

Briefly Noted

by Nelson Scott



VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 5

SEPTEMBER 2011

Service Stars ★★☆☆

Kevin was the one who retrieved our bags from the storage room, where we had left them after checking out of the W Hotel New Orleans earlier in the day.

Now, I don't know what the "W" in the hotel chain's name stands for, but I am sure that "welcome" is part of it.

The people who greet you when you arrive at the hotel, take your bags to your room after check-in, and store them after checkout are known as "welcome ambassadors."

When Kevin took the claim tags for our bags, we also asked him to get us a taxi.

"Are you going to the airport?" he asked.

"No, we need to go to the cruise dock."

"I may be able to take you there in the Acura."

With a quick telephone call, Kevin confirmed that that the hotel's courtesy vehicle was on its way back to the hotel. By the time it arrived, Kevin was ready to load our bags. He invited us to get into the silver Acura SUV.

As he drove away from the hotel, Kevin explained that similar vehicles were available at all W hotels, where welcome ambassadors were available to drop off guests anywhere within a six-mile radius of the hotel. When we mentioned that we would be returning to the hotel for a few days following our week-long cruise, he told us how to book the service.

During the brief trip to the cruise boat, Kevin suggested what to do and see when we returned, and described life in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

When we reached our destination, he offered to drop us off as close as possible to the cruise terminal. After all, he said, he knew people who worked there.

As Kevin unloaded our bags and wished us well, I reflected on what it means to be an ambassador, which the Encarta dictionary on my computer defines as, "somebody who serves as an official representative"—a role that Kevin played with enthusiasm and skill. He was proud of his job and where he worked, and knowledgeable about his city.

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Now, it's all in the hands of the printer

The book is done! The final changes have been made, an ISBN assigned and a printer selected.

Now the wait is on for a delivery truck to arrive with several cartons of *Thanks! GREAT Job!* The thrill of seeing it unloaded will likely be fleeting, followed by a realization that all those books will need to be stored someplace.

Maybe you—or someone you know—could help me out. Not with storage space, but by pre-ordering a book—or several—before they are printed.

But before you order, ask yourself, is the book for me? Your answer will depend on several factors. Are you in a supervisory position—a manager, principal, senior executive, department head, etc.? Are you interested in enhancing the meaningful staff recognition you provide to others—people you supervise, co-workers, or even your boss?

Thanks! GREAT Job! includes at least 200 tips, techniques and tools that will enable you to maximize the impact of staff recognition, while minimizing your investment of time, money and effort. There are 16 suggestions of staff recognition research projects you can do yourself. More than 20 excuses, rationalizations and cop-outs for not recognizing staff are refuted.

Thanks! GREAT Job! is filled with insights and inspirations related to staff recognition that come from unlikely sources—a dog named Kojak, a graffiti artist, a reclusive executive, professional athletes, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, and many others.

Check out the book preview we have posted at www.seaconsultingonline.com.

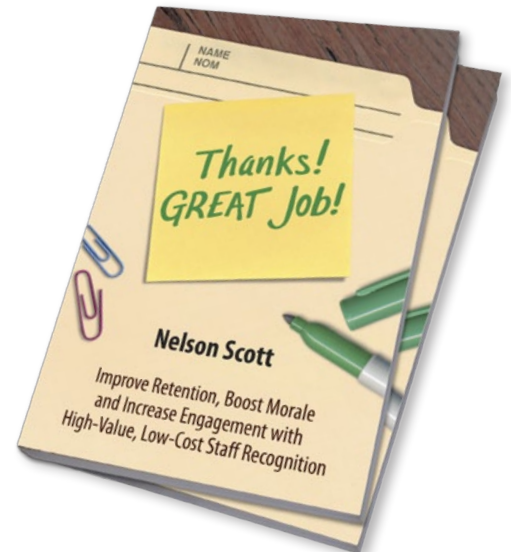
If after that, you are still undecided, here is an incentive to pre-order. We will pay the shipping and the GST on orders received by November 1. That will save you at least five bucks—more when you order additional books.

Also, there are discounts for multiple sales:

1 – 4 books	\$20.00 per book
5 – 19 books	\$16.00 each (20% discount)
20 – 100 books	\$14.00 each (30% discount)
More than 100 books	\$12.00 each (40% discount)

And, we will still pay the shipping and GST.

Still not convinced you should pre-order? How about if all pre-orders receive a package of TGI sticky notes, with at least 10 suggestions for using them immediately to provide high-value, low-cost staff recognition?



OK, here's one final incentive to get you to pre-order *Thanks! GREAT Job!* before November 1. A guarantee. If *Thanks! GREAT Job!* fails to deliver on its promise to provide tips and insights that will enable you to provide more meaningful staff recognition, return it and I will refund your money with a cheque from my *personal* bank account.

To pre-order *Thanks! GREAT Job!* send a cheque payable to SEA Consulting to: SEA Consulting, 7243 112 Street NW, Edmonton, AB T6G 1J4.

Share Your Thoughts to Win a Book

I encourage you to read the preview of *Thanks! GREAT Job!* that we have posted on www.seaconsultingonline.com.

After reading the sample chapters, let us know what you think. Use the submission form available on the website, or just send me an email.

Doing so will mean you are entered in a draw for a book prize—either *Thanks! GREAT Job!*, or *The 1001 Rewards and Recognition Fieldbook* by Bob Nelson and Dean Spitzer, which I believe is likely the most comprehensive resource on the topic of staff recognition. Your choice.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The highest compliment leaders can receive are those that are given by the people who work with them."

