


Finding the Right Employee Recognition Partner

A Guide for Large Companies



A background image showing a man with glasses and a woman in a meeting. The man is smiling and looking towards the camera, while the woman is looking at him. They are both wearing business casual attire. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in the room.

Finding the right employee recognition partner is an exciting opportunity—and no small task, especially for large companies. Between putting together the right search committee, convincing executives, researching vendors, navigating the RFP process, and building consensus on a final decision, you'll need to be prepared and can't do it alone. Use this guide to help you plan, search, and decide confidently.

Table of Contents

- 3 Get executive support
- 5 Gather your team
- 7 Decide on your goals
- 9 Do your research
- 11 Select your partner
- 13 Set up for long-term success



STEP 1 2 3 4 5 6

Get executive support

Start early, and be prepared

Get executive support, and resources, for a new employee recognition solution from the very beginning. Start early and include more than just your CEO.

Talk to senior leaders that have a vested interest in company culture and a new recognition solution: CEO, COO, HR, Communications, Sales, IT, etc. Get their feedback—what are their biggest challenges? Business goals? Priorities? What problems can recognition help them solve?

Then build a [business case](#). Connect your search for a new recognition solution or partner back to their pain points and needs. Show the [ROI of recognition](#), aligned to the goals and strategy each leader has for the organization.

7 things to include in your recognition business case:

1. **Tie it back to the overall company strategy.** A recognition solution should be seen as more than an HR tool in order to have priority with executives—it must be tied back to company culture strategy. Show how recognition will directly impact your corporate goals and objectives.
2. **Address executive pain points.** Discuss why a change in recognition is needed. Are programs outdated? Employees dissatisfied? Leaving?
3. **Show them the money.** Calculate the cost of turnover vs. the cost of recognition. Recognition can [decrease odds of turnover](#) by 29%.
4. **Improve employee engagement, culture, and business results.** ROI is on every executives' list. Include stats on how recognition can increase odds of high engagement by 9x, a [thriving culture 8x](#), and business results like productivity, [innovation](#), and revenue.
5. **Articulate what you want to change.** Be clear about the improvements you want to make, whether it's consolidating multiple disparate programs into one or modernizing your tools and rewards.

6. **Calculate cost.** This may be an estimate now but give them a general idea of cost. You can use [\\$200-\\$350 per employee per year](#) as a starting point.

7. **Convey why you need a partner.** Large companies can't administer recognition tools, training, awards, events, budgeting, and reporting on their own. A reliable partner is crucial for meaningful, successful recognition.



See how [CEAT](#) conducted assessments, in-depth interviews, and an employee survey for feedback to build the case for recognition.

Get more tips on building a [compelling business case](#) (including a templated discussion guide), to get executive support.

STEP 1 2 3 4 5 6

Gather your team

Put together your buying team

In large organizations, you won't know everything about every part of the company. You'll need a team to help you research and vet potential partners and solutions and ensure they are right for you.

As you assemble your recognition [search committee](#), thoughtfully include important stakeholders that can provide support, guidance, and consensus. Don't forget your global constituents. Be clear on roles—decide which members will only consult, who will help manage the search, and who has input into the final decision. Share feedback and data you have gathered so you can build out solution requirements together. If you do all of these things, you'll have project champions that will march with you to success.



