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The Complete

# Employee Recognition Buyer's Guide

Not All Platforms Are Created Equal



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Thank Different.<sup>®</sup>



## What's Inside

- Overview of employee recognition today
- Organizational needs assessment
- Tips on key stakeholders, timeline & budget
- Platform evaluation worksheet
- Building a business case



## Roadmap

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### What's in a Name?

When you begin evaluating options, take a moment to consider the companies' names. You can tell a lot about a provider's focus by their name.



## How to Use This Guide

Congratulations on taking the first step toward a more engaged workforce!

This guide gives a comprehensive overview of how to choose the right employee recognition solution for your company's culture, goals, and budget. Remember that you are the expert on your needs and what makes your workforce unique – this guide should help you find the perfect partner.

### Worksheets & Checklist

You'll find worksheets in this guide designed to lead you to the best choice possible. These worksheets will help you get to the bottom of your organization's needs, who

is involved in the decision-making, and, most importantly, how to compare the various software options available.

### We're Here to Help

You don't have to do it on your own. If you feel overwhelmed or on a very tight timeline, we can walk you through the process.

Get in touch →

## Employee Recognition: Current Landscape

### Employee Expectations Have Changed

Today's employees expect meaningful & memorable recognition. With Millennials as the largest generation in today's workforce, financial incentives are no longer the primary driver of employee engagement and performance. The focus has shifted to building a strong culture through engagement, shared values, and performance-centered recognition.

#### Some signs that you have an engagement problem:

- Low morale
- High turnover
- Employees have told you (via 1:1 feedback or survey)
- Lack of collaboration
- Absenteeism
- Decline in individual performance

**Recognition shouldn't just focus on tenure, milestones, or years of service but rather on an employee's daily contribution and effort.**

- "Lack of recognition" is the third biggest reason people say they are considering, or would consider leaving their jobs.
- **82% of employees** wish they received more recognition for their work.
- Recognition has the greatest impact on employee engagement.
- Social recognition is two times more likely to improve performance and NPS scores.



**Studies show** that money or cash rewards are not the most valuable forms of recognition, but, rather, verbal or written recognition.

**The way that successful organizations recognize their employees has shifted.**

#### Recognition Before

- Bonuses, trinkets & traditional rewards

#### Recognition Today

- Personal & professional growth & meaningful recognition

## What Kind of Engagement Platform Do You Want?

**Not all platforms are created equal.**

Choosing the right direction for your organization will depend on your goals and vision for this initiative. Here's a breakdown of what's out there:

### Feedback System

**Primary focus:** Surveys, one-way communication.

### Performance Management System

**Primary focus:** Annual reviews, positive & negative feedback, formal.

### Rewards-Focused System

**Primary focus:** Rewarding good performance with gifts; Extrinsic motivation.

### Recognition-Focused System

**Primary focus:** Building sustainable employee engagement, improving organizational culture and performance.





## Self-Assessment

The biggest mistake you can make when purchasing employee recognition software is to grab a list of features and see which vendor offers the most from the list at the lowest cost. For instance, many recognition platforms offer an impressive array of reward-centric features – but may not be designed to improve employee engagement and culture sustainability.

This self-assessment will help you determine the specific employee recognition software needs of your organization. Your answers to these questions should identify the main problems you are looking to solve. Don't shop for a product: Shop for a solution.

Once complete, you should use your self-assessment as your roadmap throughout the buying process. There's a lot out there: For your project to be successful, you need to revisit this often to make sure you're on track to solving the problem that first started this exploration of recognition software.

**Don't shop for a product: Shop for a solution.**









# Stakeholder Questions

Use this worksheet to track important questions from the stakeholders identified.

Here are some common interests or questions key stakeholders may have when considering an employee recognition platform:

- **HR Teams:** Interested in reducing admin time spent on traditional rewards programs, working on outdated rewards software, reduction in employee turnover, and improvement in engagement scores and culture.
- **Finance:** Would like a measurable return from culture initiatives, reduction of employee turnover costs.
- **IT:** Would like to ensure system security and data compliance, secure integrations with existing systems. For example, does the solution have SOC2? Does the solution integrate with our existing Single-Sign-On and Multi-factor Authentication?
- **Operations:** Is the system accessible for all employees (desk, factory floor, remote, etc.)?
- **Purchasing:** Would like to see quotes from more than one provider and a clear comparison of available options (platform evaluation worksheet provided below).
- **Payroll:** Would like easy reporting on rewards redemptions (if applicable) for tax purposes.
- **Executive Team:** Cost, return on investment, data compliance, user adoption, culture impact, overall company performance impact.

## Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Answered

# Timeline

I would like to launch my employee recognition software by \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

Develop a project timeline with your key stakeholders and determine your ideal go-live date.

Factors to consider when choosing a date:

- Have you identified a problem (page 8) that needs to be solved as soon as possible?
- Do you have a specific budget established or in mind for your employee recognition initiative?

When considering your timeline, it's also essential to assess your employees' skills and capabilities when learning new technologies.

Will they be open to learning a new tool?

Based on experience, what will they need in terms of support and documentation? Those factors can all affect the timeline. Your chosen vendor should be available to help you develop a realistic plan.

*Timeline notes:*

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# Budget

Enterprise employee recognition systems range in price across vendors.

Armed with your needs assessment, you will be able to get accurate quotes from vendors. Make sure you work with key stakeholders to budget for a solution that will solve your problems.

In evaluating quotes, make sure you're looking at how well the system addresses your specific needs versus simply evaluating cost.

When purchasing recognition software, make sure to budget for:

- SaaS Subscription Fee
- On-boarding Fees
- Support (not always applicable)
- Rewards (e.g., minimum reward spend, markup charged by vendors on rewards)

*Budget notes:*

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# Implementation & Support

## Current Landscape

To be successful in introducing enterprise-level recognition software, you need the right partner to support you.

Here is a simple roadmap to follow:

- **Evaluation:** The product features should align with the results of your needs assessment.
- **Scope:** Providers should present you with a detailed plan to address your requirements.
- **Consultation and Best Practices:** An ideal software provider will provide insights, ideas, and creative solutions to drive the results you need.
- **Design, Setup, Launch:** Confirm that your chosen provider is available to assist in all aspects of your program's launch within a schedule that meets your needs and deadline.
- **Engagement and Communication:** Ensure that the software provider will support you in engaging your team regularly. Consistent engagement is how recognition will become integral to your culture!
- **Success:** Confirm that there will be touch points and check-ins set to ensure the program is on target. A dedicated contact for support, billing, and program design is vital to success.

Implementation & support notes:

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# Integrations & API

Integrations simplify administration and encourage participation. With the right integrations, employees can make recognition possible through the systems you and your team use every day.

Integrations to look for:

- **Chat & Collaboration:** The tools your team uses every day.
- **Access & Single Sign On (SSO):** Skip the login for secure and straightforward access.
- **User Provisioning:** Automate user syncing and updates from your HRIS or employee database.
- **Browser Extensions:** Send recognition from anywhere.
- **Create your own integrations with a secure API**

Use the next page to note down some of the tools that you know will need to be considered as part of your platform needs assessment.

Integrations & API notes:

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**HINT:** You can track these must-haves and more in the **Platform Evaluation Checklist** found at the end of this document.

# Your Existing Technology

Consider what technologies your organization currently uses, and which ones might to be integrated with a recognition platform.

## Chat & Collaboration & Productivity

Increase user adoption by integrating with the tools that your team already uses.

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## Identity & Access

Skip the login form and use your existing software to log in instantly and securely.

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## HRIS & Payroll

Save costly admin time by automating user syncing and updates from your HRIS or employee database.

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## Other

Create your own integrations with API's.

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## Vendor Evaluation

Use this list as a reference when determining which a specific vendor is right for you.

### Key Factors to Keep in Mind:

- Remember which features are important to you based on your needs assessment.
- Keep an open mind. There's more than one way to accomplish the same goal. You may think you need X when Y will do even better.
- Ask for a comprehensive demo, and make sure you record the session to share with your key stakeholders.

### Things to watch out for:

- Vendors who claim to be able to “do it all” but have not addressed your needs directly.
- Hidden costs. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the monthly/annual fees and any markups on rewards.
- Vendors that require a minimum spend on rewards or large bundles of prepaid rewards.
- Complicated money-back guarantees – some vendors will offer this, however, the fine print makes the money-back guarantee very hard to redeem.

### Digging Deeper:

- Investigate software reviews on G2 to hear what real users think of the product.
- Ask your top three vendors for customer testimonials and references. Ensure the examples align with your industry and company size to get the most out of the review.

- Learn more about the companies themselves, their mission, and their vision. Do they align with your goals? Are they an organization you would like to partner with long-term?

