



# Introduction

The Practical Magic of 'Thank You' summary	04
A simple 'thank you'	06
Money doesn't make the world go 'round	08
Winning isn't everything	11
Not everyone's esteem is equally esteemed	17
Notecard or billboard?	20
Wrapping it up	23
Endnotes	25

# The Practical Magic of 'Thank You'

## Summary:

- Understanding individual worker preferences can be critical to creating an employee experience that is personalized, flexible, and customizable. By doing so, organizations can move beyond delivering rewards to building relationships with the workforce of the future.
- We asked more than 16,000 professionals about how they want to be recognized, for what, and by whom.
- For the day-to-day, the best recognition may be the easiest—say 'thank you'!
- Even when the accomplishment is significant, cash isn't king. Across organizational levels, generations, genders, and Business Chemistry types, the most valued kind of recognition is a new growth opportunity. Pioneers, Drivers, and Millennials value these new opportunities even more than others do.
- Big wins aren't the only thing people want to be recognized for. It's also important to recognize the effort they put in (especially Guardians, Integrators, staff, and Millennials), their knowledge and expertise (especially Drivers, Guardians, and staff), and their commitment to living the organization's core values (especially Integrators).
- It matters who's recognizing who, and whether the preference is for recognition from one's direct supervisor, from leadership, or from colleagues depends on who is being recognized, with Business Chemistry types and generations showing particularly meaningful differences.
- Your appreciation of someone need not be shared with the whole world to make it count. Most people prefer recognition that is either shared with just a few people or delivered privately. Fewer want recognition that is widely shared, Guardians, Integrators, and Baby Boomers, in particular.
- Recognizing people's unique contributions, and doing so in the ways they prefer, is one approach to demonstrating they belong, and to helping them find meaning in their work.

“Silent gratitude isn’t  
much use to anyone.”

**Gladys Bronwyn Stern**



How much of what you've accomplished in your career have you done all on your own? If the answer is anything less than 100% (and we'd bet it is), chances are you make an effort to show your appreciation for the contributions of others.

And it makes sense to do so. Not only is it polite to thank people for what they do, recognition at work is associated with increased levels of engagement<sup>i</sup> and lower rates of turnover<sup>ii</sup>. Today's workers are looking for a relationship with their employer that offers a personalized, flexible and customized experience, and they want to feel appreciated and valued for what they do.<sup>iii</sup> Recognizing those you work with can make your work environment a more positive place to be, and will also likely lead to more people around you getting more done. Indeed, when respondents in one study were asked what their managers could do that would cause them to produce great work, the most frequent answer by far was "recognize me."<sup>iv</sup> And to top it off, showing gratitude is likely to have positive benefits for you, personally.<sup>v</sup>

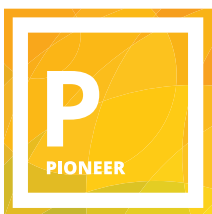
Sounds obvious, maybe, but somewhere along the line it seems some of us are missing the mark. Many professionals feel they don't receive adequate recognition for the ways they add value to their teams and organizations, and others aren't recognized in the ways they'd most like to be.<sup>vi,vii</sup> While that doesn't qualify as good news, this source of dissatisfaction represents a unique opportunity for all of us—leaders, managers, and professionals at all levels—to create stronger relationships with those we work with. It may just take a bit more thoughtfulness.

If you've spent any significant amount of time thinking about this topic yourself, you may have gathered that at least part of the challenge is, like many things at work and in life, when

it comes to recognizing people *one size doesn't fit all*. As with other elements of the employee experience, understanding individual preferences around recognition can be key to making people feel valued. Our research confirms this hunch and provides guidance on some factors to consider if you want to raise your own recognition game.

The [Deloitte Greenhouse® Experience](#) group surveyed more than 16,000 professionals working in more than 4,000 organizations around the world and across a variety of industries, from c-suite leaders to junior staff members. We asked about their preferences regarding recognition—how they want to be recognized, and for what, and by whom. And we found some strong general preferences across professionals, but we also found some differences based on generation, organizational level, gender, and Business Chemistry type.

[Business Chemistry®](#) is Deloitte's framework for understanding and engaging different working styles. There are four primary Business Chemistry types, each with unique perspectives and strengths. Uncovering the different preferences of these types helps us identify practical strategies for creating stronger working relationships with each of them, individually and when brought together on a team. When we create inclusive environments and engage with people in the ways that work best for them, we better position professionals of all types to excel and thrive.



Pioneers value possibilities and they spark energy and imagination. They're outgoing, spontaneous, and adaptable. They're creative thinkers who believe big risks can bring great things.



Guardians value stability and they bring order and rigor. They're practical, detail-oriented, and reserved. They're deliberate decision-makers apt to stick with the status quo.



Drivers value challenge and they generate momentum. They're technical, quantitative, and logical. They're direct in their approach to people and problems.



Integrators value connection and they draw teams together. They're empathic, diplomatic, and relationship-oriented. They're attuned to nuance—seeing shades of grey rather than black and white.

# A simple 'thank you'

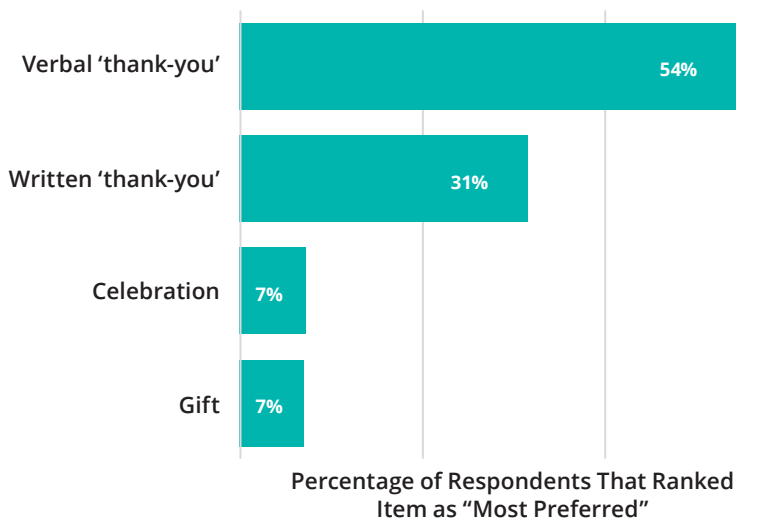
We started by asking people how they prefer to be recognized for day-to-day accomplishments—the regular work of their job. Do they prefer a verbal or written 'thank you', a gift, or a celebration?

We found a strong preference for a simple 'thank you', across all organizational levels, generations, genders, and Business Chemistry types. More than half of our sample prefers a verbal 'thank you', and nearly a third, a 'thank you' in writing. This finding may seem self-evident—and

other studies have found similar results<sup>viii</sup>—but we invite you to stop and think about it for a moment. Simply saying 'thank you' for their everyday efforts could satisfy three quarters of the people you work with! We want to emphasize this point, because research has shown that people often underestimate the

positive impact of expressing their gratitude to others.<sup>ix</sup> Maybe *you're* underestimating it too. Whether verbal or written, saying 'thank you' need not cost a thing, so if you're not doing it on a regular basis, you may be missing a huge opportunity to make people feel appreciated.

## How do you prefer to be recognized for day-to-day accomplishments?



**For day-to-day accomplishments, the most valued recognition is the easiest to do. Say 'thank you.'**

"Sometimes a simple 'thank you' and acknowledgment of effort and results achieved is enough—never underestimate the power of a 'thank you!'"

