

KUDOS. CULTURE GUIDE

The Recognition Strategy Roadmap & Toolkit

Your step-by-step resource for choosing a recognition platform
that drives culture, connection, and performance.



Recognition Matters.

Kudos has helped hundreds of organizations worldwide build strong cultures through the power of recognition.

In the age of in-office, hybrid and distributed work, recognition must be visible, data-driven, and integrated into everyday tools and rituals.

Roadmap

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How to use this guide

First of all, 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 support you in finding 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 →](#)

The current state of employee recognition

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 instead on employees' daily contributions and effort.

- More than half of employees who quit say they left because they didn't feel recognized, making it the #1 reason people leave. (McKinsey 2022, Deloitte 2023)
- Just 22% of employees say they receive enough recognition at work. The gap is real, and it's not getting better. (Gallup, 2024)



- Employees who don't receive meaningful recognition are 89% less likely to be engaged. Even doing just one thing right makes them 3x more likely to stay involved. (Gallup, 2024)
- Organizations without engaged teams are only 8% as likely to achieve the same levels of productivity and profitability as engaged organizations. (Deloitte, 2023)

Recognition before

- Bonuses, trinkets & traditional rewards.

Recognition today

- Regular meaningful recognition, personalized rewards, a hub for culture accessible by all employees.



What kind of 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, goal setting.

Rewards-focused system

Primary focus: rewarding good performance with gifts, bonuses and other expensive rewards.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Culture-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.

This self-assessment will help you identify the key problems you need to solve and your organization’s specific employee recognition software needs.

Once complete, you can 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 sparked this exploration of recognition software.

**Don’t shop for a product:
shop for a solution.**

SELF-ASSESSMENT



Recognition system needs

What prompted you to look for an employee recognition system?

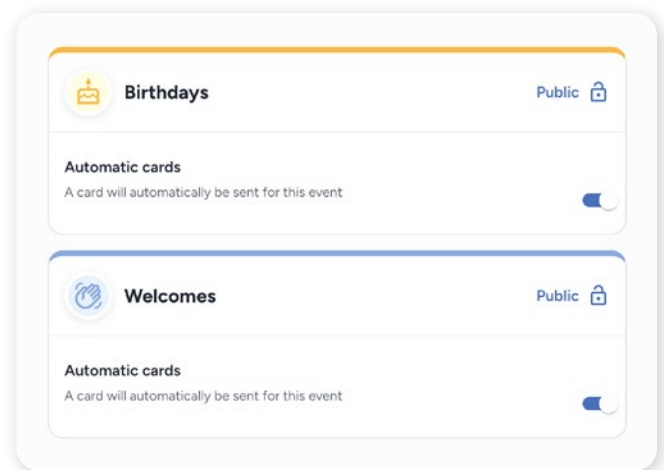
Is this initiative particularly important to someone on your leadership team? If so, who?

What is it about these systems that are of most interest to you?

What are your primary goals for this system? For example, do you want recognition to be highly visible in your organization?

Are you looking for a system that will allow for top-down recognition (i.e., manager to employee), peer-to-peer (employee to employee), or both?

Do you need the ability to automate milestone recognition (birthdays, work anniversaries, onboarding)?



Do you want recognition to be gamified or goal-driven to encourage participation?

Would it be helpful for employees to schedule recognition or draft messages in advance?



Current HR challenges & pain points

Have you experienced a recent rise in employee turnover?

What have employees shared in recent exit interviews?

How would you describe your current culture?

Are you trying to improve manager participation in recognition efforts

Is recognition budget tracking a challenge?

Adjusting to change

When would you like your new employee recognition system to be in place?

How important is it for frontline or remote employees to see recognition activity (e.g. via displays or mobile access)?

Employee engagement & recognition: current state

What are you currently doing to engage and recognize employees in your organization?

Do you currently celebrate employee birthdays, milestones, years of service or work anniversaries?

Do you currently have a method for nominating employees for any type of awards?

Is your current program manual, fragmented, or dependent on individual champions?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Your values & culture

What is your organization's mission and vision?

What are your values?

Do you think your employees know your values?

What behaviors / qualities do you want to recognize?

What changes would you like to see in your culture?



Your current software & technology

What Human Resources Information System (HRIS) do you use (ADP, Workday, Paylocity, etc.)?



What communication or collaboration tools do you use (Slack, Microsoft Teams, Outlook, etc.)?





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

- How will this reduce administrative time compared to our current rewards programs?
- Does the platform replace or modernize outdated recognition tools?
- Can it help reduce employee turnover?
- How does it support improvements in employee engagement and company culture?

Finance

- What is the expected return on investment from implementing this platform?
- How will it help lower the costs associated with employee turnover?
- Are there clear, measurable outcomes tied to culture and retention?

IT

- Is the platform compliant with data privacy and security standards?
- Does it have relevant certifications (e.g., ISO27001, SOC 2 Type II)?
- Can it integrate securely with our existing systems, including:
 - Single Sign-On (SSO)
 - Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

Operations

- Is the platform accessible and inclusive for all employee types (desk workers, frontline staff, remote employees, etc.?)

Procurement / Purchasing

- Are multiple vendor quotes available for comparison?
- Can we easily evaluate platform features, pricing, and scalability?

Payroll

- Does the system provide straightforward reporting for rewards redemptions?
- Are reports suitable for tax compliance and year-end processing?

Executive Team

- What is the total cost of ownership?
- What is the anticipated ROI and impact on company performance?
- Is the platform secure and compliant?
- Will it drive meaningful adoption and cultural change across the organization?

Questions

Name:

Question:

Answered

Name:

Question:

Answered

Name:

Question:

Answered

Name:

Question:

Answered

Name:

Question:

Answered

Name:

Question:

Answered

Implementation & support

Current landscape

To be successful in introducing a recognition platform, 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:

Integrations & APIs


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 & APIs Notes:

 **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 your recognition platform.

Chat, collaboration & productivity

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

HRIS & payroll

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

Identity & access

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

Other

Create your own integrations with API's.



Vendor evaluation

Use this list as a reference when determining if 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.
- 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 "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 breakage fees.
- Complicated money-back guarantees – some vendors will offer this, however, the fine print makes the money-back guarantee very hard to redeem.

Digging deeper

- 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, and you're ready to get buy-in from all the 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 problem 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 attractive option.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

- Risk of adopting vs risk of doing nothing.
- ROI benefits for chosen solution.



How to measure ROI

Measuring employee 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:

- Engagement survey scores
- Productivity
- Best Places to Work™ or other external awards
- # of Workplace Accidents
- Share prices
- Innovation
- Absenteeism
- Glassdoor ratings
- Employee Sentiment
- Customer satisfaction
- Performance
- Profitability
- 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"/>
Custom nominations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manager reports	<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"/>
Employee milestones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ADD

Merchandise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Experiences (Travel)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charitable Donations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMUNICATION

Kudos Vendor Two Vendor Three

Announcements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletters	<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"/>

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"/>
Slack	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLATFORM EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Vendor one: **Kudos** Vendor two (name): _____ Vendor three (name): _____

ACCESS, SSO & USER PROVISIONING

Kudos Vendor Two Vendor Three

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"/>
Microsoft 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"/>
SAASPASS	<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"/>
Building Culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TRUST & SECURITY

ISO 27001:2022	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SOC 2 Type II	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

OTHER

Kudos Vendor Two Vendor Three

API	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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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"/>

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 today to learn more.

Learn more about how Kudos can help build your culture.

Get in touch →





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