watch our [on-demand webinar](#) with two recognition experts to get tips for activating recognition across your organization and getting the most out of your recognition program features.

Implementation roadmap for HR leaders

Bridging the recognition gap for frontline workers is critical for retaining these employees through periods of intense change. Consider working with an experienced recognition provider, like [O.C. Tanner](#), to implement and sustain

a program that reaches every employee, no matter where they work—from oil rigs to the factory floor, from semi trucks to ocean liners.

1. Assess current recognition and change practices

Identify gaps in your recognition program that affect frontline engagement and work toward offline and other solutions to achieve greater recognition parity.

2. Co-design recognition touchpoints with local leaders

Partner with plant managers, shift supervisors, and employee committees to determine best practices for frontline employee recognition.

3. Equip managers

Provide scripts, templates, and micro-learning on what effective recognition looks and sounds like.

4. Measure and iterate

Track key indicators of successful recognition practices, such as:

- Change adoption metrics
- Employee sentiment
- Retention and absenteeism
- Participation in recognition activities

5. Sustain a culture of appreciation

Integrate recognition with ongoing performance cycles and safety routines.



Employee recognition improves change outcomes

When your company or your industry is in the midst of organizational, operational, technological, or strategic shifts, employee recognition can support and encourage your people through it all. By embedding recognition into change management, you can create an environment where employees are motivated to move forward and help build your company's future.

Learn how O.C. Tanner can support your organizational transformation with Culture Cloud, the world's most complete employee recognition solution. [Schedule a demo](#) today.



info@octanner.com

1-800-453-7490

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