"I am not someone that is boastful or needs to be recognized often, but when I do commit to a task and put my full effort in, a simple 'thank you' or 'great work' goes a long way for me."

"Just a sincere 'thank you' will do."

While a verbal 'thank you' will do the trick more often than not, we found one difference of note.<sup>1</sup> If you're recognizing a woman, consider making the extra effort to put your thanks in writing—36% of women prefer a written 'thank you' compared to 28% of men.

Far behind the 'thank you' in popularity are those options more likely to have a price tag attached—gifts and celebrations. That doesn't mean presents and parties aren't welcome, but if your primary focus has been on these forms of recognition, you may be able spend

a bit less time and money planning events or agonizing over what to buy. Focus first on developing a consistent practice of saying 'thank you'. Once you've got that down, then go ahead and add the icing to the cake with a celebration or a gift.

<sup>1</sup> All differences mentioned in the text of this report are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

**thank  
you**



# Money doesn't make the world go 'round

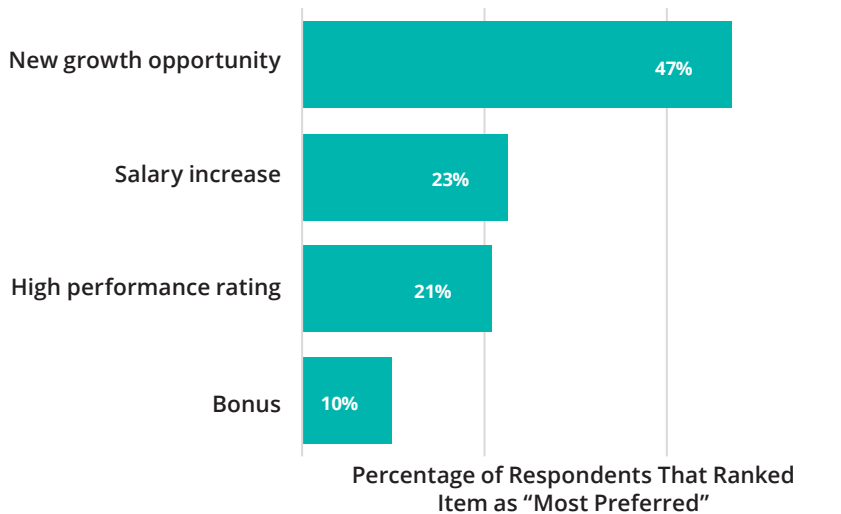
If a 'thank you' is usually recognition enough for day-to-day tasks, what about more significant accomplishments?

We asked respondents to choose between a new growth opportunity, bonus, salary increase, or high performance rating, and again we found that the strongest preference was for a form of recognition that need not cost extra—a new growth

opportunity. Salary increases, high performance ratings, and bonuses were far less popular choices. This may be particularly welcome news for those organizations that have moved away from performance ratings and are looking for other

ways to recognize performance. These findings are particularly meaningful in light of evidence that extrinsic rewards may lead people to work harder in the short-term, but ultimately have negative effects on long-term motivation.<sup>x</sup>

## How do you prefer to be recognized for a significant accomplishment?



And yet, performance management processes often explicitly characterize salary increases, bonuses, and high performance ratings as rewards for great performance. New growth opportunities, on the other hand, may not always be framed as a reward. They may, however, offer more of the elements that *have* been shown to motivate people in the long-term, like an increased sense of autonomy, mastery, and purpose.

Similar to day-to-day accomplishments, the top choice here is consistent across generations, organizational

levels, genders, and Business Chemistry types—a new growth opportunity is number one for every group. And yet, there are significant differences in the strength of this preference.

New growth opportunities are particularly important to Pioneers, by a significant margin, followed by Drivers. This finding parallels our previously published research on the conditions under which each type thrives; Pioneers are most likely to say they thrive when they have an *opportunity to learn and try new things*, Drivers, when they have *tasks*

**You can recognize excellent work by assigning even more challenging work.**

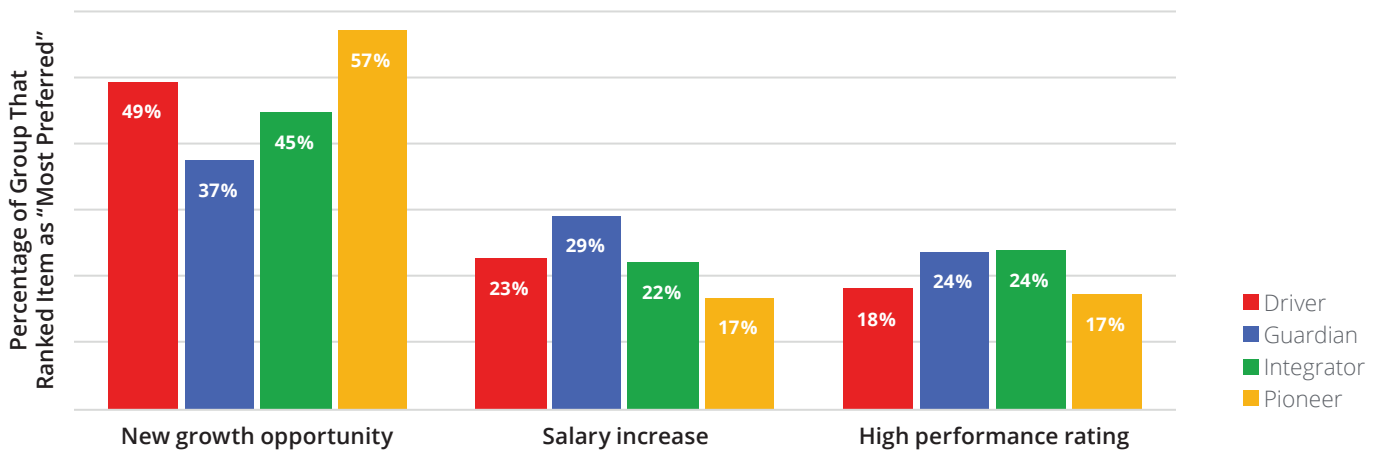
"It is important to me to have my efforts and results recognized through not only a salary increase or an award, but rather, through the offering of more tasks and projects that require more expertise."

"Being rewarded through extra and more complex work is important to me as it shows that my superiors know that I can handle more complex tasks and workloads."

"I am early in my career, so if I were to get anything, I'd love a promotion. Promotions come with more responsibility and more opportunity to learn and grow which is why it is the best thing to get."



### How do you prefer to be recognized for a significant accomplishment?



that are challenging.<sup>2</sup> Many Guardians and Integrators want these opportunities too—more than a third prefer to be recognized with a new growth opportunity—but they place more importance than Pioneers or Drivers on salary increases (especially Guardians) and high performance ratings.

Millennials also particularly value new growth opportunities, with 51% prioritizing them, compared to 45% of Gen Xers and 40% of Baby Boomers.<sup>3</sup> This isn't surprising. After all, Millennials have had the least time to grow in their careers so far, especially the youngest Millennials, and as a result might be most eager for new opportunities to do so. Moreover, Deloitte's [2018 Millennial](#)

[survey](#) found that more than 40% of Millennials expect to leave their jobs within two years, but almost  $\frac{3}{5}$  say they don't have all the skills and knowledge they need to adjust to the [fourth industrial revolution](#).<sup>xi</sup> These young professionals want opportunities to learn, and getting those opportunities just may keep them around a bit longer.

