

MIT Human Resources

Performance Development

A Toolkit for Managers

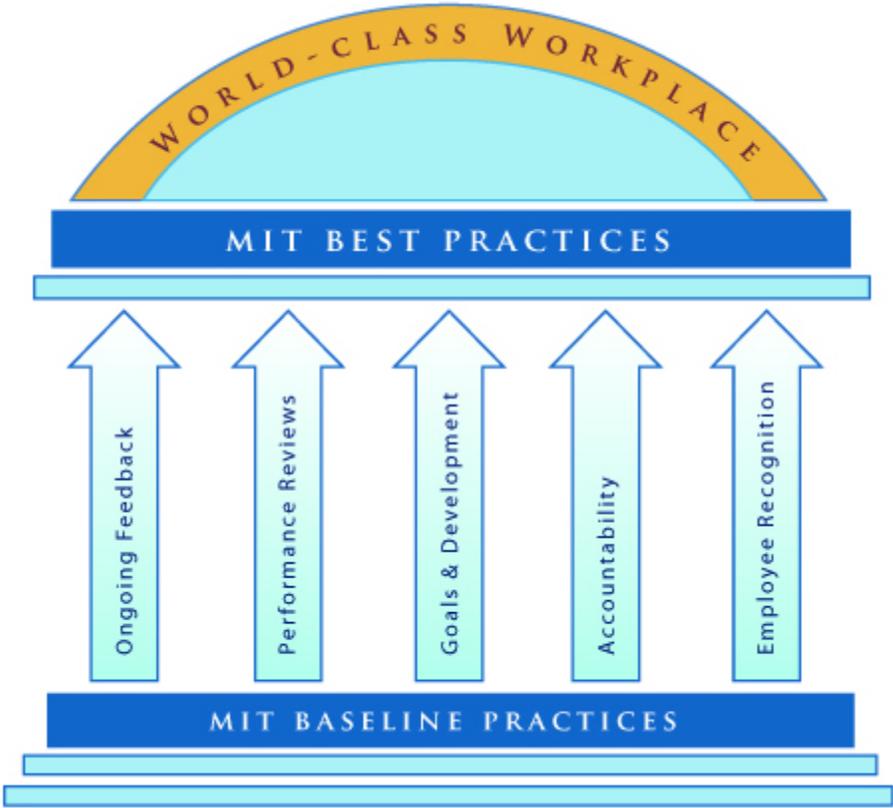
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The Vision for Performance Development at MIT

MIT is widely known as an employer deeply committed to the growth and success of every employee. At MIT, honest communication and feedback between managers and employees are everyday events, an integral facet of MIT's excellence. MIT is seen as a world-class workplace.

The graphic below illustrates the five components of Performance Development.



What do we mean by "Baseline" and "Best" Practices?

Start with Baseline

Each activity has two levels of completion: **Baseline** and **Best Practices**. Baseline practices are just that—baseline. They represent a minimum standard for each manager and each department. Most Baseline practices can be implemented by an individual manager with direct reports.

We encourage managers to review the Baseline Practices in each of the five performance development components and assess your own current practices. You may already be doing some or all of these activities. If so—great work!

Move toward Best Practices

After this assessment, your next step could be to set a milestone for improvement. Which new activities might you add to move closer to Best Practices in any area? We suggest implementing only one or two new activities at a time. For ideas or assistance, contact your Human Resources Officer.