8 main players and what's important to them

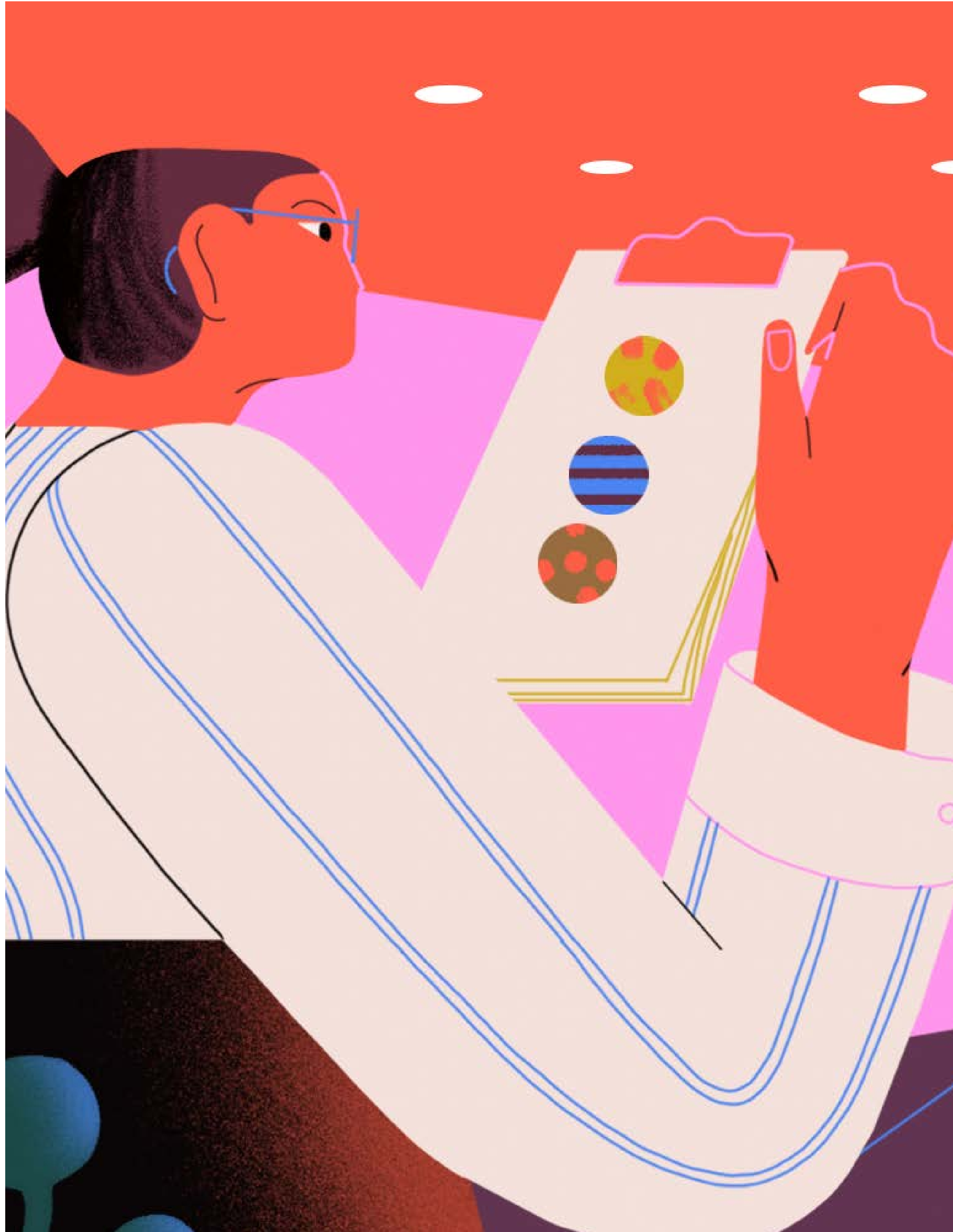
1. **Executive** – They are busy and can't attend every meeting, but want to be updated on progress, have a chance to give feedback, and point you to resources.
2. **IT specialist** – Mostly concerned about security, disruption to IT processes, and requirements for implementation. Important to involve them from the very beginning.
3. **HR or Total Awards team** – They have the best feedback on what employees want. These teams are looking for solutions that are easy to use and will improve employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention.
4. **Communications** – Recognition is a great way to communicate and celebrate brand values and purpose. These folks can help improve the brand alignment of your solution.
5. **Procurement** – Involving procurement early will help you avoid problems later. They can help you with vendor selection and service-level agreements. They'll need to understand the purpose and business reason for the project.

6. **Learning and Development** – They can help with change management and training (both the how and the why of recognition) and improve adoption and long-term participation.
7. **Global sponsors** – If your organization is global, these partners can give feedback on cultural nuances and regional needs like translations, data security policies, and other logistics.
8. **Other** – Leaders from various lines of business, your legal team, and payroll/accounting are all additional members that could be an important part of your team.

See how [TD Bank Group](#) worked with senior leaders and stakeholders throughout the Bank to create TD Appreciate!.



Read more about [assembling the right committee](#) for your recognition search.



STEP 1 2 **3** 4 5 6

Decide on your goals

What do you want for your new recognition solution?