There is also an additional difference of note in regard to salary increases, with staff valuing them more, at 29%, than managers or leadership, at 23% and 17%, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Again, this finding makes a lot of sense. *Not* prioritizing a salary increase may be a luxury more easily afforded by those at higher levels, who presumably already have higher salaries.

None of these findings suggest those who prioritize or are granted growth opportunities shouldn't be appropriately compensated for their work or rated highly in accordance with whatever performance management process an organization employs. Nor do they imply that a more challenging role or project shouldn't come with a salary increase or bonus. Instead, we aim to emphasize just how important it is to provide people with the chance to learn and grow, and to suggest that leaders and managers who don't frame new assignments as such may be missing out on a great opportunity to make people feel both visible and valued.

<sup>2</sup> 57% of Pioneers indicated they thrive when they have *opportunities to learn and try new things*, in comparison to 47% of Drivers, 45% of Integrators, and 37% of Guardians. 57% of Drivers chose *tasks that are challenging*, in comparison to 50% of Pioneers, 36% of Guardians, and 31% of Integrators. In [Christfort, Kim, and Vickberg, Suzanne. \*Business Chemistry: Practical Magic for Crafting Powerful Work Relationships\*. New York: Wiley, 2018. p. 127.](#)

<sup>3</sup> We do not yet have a large enough sample of Gen Z professionals to include them in our analysis.

<sup>4</sup> While there is a higher proportion of Guardians among staff in our sample than among managers or leadership, linear regression analysis confirms that despite this overlap, there are independent effects for staff and Guardians.

At the same time, it's important to acknowledge that not everyone has an appetite for tackling new opportunities at the same pace. Some professionals may prefer mastering one role more thoroughly before moving on to something new. For example, we've found that Guardians, more than any other

type, say they thrive when they have a chance to master a skill or topic.<sup>5</sup> Others might be more focused on priorities beyond their own personal development. For example, we've found that both Integrators and Guardians aspire to be mentors and team players more than Pioneers and Drivers do.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps what makes

most sense is to keep an eye out for growth opportunities you might offer, acknowledge that the offer is being made in recognition for contributions or accomplishments, and then stay open and curious about the recipient's preferences regarding whether such an opportunity is welcome at that particular time.

---

<sup>5</sup> 24% of Guardians indicated they thrive when they have *a chance to master a topic or skill*, in comparison to 17% of Integrators, 16% of Drivers, and 11% of Pioneers. [Previously unpublished finding.]

<sup>6</sup> 48% of Integrators and 46% of Guardians indicated they aspire to be *team players*, in comparison to 29% of Pioneers and 26% of Drivers. 40% of Integrators and 36% of Guardians indicated they aspire to be *mentors*, compared to 32% of Pioneers and 29% of Drivers. In Christfort & Vickberg, *Business Chemistry*, p. 120.

# Winning isn't everything

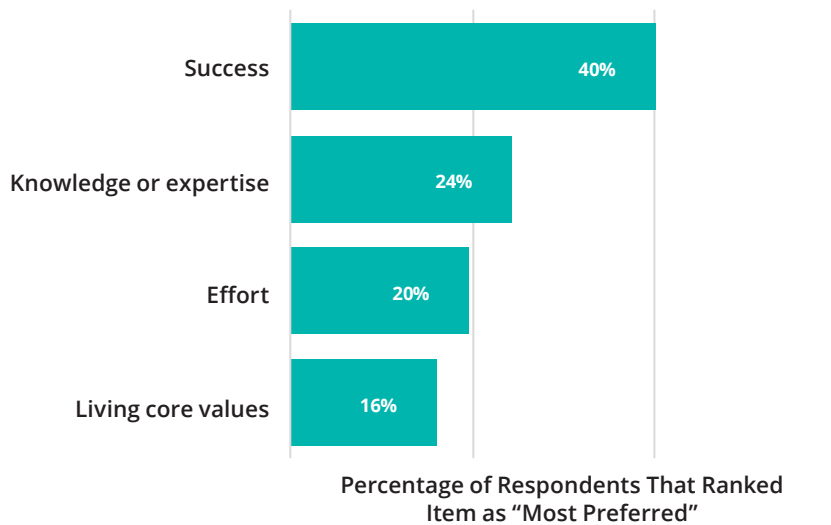
It's not rocket science that people want to be recognized for their contributions, but here we'll pause for a moment to consider, what is meant by *contributions*?

When a project is a big success, it may seem obvious that the people responsible have worked hard, done a great job, and should be recognized. But what about a project that's not a big success, despite people's hard work—should they still be recognized? Or, consider those who have roles more behind the

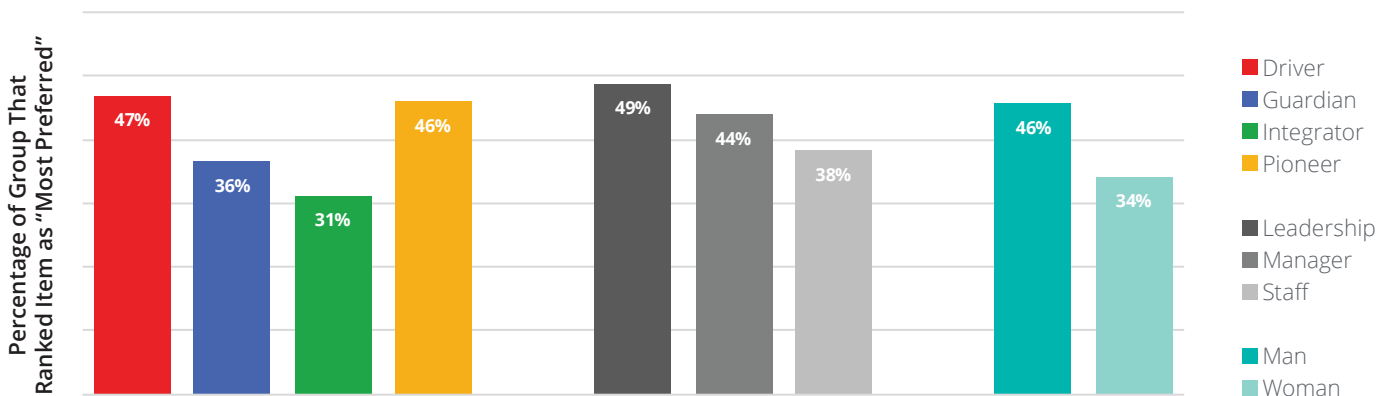
scenes, or less directly connected to any particular project. Should those people be recognized, and for what? To explore these issues, we asked whether people prefer to be recognized for success, effort, knowledge/expertise, or living their organization's core values.

Overall, people most want to be recognized for success—it's the top choice for all groups—but it's particularly important among Pioneers and Drivers, as compared to Guardians and Integrators. Leadership too, prioritizes success more than managers or staff, as do men more than women.

## What do you prefer to be recognized for?



## Who prefers to be recognized for success?



TINNY SH



There are meaningful overlaps in these categories—Pioneers and Drivers are more likely to say they tend to be in charge in group situations, and our previous research indicates they're more highly represented in the leadership ranks than are Guardians or Integrators.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, men are more likely than women to be Drivers, and while representation is slowly changing over time, men are still more likely to be leaders than are women.<sup>xii</sup> Despite these overlaps, our analysis confirms there are differences between the various groups that are independent of the others. In other words, it's not *because* more leaders are Drivers and Pioneers that we're seeing the differences we are. Nor is it because more leaders are men.

Beyond success, we found some intriguing differences in relation to the other options. Being recognized for effort is more important to Integrators, Guardians, staff, and Millennials than to others. And again, despite meaningful overlaps in these

categories, our analysis confirmed there are independent effects for each of these groups.

