INNOVATING TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS

What happens when you’ve always led your industry but suddenly start losing key clients to new competitors? If you’re CHEP USA, you take stock and rise to the challenge. After listening to customers and employees, you make organizational changes and re-energize to come back better than ever.

Most importantly, realizing people can be your differentiator in an aggressive marketplace, you focus on driving customer satisfaction as you create a great place to work.

“When the competition entered, it made us consider things like, ‘Are our customers happy with us? Are our employees happy to work here?’” explains Kathleen Harris, Senior Vice President Human Resources. “That’s driven a lot of the new perspective on how we continue to be successful.”

“It’s literally become a focused strategy of being customer-centric and innovative,” says L. Scott Spivey, SVP, Chief Financial Officer, CHEP Americas, “and how we can continually make that part of our everyday culture.”

This focused strategy, coupled with an expanded recognition solution, has yielded some big returns. In the past 18 months, employee engagement has gone up 10 percent. And those key clients? In one year, they’re coming back.

CREATING AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

‘Passionate’ is not a word that comes to mind when you see CHEP’s signature blue wooden pallets. But when asked to describe the people and culture at CHEP—no matter who you talk to—‘passionate’ and ‘driven’ are the first words used. // continued inside
91%

OF EMPLOYEES FEEL
THAT CHEP SHOWS
APPRECIATION FOR
THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

“I’ve never been at a company I’ve been this excited about.”
— MATT THIELMANN, MANAGER, INNOVATION CENTER AND PALLET TEST TRACK

The leading provider of pallet and container pooling services, CHEP offers customers an environmentally sustainable solution. After each use, pallets are returned, repaired, and then sent out for use again. With millions of trips going through their system each year, CHEP employees are passionate about quality and safety. They’re passionate about delivering solutions customers need. “We take full responsibility for being part of the supply chain,” explains Matt Thielmann, Manager, Innovation Center and Pallet Test Track, “and continually look for innovative solutions that help our customers be more efficient and decrease their costs.”

“To build that emotional bond with our customers, we need engaged employees,” explains Marianne Plumb, former Senior Vice President, Quality Customer Experience, and now President, CHEP Canada. “For us to know engaged, passionate people create those ‘WOW’ experiences and services that equal high customer satisfaction and loyalty. Part of this is having a great recognition system that really rewards the right things, which is why our partnership with O.C. Tanner is so important.”

A partnership that became critical as CHEP leadership looked for ways to reward people for making a difference.

“We’ve always used our recognition program as a point of differentiation in recruiting,” says Thomasina Kennedy, Director, Human Resources, “but we wanted to take a look at our existing programs to ensure that they were incentivizing the right behaviors to help us live our corporate values.”

TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

How could the existing program evolve to create a true culture of appreciation that supported CHEP’s customer-centric focus and other values such as innovation, quality and safety?

CHEP turned to O.C. Tanner to facilitate and lead an employee focus group that identified what people liked and what could be done differently. Taking these insights and the new strategic focus into account, a fresh, fun program was designed and launched a year ago.

The new ‘Appreciation Station’ provides one place to send thank you eCards, celebrate service milestones, and easily nominate for above and beyond awards. The approval process has been streamlined and there’s the ability for both peer and manager nominations. And because employees have tremendous pride in CHEP, they can now buy logo merchandise from an online CHEP store.

“WOW” EXPERIENCES AND SERVICES THAT EQUAL HIGH CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

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NEW LEADER TOOLS

iappreciate

Delivering a thoughtful award presentation isn’t always easy. How do you make the most of the moment when you appreciate great work or celebrate a service anniversary?

“On one hand we’ve heard leaders were struggling with what to say. Everyone always wants to do the right thing, but sometimes they get busy or simply don’t know where to start,” explains James Hilton, O.C. Tanner’s Director of Product Development.

“We then had research verifying that one of the critical elements in making an employee feel appreciated is the actual public presentation of their award. This is where iappreciate comes in. It’s a set of tools that help people easily lead a memorable appreciation moment.”

Recently launched, iappreciate leader tools include an innovative website, free mobile application (available now for iPhones, iPads, and Android devices), and printed ‘Award Presenter Kits.’

“We tried to give leaders multiple ways to use the tools,” says Jessica Alba, Manager, Product Development. “You have the website but the mobile app still lets you prepare, even if you’re not in the office. The kits arrive with the award itself, offering additional tips on putting the celebration together.”

Available in 14 languages, the website takes you through an easy four-step process to create a script. Tips and prompts appear with historical facts and quotes for added inspiration. The site also allows you to schedule the celebration, invite others to speak, and create fun eCards and certificates.

“We’re committed to providing fun and easy ways for leaders to create great recognition experiences,” says Hilton. “Iappreciate is just one of the many tools we have to offer.”

Watch a demo for the site and app and learn more at octanner.com/iappreciate.
Knowing awareness and communication were critical to the program’s success, Kennedy’s team organized a week of launch events for the Orlando headquarters and field employees. “Every day,” says Kennedy, “there was some sort of recognition event to highlight how important this was to the organization.” Program communication continues with ongoing training “Jolt” sessions and employee appreciation profiles in every issue of Outside In, CHEP’s employee newsletter. “We want to give shout outs to people that contribute to the success of our business,” explains Kennedy. “Appreciating their contributions is how we can make them feel valued.”

**MAKING AN IMPACT, INSIDE AND OUT**

“This is not an easy job,” Orlando Plant Manager Anthony Palmer points out. “I have crews where each person handles 360 pallets a day, weighing 70 pounds each. Recognizing they’re doing a good job, taking the time to point it out and say thank you, makes all the difference.”

In Palmer’s crew alone, the average tenure is 3½ years—well above the norm for a service center environment. In the last two years, safety incidents on his team have gone from 47 to 0, something Palmer attributes to the supportive atmosphere that’s been cultivated.

Responding to customer needs has also made a big difference. In the past, customers would fill out satisfaction surveys. But in the absence of a specific feedback mechanism not every issue was immediately addressed.

Now, a new Net Promoter system with a customer loyalty metric evaluates how likely a customer would recommend the company to a friend or colleague. Any customer with a low score receives a call within 72 hours to gain a better understanding of their experience. An action plan is then put in place to find out how things can be improved.

“This changed the culture of the whole team, as individuals are now empowered to find solutions as they encounter issues, creating instant value,” says Plumb. “Excitement and engagement literally goes up as people see the impact they make.”

“Having a culture of appreciation is a way to make sure that people feel valued,” concludes Kennedy, “because engaged people feel that it’s their company. It’s not just, ‘I’m coming to work every day’; but rather, ‘I’m here to help this company succeed.’”

— MARIANNE PLUMB, PRESIDENT, CHEP CANADA

“Our customer survey scores have gone up 20 percentage points in the last 10 months all because we have our people thinking differently.”

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**THE WEBSITE** has the most expanded functionality in terms of creating certificates and eCards, in addition to building the script.

**THE MOBILE APP** lets you prepare your remarks and set reminders on all important team events, such as birthdays and service anniversaries.

**THE AWARD PRESENTER KITS** contain a congratulations card for the whole team to sign, along with a tip card that helps you get ready.