Before you even start your search, work with your committee to articulate what problems you are trying to solve with a new recognition solution. Not just “we need a new solution”, but why it’s needed. Then create a wish list of what features you’d like to have in your new solution to help you accomplish your goals (you can use our handy one [here](#)). Think about the [types of recognition](#) you want to implement, but also the experience you want to create for your people.

While many companies prioritize price and ease of use, other things to consider when [buying recognition software](#) are:

- Scalability
- Integration
- Customization
- Data security
- A variety of meaningful experiences
- Overall culture fit

Now is a great time to also define budget guidelines, feature requests, and baseline metrics from which you'll measure impact later on.

5 must haves for a recognition solution for large companies

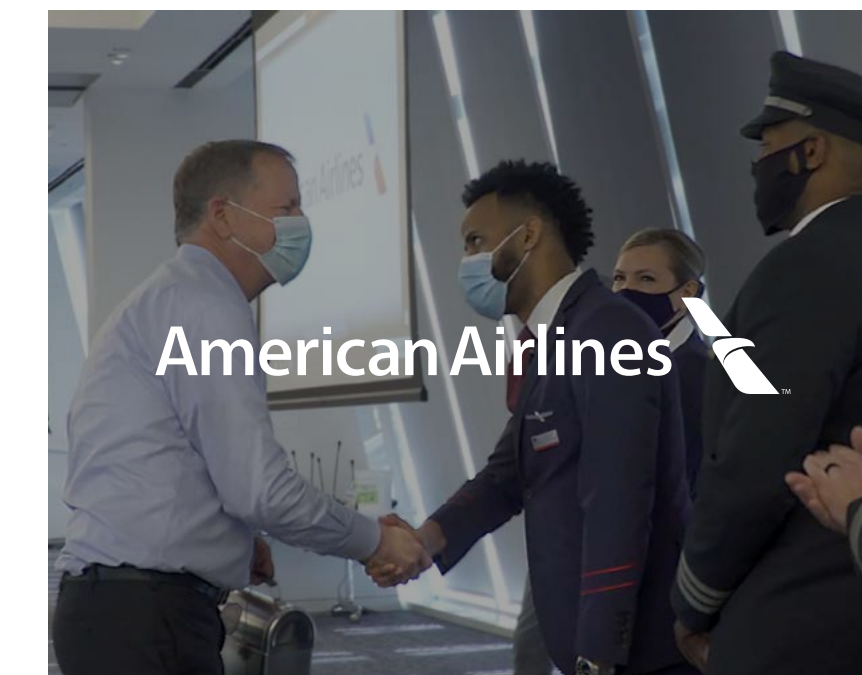
- 1. Consolidated platform.** One place for all things recognition to easily track activity, budget, and impact.
- 2. Easy to implement and use.** If it's not easy to implement or use, for you and your employees, no one will use it.
- 3. Customization.** Your solution should look and feel like you, and reflect your company culture, brand, purpose, and values. It should have a wide variety of tools to meet the needs of your diverse population and provide flexibility to make the recognition right for them.
- 4. Robust tech.** Automation. Mobile apps. Predictive reporting tools. The ability to integrate into your existing programs. All should come with the highest levels of security and data protection.
- 5. A partner with a strong reputation.** You'll want a partner with solid experience working with large companies, and one who will be around to help you sustain recognition for years to come.

What are other companies' goals for their recognition solutions?



[BlueScope](#)

This Australian steel company needed both online and offline ways to meaningfully recognize their people.



[American Airlines](#)

The airline wanted to modernize and expand their recognition tools and approach.



[GE Appliances](#)

The company looked to create meaningful recognition experiences for their people.

Learn more ways to [set your recognition intention](#).

Do your research

Get info about recognition providers

Once you've decided your goals, it's time to [research providers](#). You can start with a google search, ask peers in other organizations, put out a query on LinkedIn, confer with consultants like Gartner and Brandon Hall Group, or find potential partners at HR conferences. Just make sure you take the time to research and cross reference each one.

Review sites, customer success stories, and references can add to the information vendors give you. After your initial research, schedule a demo with your narrowed down list of providers. Be sure to ask lots of questions.

To RFP or not to RFP? RFPs (Request for Proposals) can be a rigorous way to compare vendors, but they typically take some time. If you need to or decide to use an RFP, you'll want to start with other research to narrow down and target 3-5 vendors, know what specific features you are looking for, and have a tailored, thoughtful set of questions specifically for recognition solutions.