## Building a Business Case

You've chosen a preferred vendor based on all of your analysis, and you're ready to get buy-in from all individual stakeholders previously identified to move forward.

Your chosen vendor should be available to work with you to create a compelling presentation and business case.

Here is a simple framework you can follow:

### Business Case Framework

#### PROBLEM

- **Needs assessment:** Present the current issue and why it needs to be addressed.

#### SOLUTION

- **Employee recognition platform:** Explain how recognition can address your problems and more.

#### APPROACH

- **Present your platform evaluation:** Highlight most valuable option.

#### RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

- **Risk of adopting vs risk of not doing anything:** ROI benefits for chosen solution.

## How To Measure ROI

Measuring turnover is the easiest way to understand ROI after implementation; however, depending on your needs and goals, some other metrics that can measure the ROI of implementing recognition software include:

- Culture scores
- Productivity
- Best places to work
- Accidents
- Share prices
- Turnover
- Innovation
- Absenteeism
- Glassdoor ratings
- Sentiment
- Customer satisfaction
- Performance
- Profitability
- Errors & defects
- eNPS

**💡 HINT:** Today's most progressive organizations use their [recognition programs](#) to consistently reinforce key behaviors and outcomes necessary to drive business success.

### The Cost of Disengagement

What is the risk of not implementing employee recognition software?

- 65%** lower share prices
- 37%** lower job growth
- 60%** more errors & defects
- 30%** higher turnover
- 49%** more accidents
- 18%** lower productivity
- 37%** higher absenteeism
- 16%** lower profitability

Sources: [HBR](#), [Bersin](#)

# Platform Evaluation Checklist

Use this checklist to keep track of the various features each solution offers throughout your evaluation process.

Vendor one: **Kudos**    Vendor two (name): \_\_\_\_\_    Vendor three (name): \_\_\_\_\_

## RECOGNITION

	Kudos	Vendor Two	Vendor Three
Peer-to-Peer recognition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Awards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manager reports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Levels of recognition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognition endorsements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commenting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ANALYTICS

Manager dashboards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
User dashboards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leader reports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Custom reports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Years of service & milestones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## REWARDS

Built-in report for payroll	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rewards are optional	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Configurable points value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No markups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Kudos	Vendor Two	Vendor Three
Custom rewards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easy to manage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Gift Cards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## COMMUNICATION

Announcements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Galleries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Values	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mission	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Page Builder	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## INTEGRATIONS & API

### Chat & Collaboration

Microsoft Teams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microsoft Outlook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microsoft	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SharePoint	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Skype	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slack	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## BUYER'S GUIDE: PLATFORM EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Vendor one: **Kudos**    Vendor two (name): \_\_\_\_\_    Vendor three (name): \_\_\_\_\_

### INTEGRATIONS & API (CON'T)

	Kudos	Vendor Two	Vendor Three
<b>Access &amp; Single Sign On (SSO)</b>			
ADP Workforce Now®	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microsoft Azure AD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Office 365	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oracle Identity Cloud	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BITIUM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Okta	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OneLogin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ping Identity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SAASPASS</b>			
Google	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LinkedIn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Browser extensions</b>			
Brave	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microsoft Edge	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Google Chrome	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Firefox	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other</b>			
API	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### USER PROVISIONING

	Kudos	Vendor Two	Vendor Three
ADP Workforce Now®	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BambooHR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paylocity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microsoft Azure AD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Okta	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OneLogin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ping Identity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT

Project overview and scope provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provides insights, ideas and creative solutions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can launch by (ideal launch date)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program support available post implementation (campaigns, best practices)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular touch points and check-ins post implementation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### PRIMARY FOCUS OF SYSTEM

Recognition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rewards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performance management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Purchase

**Congratulations.** Hopefully, at this point, you've chosen a software provider and are ready to move forward.

While this is the end of your guide, you should hold on to your notes, especially your needs assessment, to track your success.

## About Kudos

Kudos is an employee engagement, culture, and analytics platform, that harnesses the power of peer-to-peer recognition, values reinforcement, and open communication to help organizations boost employee engagement, reduce turnover, improve culture, and drive productivity and performance. Kudos uses unique proprietary methodologies to deliver essential people analytics on culture, performance, equity, and inclusion, providing organizations with deep insights and a clear understanding of their workforce. Visit [kudos.com](https://kudos.com) today to learn more.

**Learn more about how Kudos  
can help build your culture.**

Get in touch →

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