

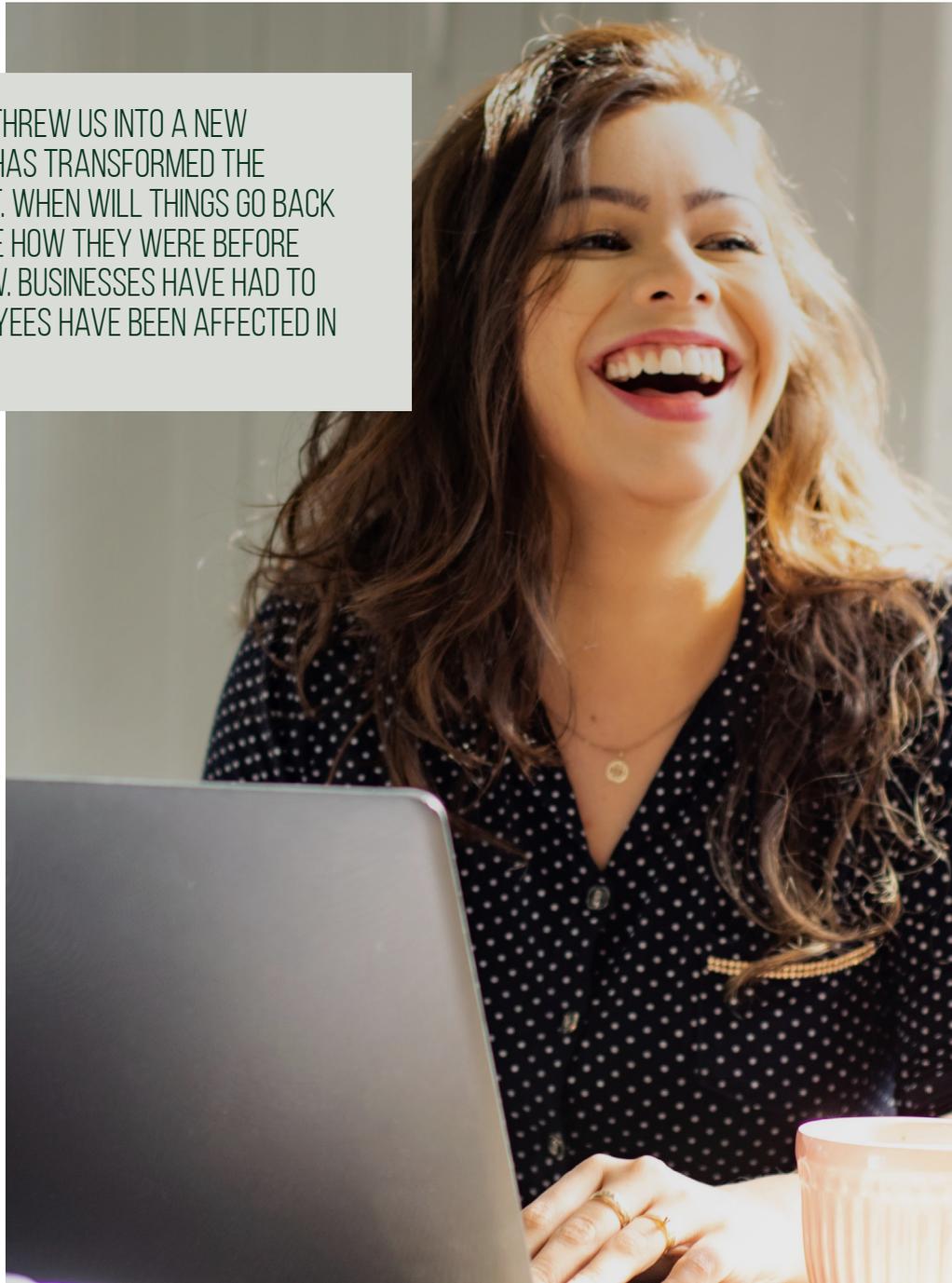
WHY REWARD AND RECOGNITION ARE CRITICAL TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

THE OUTBREAK OF CORONAVIRUS THREW US INTO A NEW UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENT WHICH HAS TRANSFORMED THE WORKPLACE AS WE ONCE KNEW IT. WHEN WILL THINGS GO BACK TO NORMAL? WILL THINGS EVER BE HOW THEY WERE BEFORE COVID-19? WE SIMPLY DON'T KNOW. BUSINESSES HAVE HAD TO ADAPT WHICH HAS MEANT EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

Research from Barnett Waddingham revealed that 39% of employees have experienced elevated stress during the pandemic. On top of that, research from Benenden Health discovered that more than a third of employees feel that the pandemic has been damaging to their mental wellbeing.