One possible explanation for these differences is those who aren't leading teams or projects may less often be recognized for big wins. As a result, those individuals may place more emphasis on being recognized for the effort they put in. While Guardians and Integrators certainly do lead, we've seen that their roles and their work are often more behind the scenes, and their parts in a project might be less visible, particularly when compared to Pioneers and Drivers. The same may be said for staff, when compared to managers and leadership, and for Millennials, at earlier stages in their careers, when compared to Gen X and Baby Boomers. Individuals in each of these groups may be less obviously connected to specific projects or successes, so it's likely more important to them that their effort is recognized regardless of whether it directly leads to a big win.

**Effort matters too, especially when you're not out front.**

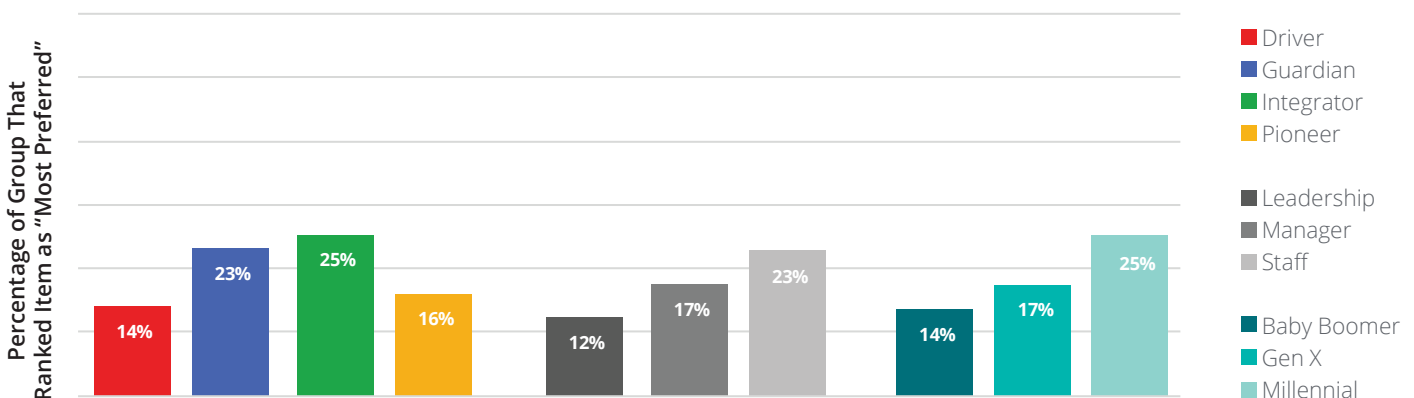
"End results matter, but the whole process is equally important and must be recognized. Results have many other parameters, but our efforts during the process is completely ours, hence, speaks more about us."

"The effort and hard work put in to achieve the success is just as important as the success."

"I think what's important is being recognized for the expertise and effort; whether something is successful or not."

<sup>7</sup> In our U.S. Business Baseline sample, 33% of leaders are Pioneers, 27% are Drivers, 22% are Integrators, and 19% are Guardians. In the same sample, 33% of men are Drivers, in comparison to 19% of women. In Christfort & Vickberg, *Business Chemistry*, p. 139.

**Who prefers to be recognized for effort?**



Another angle on the importance of recognizing effort comes from considering the rise of agile processes in fields and functions beyond software development. As teams are increasingly encouraged to iterate quickly in order to identify early what doesn't work, much effort may go into sprints that don't succeed in the traditional sense, but that lead to important learning none-the-less. Recognizing the effort put in and the progress made along the way, rather than only the success at the end, is likely to motivate people to keep driving forward.<sup>xiii</sup> Likewise, in scenarios where risk-taking is required, innovation is valued, or stretch assignments are encouraged, recognizing effort, apart from outcomes, can help to shape worker behavior in the desired direction.

Being recognized for knowledge or expertise is more important to staff than to managers or leadership, and to Drivers and Guardians more

than Integrators or Pioneers. Again, our previous research mirrors the Business Chemistry finding here; when asked about career aspirations, Drivers and Guardians are more likely than Integrators and Pioneers to indicate they aspire to be experts.<sup>8</sup> Staff, too, may lean more heavily into their expertise than managers and leadership, whose roles often require a broader point of view and a more generalist approach. It makes sense, then, that these groups may be more likely to see themselves as experts and also to hope their expertise is valued and will be recognized.

Finally, recognition for living the organization's core values is more important to Integrators, followed by Pioneers, than it is to Drivers or Guardians. Integrators are the type most likely to feel a duty to society and a responsibility to the larger group. They are also most likely to say they thrive when they have a sense their work matters, with

**Experts hope expertise is held in high regard.**

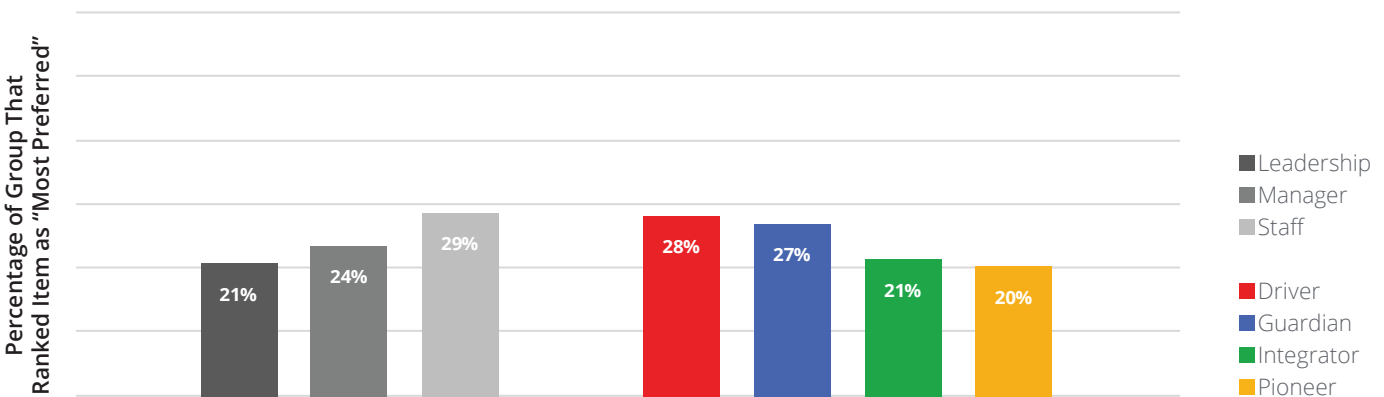
"What is most important to me is supervisors acknowledging my intelligence and expertise on a subject and deferring to me on it in future projects."

"It's important to feel recognized for your knowledge, expertise and hard work."