Differences between Baseline and Best Practices

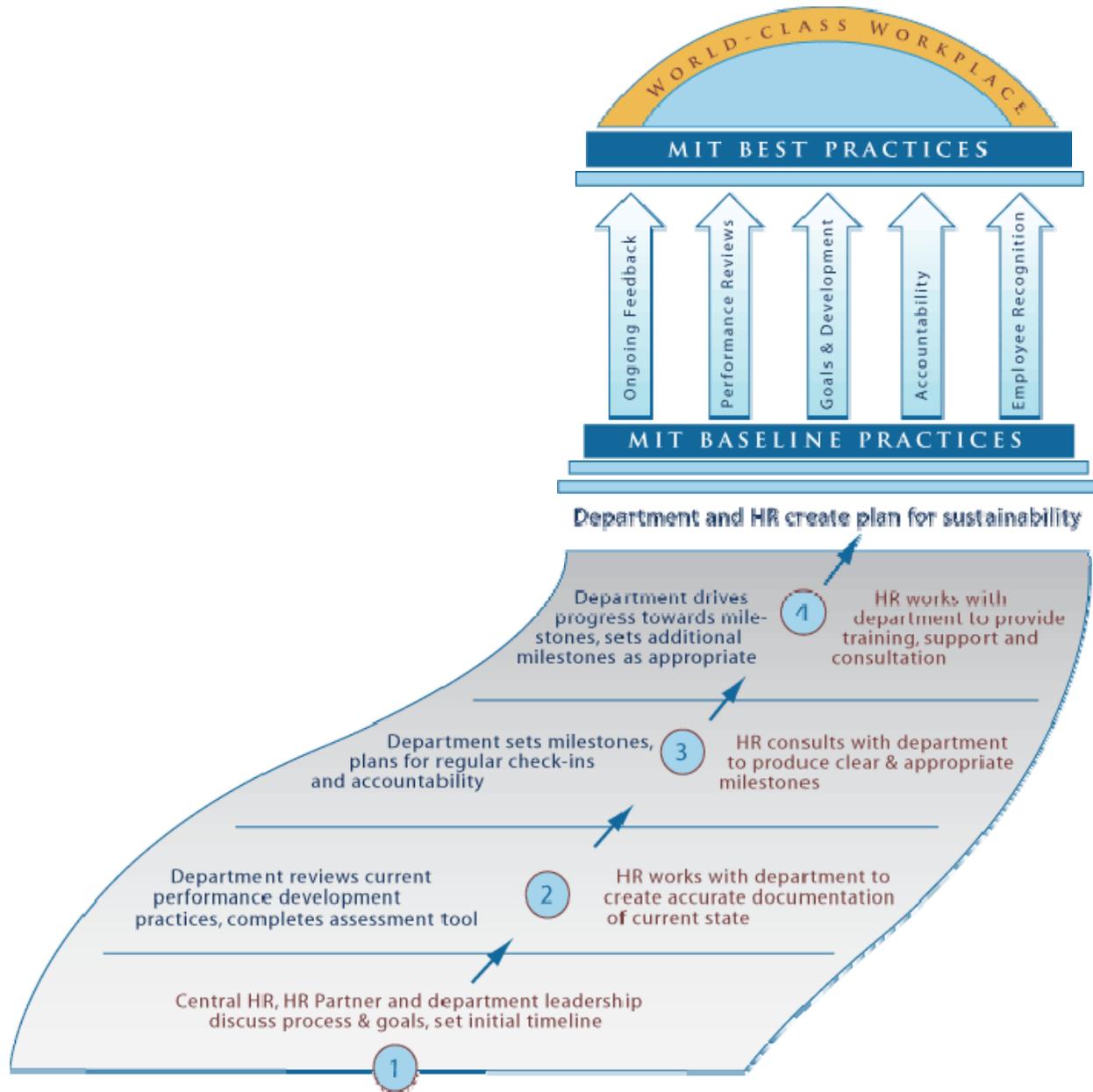
The differences between Baseline and Best Practices vary. Sometimes Best Practices represent a more frequent or more detailed version of the activity shown on the Baseline list. Sometimes Best Practices represent a higher level of skills in an activity. In some cases Best Practices can only be fully implemented with the commitment and involvement of departmental leadership.

MIT Performance Development Improvement Process

What is the Performance Development Improvement Process?

- A defined set of baseline and best practices for each of the five components of performance development
- A simple process and some tools to help departments move from their current performance development practices toward the best practices
- An effort driven by the department and supported by HR
- A process in which underlying obstacles to achieving best practices are identified and addressed

The Performance Development Improvement Process



For More Information about the Performance Development Improvement Process

The PDI is facilitated and supported by the department's Human Resources Officer (HRO) and/or Organization Development Consultant (ODC) (oed-request@mit.edu). Please contact your HRO or ODC for more information.