8 things to look for in a provider

Wondering what to look for as you research providers? Here are a few things to check out (see more in our [recognition provider checklist](#)).

1. How comprehensive are their [recognition products](#) (for things like everyday effort, achievements, career anniversaries, company celebrations, safety, etc.)?
2. Do their products integrate with tools your employees use every day?
3. Do they have options for your unique employee needs ([offline](#), remote, and global employees?)
4. Are their solutions easy to use, easy to implement, and scalable?
5. Are there unique bells and whistles that other vendors don't offer? Customized [symbolic awards](#), communication and branding, leadership training, the latest [industry research](#)?
6. Do they have robust data security and work with your existing IT systems?
7. Is it an organization with long-term stability who will truly partner with you?
8. Is the partner/solution a good culture fit and someone who really understands you?



Read about [NewYork-Presbyterian's](#) search for a new recognition vendor, and how “none compared to the passion, the excitement, the fun, and the creativity of O.C. Tanner.”



Learn about more things to look for as you [research providers](#).



STEP 1 2 3 4 **5** 6

Select your partner

Find the recognition provider that is right for you

Once you've completed your research, compare your favorites (you can use our [comparison chart](#) or [weighted scorecard](#) as an example). Now's the time to look at details around the user experience, pricing, award sourcing, integration, implementation, post-sale support, and long-term strategy. Not all partners are equal when you start looking under the hood. You may have more questions for the vendors, and that's ok. As a large organization you'll have some complexities you may not think about at first, so you'll want a partner who can help you identify and solve them.

When it comes to building consensus, clarifying roles and approval power on your committee is key.

Consider the opinions and feedback of the experts in their field, but ultimately only a few should be the final decision makers. Reconfirm executive support, focus on strategy, communicate clearly, and choose a partner who can lead you to success. The best partner is one who will listen to and understand you and provide a comprehensive solution that meets the needs of your organization.

A few things to look out for when comparing vendors are:

Red flags

- Only offers one type of program
- Brand new tech company
- No integrations
- Indirect answers
- Poor culture fit
- Hidden minimums or required prepayment for points

Green flags

- Customization
- Offers billing options
- Flexible solutions for diverse populations
- Custom awards
- Deep expertise
- A partner who listens and understands



“It’s such a good partnership because both our companies have gone through this transformation to think not just about a specific technology, but what is the recognition experience we want to create? How do we make it an experience for our associates? We bounce ideas off each other, we often test things...it’s a true partnership.”

—Capital One

Find out how to spot red flags and build consensus when deciding on a provider.

STEP 1 2 3 4 5 6

Set up for long-term success

Look post-sale

Your recognition purchase journey isn't over when the contract is signed. The bigger, maybe even more important work is just beginning. Implementing your solution requires a robust change management plan, complete with regular communication, training, and promotion to encourage employee excitement and adoption.

Build recognition into your daily employee experience and find ways to recognize often. Keep the excitement going beyond just launch and well into the future.



9 Implementation steps you shouldn't forget

1. Come up with your recognition brand (aligned to your company brand)
2. Create a change management plan for year 1 and beyond
3. Provide leader and employee training (both the how and why of recognition)
4. Integrate new recognition tools into the tech and programs your employees use every day
5. Schedule ongoing program reviews with your partner
6. Set baseline metrics from which you want to measure impact
7. Ensure every employee is able and empowered to access your new solution (including your offline, remote, and global employees)
8. Establish a recognition champion group to promote your program (especially important for large companies with multiple locations or business units)
9. Remember you are creating recognition experiences, not just tools



Read about [IAG's](#) comprehensive recognition change management strategy.



See how you can [integrate your new recognition program](#) into your employee experience and company culture.

We hope this e-book provides a helpful path in your search for a recognition vendor. While it can seem like a daunting task, it comes with infinite rewards.

Choose a partner who will help you create meaningful recognition experiences for your people and you'll help all your employees feel appreciated and thrive at work.

Not all recognition providers are equal.

At O.C. Tanner, we have a proven track record of helping thousands of top enterprises meet, and exceed, their recognition goals. Our comprehensive Culture Cloud solution provides insightful expertise, intuitive tech, and elevated experiences. We're ready to help you.

[Contact us](#) to schedule a demo to learn more.