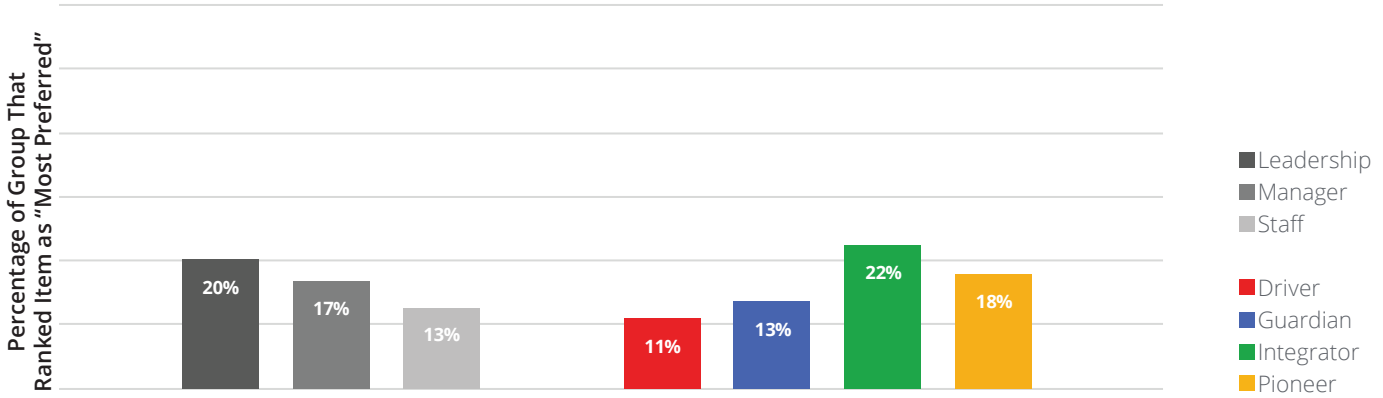
"I think it is important to recognize a person's success and contribution either based on their expertise or effort."

<sup>8</sup> Approximately 35% of Drivers and Guardians indicated they aspire to be *experts*, in comparison to approximately 20% Integrators and Pioneers. In Christfort & Vickberg, *Business Chemistry*, p. 118.

**Who prefers to be recognized for knowledge/expertise?**



Who prefers to be recognized for living core values?



Pioneers taking the second spot in this regard.<sup>9</sup> So it's not surprising that they would appreciate when their efforts to live the organization's values are noticed.

Leadership, too, places higher importance on recognition for living the organization's values, particularly as compared to staff. Since they are more likely to have been part of developing these values and should by rights be the standard bearers for them, this is not unexpected. Perhaps what is remarkable is that *more* leaders don't put their priority here.

Our findings here suggest it might be worth taking a moment to reflect on the meaning of the word

*recognize*. One definition is *to identify someone or something as previously known*, and another, perhaps most obviously relevant here, is *to show appreciation*. But *recognize* can also mean to *acknowledge the validity of*. And for those professionals whose contributions to their teams and organizations are less obviously tied to the successes, validation may be just what they're craving. So remember to look out for those colleagues who may be making a quieter impact, and then find ways to validate the value they add to your workplace.

As we set out to explore people's preferences around recognition, we wondered, does it matter who

Do you value what I value?

"I find it most rewarding when I am recognized for my commitment to the mission of my organization and for exemplifying the core values."

"What is most important to me is to be recognized for my servant leadership... modeling core values and changing cultures within an organization - bringing people together and motivating them to be the best they can be."

"I value recognition of commitment to values and honorably doing a good job."

<sup>9</sup> 57% of Integrators indicated they thrive when they have *a sense my work matters*, in comparison to 52% of Pioneers, 46% of Guardians, and 42% of Drivers. In Christfort & Vickberg, *Business Chemistry*, p. 126.

" Thank You "





# Not everyone's esteem is equally esteemed

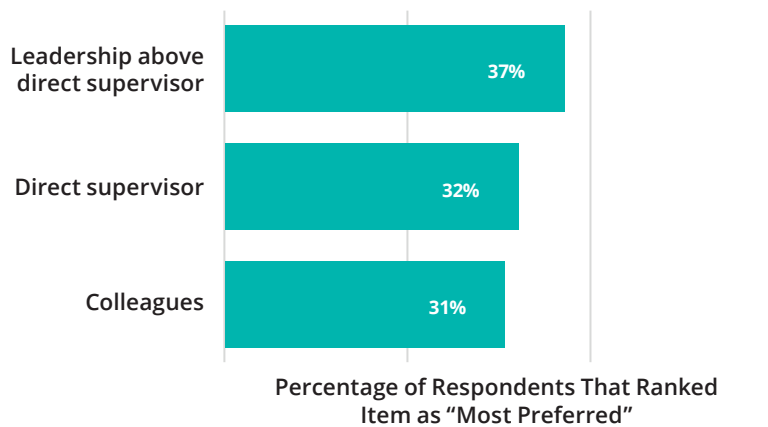
A 2014 article in SHRM's *HR Magazine* suggests "Peer recognition can mean as much to employees as praise from the boss—maybe more." <sup>vii</sup>

does the recognizing? Our findings suggest that it does matter who recognition comes from, and also that the preferred recognizer depends on who is being recognized. Among our respondents, recognition from leadership is most valued overall, but direct supervisors and colleagues come in close behind, and each takes the lead among certain groups.

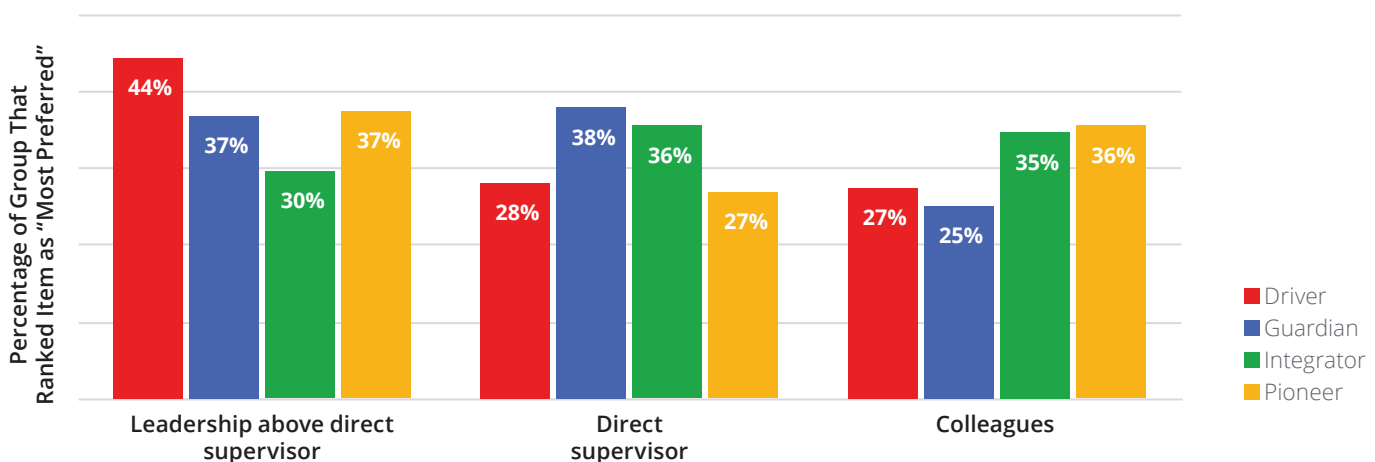
We found significant differences between Business Chemistry types, with each type showing a different pattern of results. Drivers have a clear preference for being recognized by leadership and are less likely to prefer their supervisor or colleagues. Guardians are equally likely to choose leadership or their supervisor, but less likely to choose

their colleagues. Pioneers are also equally split between two options, but they equally esteem leadership and colleagues, with their supervisor claiming the third spot. Only Integrators put leadership in the least valued camp, preferring recognition from their supervisor or colleagues. It's notable that the two types who most appreciate recognition from their colleagues also share a number

## Who do you prefer to be recognized by?



## Who do you prefer to be recognized by?





of other relevant traits. Compared to Drivers and Guardians, Pioneers and Integrators are more likely to value having personal connections with their coworkers, to prefer teamwork over working alone, and to prioritize maintaining large networks of connections. Their regard for recognition from their peers may be a reflection of the importance they place on relationships.