Working in a different environment while experiencing new pressures outside of work will undoubtedly impact your employees' motivation levels, productivity, commitment, enthusiasm and more. As a result, employee engagement has taken on new significance and this is why businesses need to be utilising reward and recognition to combat the challenges posed by COVID-19.

When used effectively, a reward and recognition programme can drive employee engagement in a number of ways, even during a global pandemic.



BOOSTING EMPLOYEE

WELLBEING

During this pandemic, we have seen how people's mental health and overall wellbeing has been affected, maybe you've even experienced it yourself. Reward and recognition can help to alleviate these challenges. Celebrating the efforts of individuals, teams and your business as a whole can reduce your employees' stress levels and encourage them to focus on the positives which will inevitably give their wellbeing a well-needed boost.

In particular, when employees' individual work is recognised and rewarded, this naturally boosts their self-esteem, confidence and makes them feel good about themselves. Now, more than ever, it's important for employees to feel valued and appreciated. Their commitment and resilience during this challenging time shouldn't go unnoticed. By making sure your business is acknowledging your employees' efforts, individually and as a whole, you'll help to maintain and even boost their engagement during this pandemic.

DRIVING MOTIVATION

LEVELS

On a reward and recognition platform, the many achievements and examples of great performance and behaviour happening from all areas of the business are visible, and therefore a source of inspiration for others.

Peer-to-peer recognition is especially powerful because every employee has the same opportunity to receive recognition and have their contributions to the business amplified to the whole company through the platform. Seeing their colleagues' efforts being acknowledged will remind employees that they too can be in the spotlight if they go the extra

mile. This gives them an extra nudge of encouragement which can make a huge difference if their motivation levels have been impacted by the pandemic.

On top of that, rewards also incentivise employees. A physical gift or reward points will go a long way at a time like this. Whether you reward employees for hitting a certain target or simply deliver an extra special thank you for working hard during this time, the opportunity to be rewarded will boost your employees' motivation levels.

This also applies to any of your employees on furlough. While they might not be actively working for your business at present, having access to your reward and recognition platform will provide a vital insight into what's going on in your business. When they do eventually get reinstated, they'll have seen what their colleagues have been achieving, the rewards that have been delivered and therefore be more driven to hit the ground running and go the extra mile themselves.

REINFORCING PURPOSE

It can be very easy for employees to lose sight of their purpose at work when they're dealing with external pressures and challenges, let alone when there's a global pandemic going on. Reward and recognition are therefore crucial because they help businesses reinforce their strategic narrative and their employees' purpose, which is key to engagement.

Reward and recognition programmes tend to be built around a company's core values thereby championing and encouraging employees to strive towards a certain set of behaviours in their day-to-day roles. This is useful year-round, but during this pandemic it has extra value because it'll help refocus

employees' minds, remind them of what they should be aiming for and provide some goals to work towards during this challenging time.

STRENGTHENING COMPANY CULTURE

Your business' culture is key to employee engagement, but while we've all been riding the tumultuous wave of the pandemic and trying to stay afloat, culture naturally comes lower down on the priority list. You can rectify this and keep your culture alive by using your reward and recognition programme to highlight special moments and bring your employees together.

For example, at peoplevalue we can share photos on our reward and recognition platform, so we had a photo competition throughout the month of May. The theme was 'Life in Isolation' and we simply shared photos of what we were up to. This gave us all an insight into each other's lives and brought some colour and character to our virtual workplace.

A reward and recognition platform essentially acts as a window into your business. So, whether you've got employees on furlough or your workplace is now remote, you can bring your culture into a virtual space to maintain connectivity and engagement.

Having a reward and recognition programme is valuable for employee engagement year-round, but it's been critical for businesses to adapt their schemes to reflect the current environment. While performance is key, it's also important to shine a light on those employees who are showing excellence in different ways during the pandemic. The businesses that support, appreciate and reward their employees during this time will see better engagement in the long run.

