



# Reshaping The Employee Experience

## 2021 EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION TRENDS

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the idea that the employee experience is directly related to business performance, necessitating a more holistic approach to employee recognition efforts.

The entire concept of the employee experience has been redefined over a short period of time, and companies have had to adapt quickly and learn to be prepared for anything.



# The Post-2020 Employee Experience

Companies are preparing for rapidly changing needs moving forward. HR has taken up more seats at the table, and HR leaders are expected to have faster-than-average job growth<sup>1</sup> over the next decade.

At a time when employees need to be connected and supported more than ever, employee recognition will play an important role in reshaping the post-2020 employee experience.

<sup>1</sup> [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Only **19% of 2021 HR leaders** reported that their workforce can effectively change direction based on changing needs and priorities.

Source: [Gartner 2021 HR Priorities Survey](#)

# Universally Accessible Programs

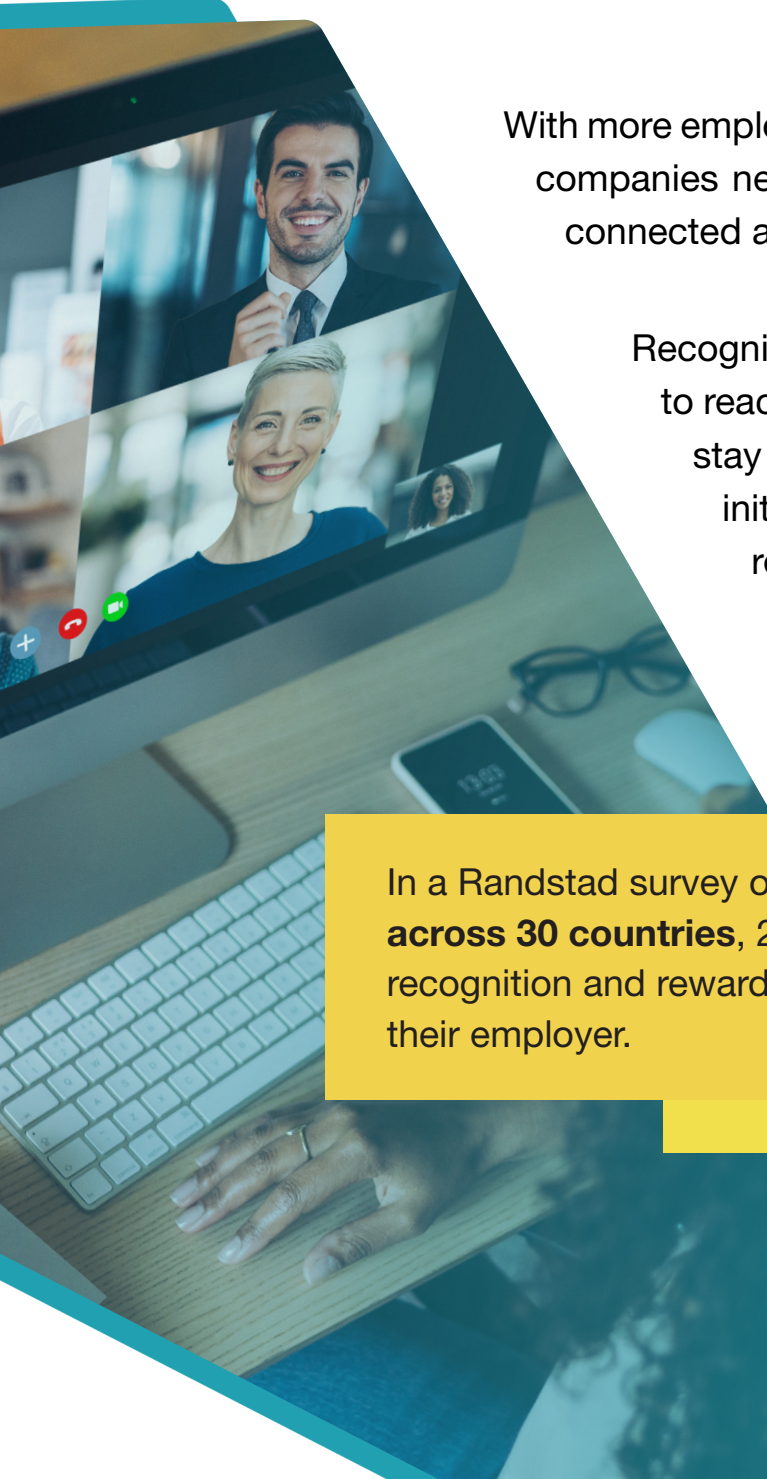
A staggering 1 in 4 Americans will be working from home in 2021, putting pressure on companies to create a sustainable remote experience.