Ongoing Feedback

Feedback is a focused dialogue between a manager and an employee, a method of sharing information and perspectives about performance. The goal of ongoing feedback is to identify where performance is effective and where performance needs improvement. Giving and receiving feedback is a two-way street; both the manager and the employee should be proactive by frequently seeking out and providing feedback.

BASELINE PRACTICES

- a. Deliberate, planned conversations about performance occur between manager and employee at least two times per year, including the annual review

BEST PRACTICES (Baseline Practices plus ...)

- b. Candid feedback is given frequently and focused on performance successes or how to improve performance
- c. Individual performance goals are revisited more than once a year
- d. Where applicable, groups get aggregate feedback on group goals

The Best Practice Difference

The additional steps in Best Practices are both qualitative and quantitative. The upgrade from Baseline Practices is that feedback is tied explicitly to performance. In addition, Best Practices feedback is candid and given frequently. Performance goals are revisited during the course of the year so that the employee knows that he or she is on track, or knows what to do to get back on track.

Some work groups do not have group goals; for those that do, Best Practice means that everyone gets feedback—in the aggregate—about progress toward those goals.

Effective feedback should:

- Be timely (not months after good or problematic situation)
- Be specific (identify impacts or effects of employee's actions)
- Be behavior-based (focus on acts, not attitudes)
- Be motivated by desire to help, not punish

Example: "In today's meeting, I noticed you started to talk when Bob was still speaking. You did this again when Joan was talking. These interruptions made it hard for us to hear their ideas. I don't think they had a chance to finish what they wanted to say. I know you are very enthusiastic about this topic, but it would be better if next time you would make sure the person talking is finished before you start. That way we'll all get to hear everyone's ideas."

How Good Are You at Giving Feedback: A Self-Assessment

This self-assessment will help you check your knowledge and assumptions about giving feedback.

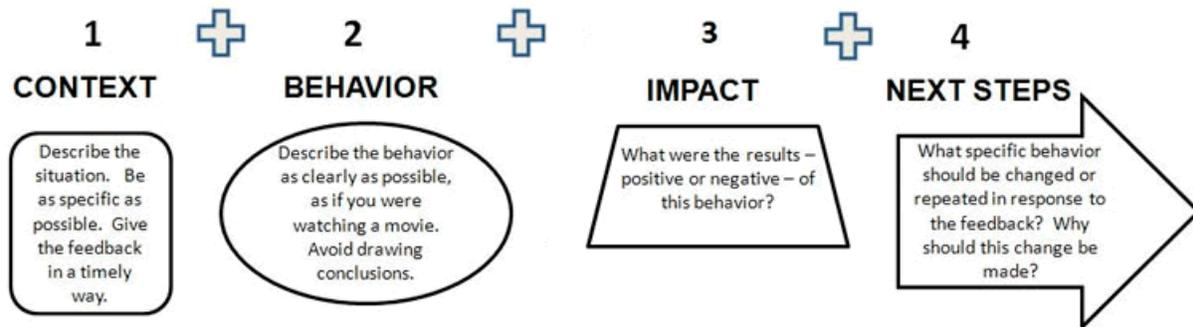
Circle the letter that best represents your thinking in most cases that involve giving feedback to someone else.

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Somewhat agree 2 = Somewhat disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | a. | If I wait, the situation will probably resolve itself. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | b. | I don't like to get criticism, so others must feel that way too. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | c. | I criticize indirectly by using sarcasm or jokes. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | d. | I can't seem to find the right time to give feedback. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | e. | I don't have time to give all the constructive feedback that's needed. It's easier and quicker to pick up the slack myself. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | f. | I'm unsure about how the other person will respond. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | g. | I'm not perfect, so who am I to judge anybody else. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | h. | Giving my boss negative feedback may be used against me. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | i. | I've let the situation go for so long that saying something now seems inappropriate or futile. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | j. | I'm not certain whether I can keep my emotions in check. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | k. | I shouldn't have to give people feedback for something that's expected in their jobs. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | l. | I don't get any feedback from my boss(es), so I don't have to give it to anyone else either. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | m. | If I give positive feedback for good work, it might make it harder to criticize that person's work when it's needed later. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | n. | If I give praise for an individual's (or team's) work, it may appear that I'm playing favorites. |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | o. | If I provide negative criticism to someone, that person's attitude or morale might get worse. |