There are generational differences here as well. Baby Boomers prefer being recognized by their colleagues, while Millennials and Gen Xers prefer recognition from leadership. There is a similar patterns of results by organizational level, although the differences are less extreme. One might imagine this pattern of results could be reflective of *who* one's colleagues are. In other words, being around quite a bit longer, Baby Boomers might have more

powerful colleagues at higher levels than Millennials, in particular. And of course, the same is true of leadership, for whom there may be few (if any) levels above their direct supervisor. In their case, colleagues and leadership may be one in the same.

All in all, these findings don't suggest peer recognition isn't valuable or that a 'thank you' from a colleague isn't appreciated. In some cases it seems it actually *does* mean more than recognition from the boss. Our findings do, however, suggest recognition from peers should supplement, not replace, recognition that comes directly from supervisors and leadership. If you're a manager or leader, don't delegate the responsibility of showing appreciation for people's contributions. Instead, consider bringing others in on the action, and for help in deciding who to include, read on.

**Who Said That?**

"Recognition from my colleagues and supervisors would motivate me to evolve, explore my limits and ultimately present better results."

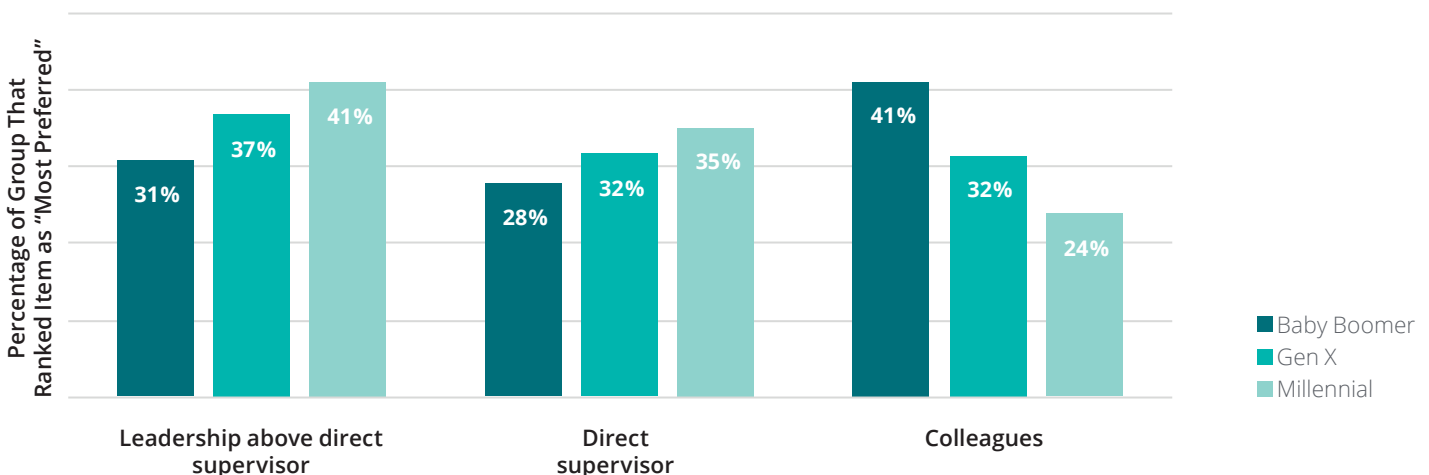
"I appreciate leaders taking the time to personally provide the recognition."

"I particularly like recognition when a senior leader recognizes my team's work in front of their peers. It is very validating for the effort that the team puts in."

"The type of recognition I value the most comes from my direct leadership and among my day-to-day colleagues."

"What's most important to me when it comes to recognition is being recognized by the people it matters the most to like direct supervisors and senior leadership."

**Who do you prefer to be recognized by?**



# Notecard or billboard?

With the ubiquity of social media today, it can seem like anything that's really important gets shared all around, with friends, family, colleagues, and strangers, too.

Come to think of it, even not so important things often get shared this way. When it comes to recognition at work, is this what people want? Our final question asked whether people prefer recognition to be shared with others. When thanking someone, should you whisper it in their ear or shout it from the rooftops? We found that overall, people prefer something in between, recognition

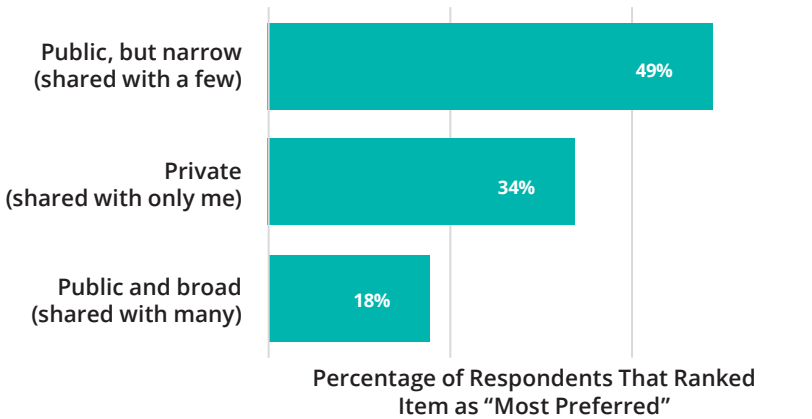
that's public, but shared with just a few others. Claiming second place is private recognition, with the fewest respondents preferring public recognition that is shared broadly.

While a similar proportion of each Business Chemistry type prefers public recognition shared with a small group, there are differences related to the other options. Pioneers are the

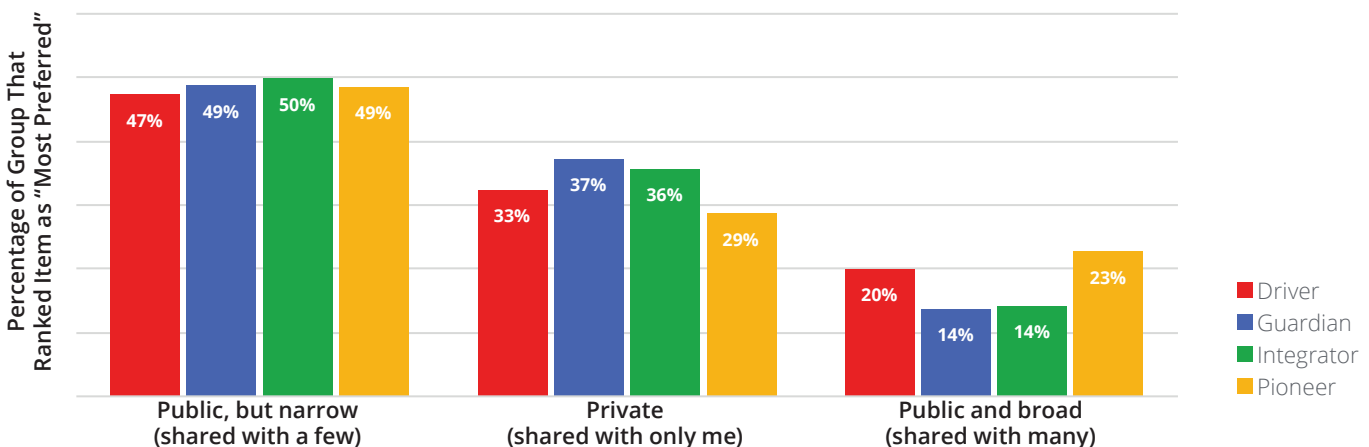
least likely type to prefer recognition be kept private, and most likely to prefer it be broadly shared. They are also the most extroverted type, and may generally be more comfortable with a public personae<sup>10</sup>. Guardians and Integrators are the most likely types to prefer private recognition, and least likely to prefer it broadly shared. Guardians are the most introverted and reserved Business

<sup>10</sup> A discussion of the Business Chemistry types as they relate to introversion and extroversion can be found in Christfort & Vickberg, Business Chemistry, pp. 93-102.