Centralized recognition platforms have been making it easier for companies with spread-out workforces stay in touch for years, but now they are invaluable. Universally accessible programs compatible with Single Sign-On and existing intranets will be key communication channels for maintaining emotional bonds and building culture with remote staff.

By 2025, 36.2 million Americans will be working remotely, **an 87% increase** from pre-pandemic levels.

Source: CNBC/Upwork Survey

# Peer-to-Peer Support



With more employees than ever separated by distance, companies need more ways of keeping their teams connected and engaged with one another.

Recognition offers powerful ways for employees to reach out and show appreciation or simply stay in touch. Peer-to-peer recognition initiatives are already being amplified and retooled as a key channel in keeping employees feeling supported and focused on goals.

In a Randstad survey of **over 175,000 respondents across 30 countries**, 27% of employees cited a lack of recognition and rewards as an important reason to leave their employer.

Source: [Randstad Employer Brand Global Report](#)



# Incentivizing Empathy

A 2020 survey<sup>2</sup> found that since the pandemic, 91% of CEOs say their company is empathetic, but only 68% of employees agree. Empathy, transparency, consistency, and honesty are in high demand.

Showing gratitude and sending the right motivational messages is imperative in 2021. Recognition gives management the perfect opportunity to check in, provide support, and find out what's not working.

<sup>2</sup> Business Solver State of Workplace Empathy Survey (2020)

Globally, only **1 in 4 employees** strongly agree that they have received recognition or praise for doing good work. If that ratio were increased to **6 in 10**, it could cause a **28%** improvement in quality and a **31%** reduction in absenteeism.


Source: Gallup COVID-19 Remote Recognition Analysis

# Remote Work Lifestyle

Remote work has become more of a lifestyle than ever and creating a consistent experience with virtual events and gestures of support are critical. More than half of virtual event organizers plan to invest more in virtual events in 2021<sup>3</sup>, and the demand continues to rise.

Physical merchandise gifts and kits are being leveraged more and more to augment virtual celebrations and provide strategic support for many scenarios, including work-from-home care packages, wellness kits, and special events like Employee Appreciation Day and Customer Service Week.

<sup>3</sup> Markletic Virtual Event Market Survey (2021)




By the end of Spring 2020, **55% of American workers** had participated in a virtual happy hour with coworkers.

Source: Digital Information World Survey



# Mental Health & Wellbeing



42% of employees<sup>4</sup> have reported a decline in mental health since the pandemic began. The isolation and related hardships take a heavy psychological toll on everyone. Sensitivity to mental health needs is crucial in times of social distancing.

Perhaps the most important benefit of employee recognition in 2021 is how it grants the ability to incentivize certain culture traits like kindness, health awareness, and of course empathy. Business leaders are already touting the importance of empathetic leadership, and introducing new initiatives to drive awareness and support change are a key focus for recognition programs in 2021.

<sup>4</sup> MSP/Qualtrics/SAP Survey via Harvard Business Review (2020)

Working parents are **losing a cumulative 720 million hours each week** to stress/anxiety and caregiving during the pandemic.

Source: Cleo Q3 2020 State of Working Parents Study



# Moving Forward In 2021

It goes without saying that the 2021 employee experience will be unlike any that came before it. Things may be difficult to predict in the coming months, but recognition has always played an important role in keeping work cultures resilient in the face of adversity and change, with the power to reshape the employee experience in real-time to rapidly evolving work dynamics.

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