18 or fewer = superior; 19 -34 = there's a little room to grow; 35 -49 = needs improvement 50 or more = needs lots of work

Giving Effective Feedback: a 4-part Model



Positive Feedback

<p><i>Yesterday when Professor Smith stopped by your office ...</i></p>	<p><i>I saw you put down the budget you had been working to get done and go to our website to get some information. You then got up and walked her from your office towards the office that could help her.</i></p>	<p><i>She stopped by later to tell me how helpful you had been. Your flexibility and willingness to go out of your way to help really model our commitment to customer service!</i></p>	<p><i>I really appreciate that you'll continue to do this. It shows your commitment to customer service.</i></p>
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Corrective Feedback

<p><i>At our staff meeting yesterday ...</i></p>	<p><i>Every time that Susie spoke, you turned away and started talking with Bob, or you opened your laptop and checked your email.</i></p>	<p><i>I saw that Susie noticed this. After the 3rd or 4th time you did this, Susie stopped saying anything for the rest of the meeting. Susie knows a lot about our topic; I think we really missed out on her ideas.</i></p>	<p><i>From now on, during staff meetings please focus your full attention on each speaker so that everyone continues to participate and we work more effectively as a team.</i></p>
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Giving Feedback for a Recurring Problem

Step 1: Raise the Issue

- Identify the area of concern
- Example: "I need your help with ... " or "I am concerned about ..."

Step 2: Describe the Specifics

- Avoid accusations and defensiveness by using the 4-part model for effective feedback
- Encourage the other person to discuss how they feel by using open-ended questions
- Summarize the other person's remarks to confirm understanding/perception
- Example: "When this happens ... the result is ... and I feel" Or, "Why do you think that occurred?"

Step 3: Request a Change in Behavior

- Mutually discuss ways to eliminate the problem
- Seek the other person's suggestions, thoughts, and goals
- Make suggestions
- Example: "In the future how can we ... ?" Or, "Here's what I would suggest ..."

Step 4: Agree on an Action Plan

- Summarize what you discussed
- Provide an opportunity for the other person to make any final suggestions or comments
- Set a time and place for follow-up and evaluation of the changes
- Close the discussion on a positive, upbeat note

Step 5: Follow Up

- If the situation warrants it, keep a record
- Evaluate how you handled the discussion and what you could do differently in the future
- Set up a system for follow-through (e.g., set check-in dates on calendar)
- Continue to provide assistance to the other person as needed and appropriate
- Provide feedback

When to Put It in Writing

- When it's something you should remember (positive or negative)
- At the first sign of a problem
- To keep track of a recurring problem
- When you might take future action (positive or negative)
- So that you can share documentation with the employee to clarify expectations

Performance Reviews

Formal performance reviews are a crucial part of the ongoing dialogue between managers and their employees. The objectives of the review conversation are to make sure that the employee and manager share a clear definition of the job, an understanding of performance expectations for the position, and an assessment of the employee's performance.

BASELINE PRACTICES

- a. Manager and employee review job/position description, update as needed, discuss past year's performance
- b. Review is written; employee is informed that it will be part of his/her MIT personnel file; employee signs and receives a copy.

BEST PRACTICES (Baseline Practices plus ...)

- a. Manager encourages employee to share responsibility in a reciprocal process
- b. Process begins with written self-appraisal by employee
- c. Manager solicits feedback from colleagues, customers, and direct reports
- d. Every employee, including senior managers, receives a review
- e. Department provides training for employees about their roles and responsibilities in performance development
- f. Department management selects review forms that are meaningful and consistent within department

Multi-rater Reviews

Performance reviews that include feedback from an employee's customers and coworkers can be particularly helpful. While compiling the data from a multi-rater review requires some additional time from the manager, these reviews may identify excellent performance or areas for improvement not visible to the manager.