## How public or private do you prefer recognition to be?



## How public or private do you prefer recognition to be?



Chemistry type, which may lead to a preference for privacy, while Integrators are the most intrinsically motivated type, which may contribute to less interest in public recognition.

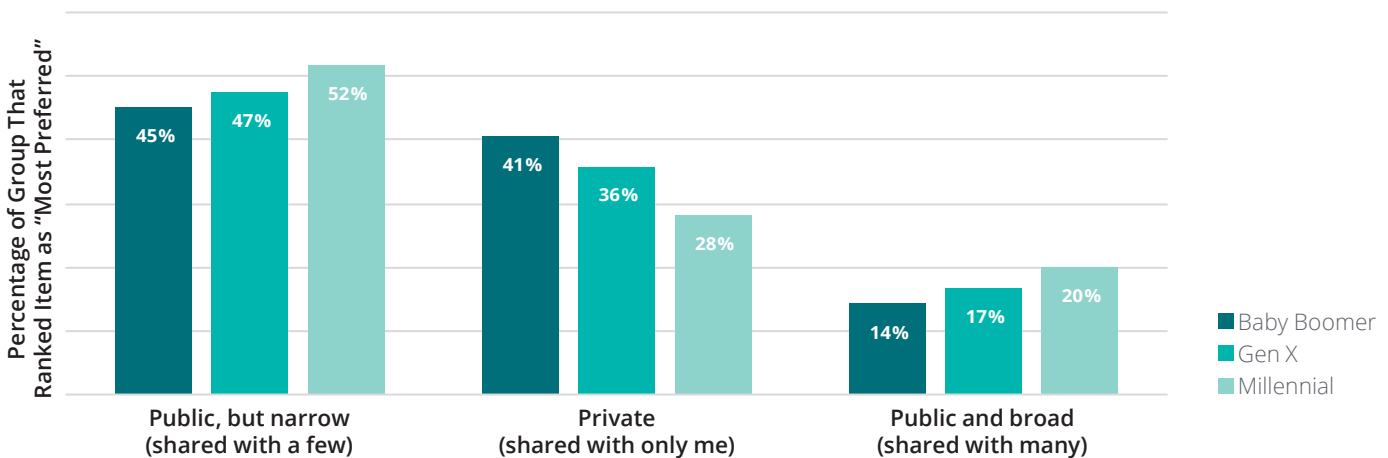
Baby Boomers are more likely than Gen Xers or Millennials to prefer private recognition, while Millennials are more likely than the others to choose both public options. It's

possible that Millennials, who have grown up with social media, may simply be more accustomed to having their accomplishments (and everything else) shared with the world.

So if you're going to express your gratitude to someone privately, that's fairly straight-forward, as it is if you're going to announce it to everyone. But if you're going to share it with just a

few others, who should those others be? You can find guidance on that in the previous section. In some cases the recipient of your kudos may find it most valuable if you share it with leadership, in others, with colleagues, and in still others, with a direct supervisor, if you yourself are not that person.

### How public or private do you prefer recognition to be?



### To whisper or to shout?

"I want the recognition to match the level of work. Small things don't need to be shared with the broader team. Big things should be recognized to higher levels."

"It's important that my time, effort and successes are acknowledged and that positive feedback is shared with key decision makers, influencers and management as appropriate."

"Recognition should be reserved for exceptional performance and should be shared with colleagues that interact with the person being recognized on a regular basis."

"It would be nice for my team and I to be publicly acknowledged from time to time. It would really go a long way as I feel we are all very passionate and often punch above our weight but rarely feel that it's publicly recognised."

"I like to be recognized in my approach and methodology regardless of the outcome. I take private or public but narrow recognition more seriously as it feels more genuine and less contrived."

"Preferably, recognition is more of a private occurrence between you and your supervisor or supervisor's supervisor."

Where to start, when working with a...

**PIONEER**

Say 'thank you' and offer them a chance to try something new. Prioritize recognizing them when they've been part of a big win. For an extra boost, ask their colleagues or the boss's boss to deliver the thanks, and consider who else should hear the news.

**GUARDIAN**

Inquire about whether they'd welcome a new opportunity and maybe consider a financial reward. Make sure to thank them, not only when they're part of a big success, but also when you see them making a strong and steady effort, or when their expertise adds particular value. If you're their boss, go ahead and recognize them yourself, or invite leadership to share in delivering kudos. And it's probably okay to keep it a bit quiet—they don't necessarily need (or want) their name in lights.

**DRIVER**

Present them with a challenging opportunity and thank them, particularly when they've been successful in their endeavors, but also when their expertise proves critical. If you can get the higher ups to acknowledge their performance, even better.

**INTEGRATOR**

Thank them sincerely and ask if they'd like a growth opportunity. Acknowledge their efforts as much as their successes, and while you're at it, recognize their commitment to living your organization's values. If they report to you directly, they'll likely appreciate you doing the recognizing yourself, or you could get their colleagues in on the effort, but there's probably no need to share your appreciation beyond a small group.

# Wrapping it up

This study is certainly not the first to suggest paying attention to individual preferences when it comes to recognizing people's contributions. The need to make rewards more personalized, agile, and holistic was one of the key global human capital trends identified by Deloitte in 2018<sup>xv</sup>. And Deloitte's [Rewards to Relationships](#) point of view highlights the critical need to understand worker preferences before designing any of the key elements – including compensation, benefits, recognition, wellbeing, and development – of an organization's relationship with its workforce. Others have also suggested that recognition should happen more often—one study found employees receiving small rewards and thanks were eight times more engaged than those receiving compensation and bonus increases once a year.<sup>xvi</sup> But if those overall messages are more reminders than epiphanies, what's new here is Business Chemistry as a frame for thinking about these issues. Our findings suggest there are some areas where most people are in agreement—saying 'thank you' and offering opportunities to learn and grow are key to making people feel appreciated—and other areas where the Business Chemistry types differ quite a bit, as do the generations and different organizational levels.

And yet, we want to be clear that we're not suggesting you use Business Chemistry or any other organizational

or demographic category as the sole determinant of how you should show your appreciation for someone—all Guardians are not exactly the same, nor are all Pioneers, Drivers, or Integrators. Instead, we encourage you to view these results as a window into some of the different perspectives people—quite large groups of people—have on recognition. We encourage you to keep in mind that many of the people you work with are different from you, and what will make them feel most appreciated isn't necessarily the same as what makes you feel appreciated. We hope you'll ask more questions about how people want to be recognized, and for what, and by whom.

As an example of what this might look like, *Thank it Forward* is a Deloitte program that aims to nurture a community and culture of recognition within our own organization. It offers many options for professionals at all levels to recognize our colleagues up, down, and across our organization in small and large ways. There's an app and an online platform for giving public Shout Outs in real time, as well as a social feed where our professionals can engage and celebrate one another's contributions. We also have a program site complete with resources like branded templates for personal thank you notes, as well as interactive guides inspiring us to incorporate recognition into everyday moments. A gratitude checklist

highlights 25 unique ways to show appreciation for others. We might nominate someone for a monetary Applause Award to reward excellence or for a leadership training program or stretch assignment to cultivate growth and development. *Thank it Forward* gives us the tools we need to recognize others in the ways they'll find meaningful and provides the encouragement to do so. What's left for all of us to do is to take advantage of the opportunity.