—James L. Barksdale,
American businessman

High-Value, Low-Cost Staff Recognition

National Boss Day is an annual reminder to staff that they should let their supervisors and managers know they are appreciated for what they do to make jobs easier, to support staff, and of course, to recognize people for doing their jobs well.

Officially, National Boss Day falls on October 16, which in 2011 is a Sunday. Because of this, National Boss Day can be celebrated on the proceeding Friday (October 14) or on Monday, October 17.

As with all expressions of appreciation, any acts of gratitude directed toward bosses should be based on their recognition preferences. Here are a few suggestions of appropriate ways to recognize your boss on National Boss Day:

- For the caffeine addict, a collection of gourmet coffees or fine teas, or a gift card from a local coffee shop
- A basket filled with the boss's favourite treats
- Take the boss for lunch, or provide a gift card for dinner at his favourite restaurant
- Purchase a DVD of a movie or TV series starring the boss's favourite actor
- Give the boss a subscription to a magazine that relates to his interests or hobby, or a book on a topic that may interest him (such as a book filled with staff recognition tips)
- Organize a surprise potluck for the boss, including the types of dishes the boss enjoys

However you decide to celebrate National Boss Day, remember that it is just one day of the year. To be effective, recognition should occur frequently throughout the year, whether directed toward your boss, or to the staff you supervise. Recognition should be an everyday feature of the workplace.

Small business awards in Wainwright

If you are going to be in the area on the evening of Friday, October 21, why not attend the Wainwright and District Chamber of Commerce Small Business Awards Gala? I have been invited to be the guest speaker at the event and will be talking about how you can retain staff without spending buckets of money.

Cocktails begin at 6 p.m., with dinner at 7 p.m. The awards will follow.

The cost for members is \$30 and \$50 for non-members. For more information, or to buy tickets, contact the Chamber office at (780) 842-4910.

I will be making a similar luncheon presentation for the Vermilion Chamber of Commerce earlier that day. Information about that presentation will be in the next issue of *Briefly Noted*.

Public recognition can create awkward moments

Recently, I attended the luncheon for a volunteer organization at which members were to be acknowledged for their contributions over the past year.

The person responsible for the awards, who I'll call "Jim," confessed he was facing a dilemma. He wanted to recognize one volunteer (we'll call her "Sue") for her outstanding contribution, but was afraid that in doing so he would offend another volunteer.

On paper, Sue and her colleague "George" had shared responsibility for a specific task that was fundamental to the organization's operation over the past year. In reality, one person (Sue) had done the lion's share of the work, while George had fulfilled the role in name only.

Should they both be acknowledged to avoid offending underperforming George? Or should Jim acknowledge neither, which would mean that hard-working Sue would not receive the recognition she deserved? Should both be acknowledged equally, even though Sue had contributed much more than George?

In the end, Jim found a compromise. He found another reason to acknowledge George, for a relatively minor task he had accomplished with some degree of

success, before acknowledging Sue for what she had accomplished in the recent months when she had had sole responsibility for the task that she and George were supposed to have shared over the year.

Did the compromise work? Most of the audience likely did not notice how Jim nuanced the recognition he provided. Sue likely appreciated the recognition she received, but might have wondered about the focus on what she had done recently, when she had contributed in the same fashion over the full year. And George might have thought, "Hey, didn't I work with Sue on that?"

Although Jim successfully avoided creating an awkward situation, I believe that the recognition Sue received would have been more complete if Jim had acknowledged her privately—over coffee, with a thank-you note, or during a telephone conversation.

Recognition delivered privately is freed from the pressure to treat everyone equally—a practice that diminishes the impact of the recognition received. As legendary football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals."

Service awards eat nearly half of thank-you budgets

Events and awards that employers use to mark service milestones seem to consume a disproportionately large share of money Canadian organizations budget for rewards and recognition.

This conclusion is based on a survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, which was described in a brief article in the August 2011 issue of *CA Magazine*.

The Conference Board found that Canadian companies spend an average of \$175 per employee on staff recognition and rewards. Nearly half (45 per cent) is spent to honour employees who reach service milestones, typically once every five years.

Consider what this means for that "average" organization, which we will assume has 100 employees. Its budget for rewards and recognition would be \$17,500, of which 45 per cent (or \$7,875) is earmarked for a once-a-year celebration of the few employees who have worked for the same employer for five, 10, 15, or more, years.

Assuming that about 20 per cent of the staff would reach any of the service milestones during a given 12-month period, this means that \$7,875 would be spent to honour 20 people (\$393.75 per person) during a single, once-a-year event.

What is left of the \$175 per person to recognize staff during the remainder of the year? Just \$96.25. Less than 50 cents per person, per day.

Service awards presented at five-year intervals miss a lot of people. Many employees don't remain with an employer long enough to even reach the first five-year service milestone. This means that the number of people being honoured will actually be less than 20 per cent of workforce. The 45 per cent of the money budgeted for staff recognition could be being spent on less than 15 per cent of the staff.

There may be many reasons for people to leave an organization—retirement, finding a better paying job, a family move, or an opportunity to work closer to home—but it is not uncommon for people to leave because they feel unappreciated.

In *The 24-Carrot Manager*, Andrian Gostick and Chester Elton write, "And it's that hunger for recognition that drives them to leave for other jobs—searching for greener pastures where they will feel needed and appreciated."

While meaningful recognition is seldom about money, where money is placed in a budget does send a message about priorities. Too many companies appear to believe that what's important are big, formal events, rather than the high-value, low-cost staff recognition that has an impact throughout the year.



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