How to Conduct a Multi-rater Performance Review

1. Develop a set of three to four simple questions to be sent to the employee's customers, coworkers, and/or direct reports. OR, for a more collaborative process, ask the employee to suggest some possible review questions. See sample questions that can be used in a multi-rater review.
2. Identify specific individuals to be asked for feedback, and give the employee the opportunity to suggest names as well. Because some multi-raters may not be able to participate, feedback should be requested from 3 to 5 individuals in each category (e.g., customers, coworkers, direct reports). This ensures that there will be ample

- feedback and that comments can be consolidated for reporting without attribution.
3. Send requests for feedback no later than three weeks before the review conversation with a request for completion within two weeks. This gives the manager one week to prepare for the performance review conversation.
 4. Have all feedback sent directly to the manager so that the comments can be compiled without attribution. To encourage candor, remind raters that their feedback will be presented to the employee without attribution.

Sample Timeline

Start by working backward from the proposed conversation date. For example, if the review conversation is scheduled for Sept. 2, the timeline should be as follows.

Aug. 1

- Manager and employee determine who will be asked for feedback.
- Manager and employee discuss what topics the questions should address.

Aug. 5

- Manager emails individuals and requests feedback by Aug. 19.

Aug. 19–26

- Manager compiles feedback received from multi-raters and identifies highlights (trends, examples of outstanding performance or examples of areas for improvement).
- Manager prepares for review conversation.

Aug. 26

- Performance review conversation takes place. Development plan is created for employee.

Sept. 2

- Employee and manager complete any summary documents and development plans.
- Employee receives a copy of materials; manager keeps a copy in department files.

Note: This annual performance review process does not fall within the standard timeline for the annual salary review process.

Sample Questions for Multi-Rater Reviews

For Coworkers

- What would you say are (person's name) areas of expertise?
- What skills/attributes does (person's name) bring to the team/area? Are there things you wish he/she would do less of or do differently?
- How would you comment on (person's name) professional development over the past year?
- If you were creating a development plan for (person's name) what would you include?

For Customers

- What are the two or three most helpful things (person's name) has done in his/her work with your area/group?
- What do you wish he/she had done/would do more of?
- What do you wish he/she had done/would do less of, or do differently?
- If you were doing this person's review, what might you recommend for his/her professional development?

For Direct Reports

- What are the two or three most helpful things (person's name) has done to contribute to your successful work?
- What do you wish he/she had done/would do more of?
- What do you wish he/she had done/would do less of, or do differently?