Within Deloitte's [2019 global human capital trends](#) report is a call to action for organizations to *reinvent with a human focus*.<sup>xvii</sup> Many professionals today are lacking a sense of belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. What people want now, more than ever, is a sense of meaning in their work. The organizations that thrive in the future will likely be those that create cultures, put in place structures, and develop programs and policies that help people do so. But there is a critical role for individuals to play as well. When you recognize someone for their unique contributions to your team or organization, and when you do so in the way they prefer, it validates them, demonstrates that they belong, and helps them connect with that sense of meaning. At the same time, it can positively impact your work environment, while making the world a better place. For that, we'll say, in advance, 'thank you.'

## Study Methodology

During the period of January, 2017 to December, 2018, study participants completed the online Business Chemistry assessment, and also answered questions about their recognition preferences. The sample is comprised of 16,066 professionals working at varying organizational levels, in the United States and elsewhere. Participants represent more than 4,000 organizations, in 101 different countries, across a variety of industries. No one organization represents more than 5% of the sample. The margin error for this sample is less than +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level, for all groups.

### Sample Demographics<sup>1</sup>

Category	% of Sample	Category	% of Sample	Category	% of Sample
U.S.	61%	Men	53%	Pioneer	22%
Outside U.S.	39%	Women	47%	Guardian	29%
				Driver	27%
Millennials	40%	Leadership	38%	Integrator	22%
Gen X	45%	Managers	48%		
Baby Boomers	15%	Staff	14%		

<sup>1</sup> We have demographic information for the majority, but not the entirety of our sample. Percentages reported here are based on those for which we have this information.



# Endnotes

- i. Human Resource Executive, [How recognition drives employee engagement](#), March 2018.
- ii. Bersin by Deloitte, Deloitte Consulting LLP, November 7, 2012, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-bersin-associates-research-shows-organizations-that-excel-at-employee-recognition-are-12-times-more-likely-to-generate-strong-business-results-177627921.html>
- iii. [Rewards: Closing the gap](#), Deloitte 2019 Global Human Capital Trends.
- iv. O.C. Tanner, [What causes great work](#), 2015.
- v. Emmons, Robert. *Thanks!: How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. Houghton Mifflin: NY. 2008.
- vi. Richard Novak, [Recognizing Employees Is the Simplest Way to Improve Morale](#), hbr.org, May 9, 2016.
- vii. Sturt, David et al. *Appreciate: Celebrating People, Inspiring Greatness*. O.C. Tanner Publishing Institute: Salt Lake City. 2017.
- viii. Crystalee Webb Beck, (2016) [Perceptions of thanks in the workplace: Use, effectiveness, and dark sides of managerial gratitude](#), Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Vol. 21 Issue: 3, pp.333-351,
- ix. Amit Kumar and Nicholas Epley (2018) [Undervaluing gratitude: Expressers misunderstand the consequences of showing appreciation](#). Psychological Science, Vol. 29 Issue: 9, pp. 1423-1435.
- x. Pink, Daniel. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Riverhead Books: NY. 2009.
- xi. [2018 Deloitte Millennial Survey](#).
- xii. [The Women's Leadership Gap](#) by Judith Warner & Danielle Corley, May 21, 2017.
- xiii. Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer (2011). [The power of small wins](#). Harvard Business Review, 89 no. 5.
- xiv. [Employers Embrace Peer-to-Peer Recognition](#) by Tony Vranjes, Oct 23, 2015.
- xv. [New Rewards: Personal, Agile, and Holistic](#), Deloitte 2018 Human Capital Trends.
- xvi. Society for Human Resource Management and Globoforce, [2018 SHRM/Globoforce employee recognition report](#), 2018.
- xvii. [Deloitte 2019 Global Human Capital Trends](#).

# Meet the Authors



**Author and primary contact for questions about this research.**

**Suzanne Vickberg, PhD**

Senior Manager, Applied Insights Lead,  
the Deloitte Greenhouse® Experience

Deloitte Consulting LLP

[svickberg@deloitte.com](mailto:svickberg@deloitte.com)



**Contributor and primary contact for questions about how Deloitte helps organizations create Total Relationships with their workforce.**

**Melanie Langsett**

Principal, US Rewards & Wellbeing Market Offering Leader

Deloitte Consulting LLP

[mlangsett@deloitte.com](mailto:mlangsett@deloitte.com)



**Program Sponsor**

**Kim Christfort**

National Managing Director,  
the Deloitte Greenhouse® Experience

Deloitte Consulting LLP

[kchristfort@deloitte.com](mailto:kchristfort@deloitte.com)

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Selena Rezvani who helped develop this research, and to the following individuals who contributed along the way: Anjani Patel, Jasjit Magat, Jessica Tankersley, Leigh Otey, Victoria Henao, Grace Lee, Swati Kundu, Kimmerly Cordes, and Jonathan Lum.

**Report design by:** Patricia Mozetic

## About Business Chemistry®

Expressly designed for use in a business context, Business Chemistry draws upon the latest analytics technologies to reveal four scientifically based patterns of behavior. The system is designed to provide insights about individuals and teams based on observable traits and preferences. To learn more about Business Chemistry, visit [www.deloitte.com/us/businesschemistry](http://www.deloitte.com/us/businesschemistry) or read the book [Business Chemistry: Practical Magic for Crafting Powerful Work Relationships](#).

**For general Business Chemistry questions, please contact:** [chiefchemist@deloitte.com](mailto:chiefchemist@deloitte.com)

## About Deloitte Rewards and Wellbeing Services

Deloitte Consulting is recognized as the leading HR Advisory Firm in the world and has been providing rewards consulting services for more than 40 years. We made the business decision to remain a strategic advisor not focused on the transactional aspects of rewards and not attached to business models that focus on the ways of the past. We believe that the rapidly evolving nature of work, the importance for employers to create a differentiated experience for their workforce, and the stewardship necessary to manage total rewards cost and risk, companies must now pivot to a more strategic view of rewards. The move from Rewards to Relationships is a journey to discover, design, and ultimately deliver programs that reflect the evolving nature of the workforce and their preferences and to better incentivize behaviors that support business objectives. Deloitte is the only firm that can advise you from strategy through implementation on every aspect of your relationships with your workforce. Please see <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/human-capital/solutions/employee-rewards-to-employee-relationships.html> to learn more about why Deloitte is the right strategic advisor to guide you along the journey from Rewards to Relationships.

## About the Deloitte Greenhouse® Experience

The Deloitte Greenhouse provides immersive experiences designed to break down barriers and accelerate meaningful results through one-to-two day interactive sessions tailored to address specific business challenges. The result? Behavioral science, design thinking, and strategy converge to help you solve your toughest business challenges. These corporate innovation lab experiences promote experimentation in a controlled environment, guided by ambitious objectives. To learn more about the Deloitte Greenhouse Experience, visit [www.deloitte.com/us/greenhouse](http://www.deloitte.com/us/greenhouse).



#### **About Deloitte**

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee (“DTTL”), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as “Deloitte Global”) does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the “Deloitte” name in the United States and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see [www.deloitte.com/about](http://www.deloitte.com/about) to learn more about our global network of member firms.

This publication contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this publication, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This publication is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor.

Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this publication.