Goal Setting/Development Planning

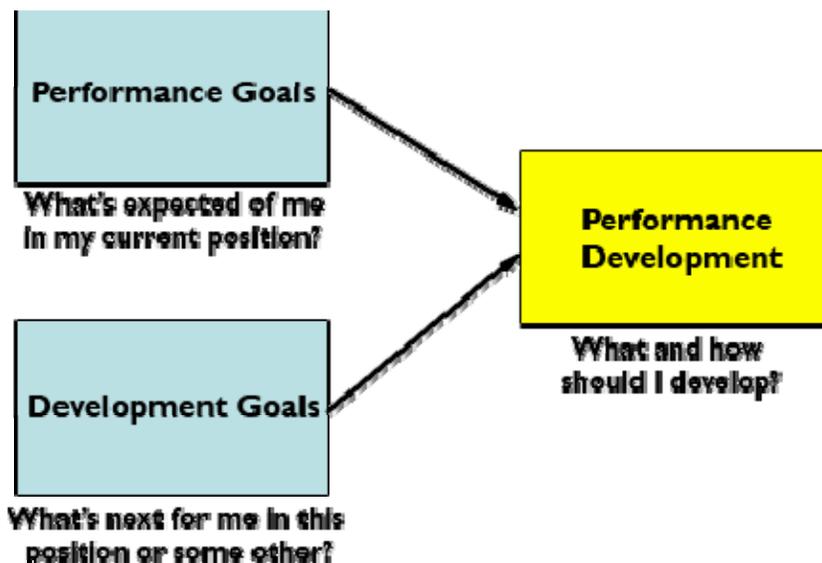
BASELINE PRACTICES

- a. An employee's performance goals and development plans are:
 - o created by the manager and employee
 - o written and, where possible, measurable
- b. Performance goals answer the question "What is expected of the employee in his/her job/position?"
- c. Development goals answer the question "In what areas and ways should the employee develop for the future?"

BEST PRACTICES (Baseline Practices plus ...)

- d. Performance goals are aligned with both job/position description and department goals
- e. Development plans include more than training (e.g., special projects, committee assignments, mentoring relationships)
- f. Achievement of performance goals is used to drive next assignments
- g. Employee and manager consider current performance, individual desires, and department needs in development plans
- h. Where applicable, department goals are communicated to the department as a whole in a timely fashion

Integrating Performance and Development Goals



Accountability

Accountability by both individual managers and departmental leadership is a key factor in implementing robust performance development practices. In a strong performance development environment, **managers have two types of accountability:**

- Showing a committed, ongoing involvement in the performance development process—especially by helping employees reach their goals and holding them accountable for doing so.
- Using the annual salary review allocation to accurately reflect an employee's performance and progress toward goals.

Managers and departmental leaders should place as much importance on performance development (managing and developing people) as they do managing budgets, space, and projects. If your manager doesn't ask you about your performance development activities, you can bring it up by saying something like, "I consider this one of my key responsibilities. I'd like to keep you informed about performance development."

Employees share the responsibility by:

- Doing their best work
- Striving to meet or exceed expectations
- Informing their managers of roadblocks or the need for assistance

BASELINE PRACTICES

- a. Managers are held accountable by their managers for providing up-to-date job/position descriptions and annual written reviews for each of their direct reports
- b. Accountability for performance development is reinforced by senior management during the manager's own annual performance review
- c. Annual salary review increases are supported by the annual written review

BEST PRACTICES (Baseline Practices plus ...)

- d. Senior managers hold all department managers accountable for providing ongoing feedback and development plans
- e. Department tracks completion rates for performance development process
- f. Department differentiates between individual annual merit increases based on performance
- g. Department communicates criteria for increases to each employee
- h. Department provides managers with appropriate training in performance development

Employee Recognition

Recognition is essentially positive feedback that lets employees know they are valued and appreciated by their coworkers and the organization. To have the greatest impact in the workplace, recognition activities should also reinforce and encourage work that advances employee, departmental, and/or institutional goals and values.

BASELINE PRACTICES

- a. Department has well-defined and promoted recognition program that is visibly supported by management
- b. Both individual and team performance are recognized
- c. Managers use appropriate recognition to reinforce good performance

BEST PRACTICES (Baseline Practices plus ...)

- d. Managers use recognition to reinforce department and/or employee goals
- e. Department provides a continuum of recognition activities from informal day-to-day to formal award events
- f. Department awards criteria are aligned with department goals and values
- g. Group social events and awards are used to enhance/deliver explicit recognition message

Employee Recognition Is Everyone's Responsibility

While the Institute as a whole and individual departments are responsible for providing resources and programs for recognition activities, employee recognition is fundamentally about relationships. Employees want their contributions and efforts to be acknowledged by those they work with on a day-to-day basis, including managers and peers.

In fact, employees are most satisfied when recognition comes from a blend of sources.



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Employees also report that they want to be recognized by one of these sources in some way **once every seven days!**

Fortunately, recognition can take many forms:

- Thanks
- Praise
- Respect
- Job or development opportunity
- Being included in decision making
- Training
- Safe work environment
- The right tools to do the job
- Pride in working for an organization with a meaningful mission
- Awards

For help with employee recognition, see MIT's Rewards & Recognition program for best practices (<http://hrweb.mit.edu/rewards>).