

HOW ABOUT ...

Wowing Workers at factories to get the measurable results
By Paul Lange, Director WOW Enterprise Performance Solutions



Paul has over 17 years of experience in designing and implementing Incentive, recognition and communication programmes. In 2007 he co-founded WOW which currently rewards 1,000s of participants across numerous channel programmes customised for top South African companies.

The key to a successful behaviour change programme is to find the balance between recognising and then meeting the emotional and psychological needs of workers, while at the same time securing changes that meet the specific requirements of management to achieve optimum performance results.

The WOW system is used by factories both large and small across South Africa to engage with their workers. In some factories the focus is on improving safety, in others it is production efficiency and always the absenteeism bugbear is addressed. These programmes are designed to effect direct, measurable changes in behaviour as well as supporting the softer value propositions such as care, attentiveness, professionalism, diligence and commitment that companies are seeking to inculcate in their workforces. A rigorous process is followed whereby a sample of the workforce is engaged in the programme design together with management and supervisory staff. The programme is launched and re-communicated monthly using low-cost technology such as SMS messages and digitally printed low-run posters on noticeboards, banners, flags, public ceremonies, public address announcements and did-you-know cards. In the South African environment it is necessary to include an element of a practical 'what's in it for me' (WIFM) i.e. low value symbolic prizes deliberately designed to engage and reinforce the core messages of the programme. A variety of reward mechanisms are used: WOW Anything-Goes vouchers (retail voucher of choice), WOW Reward MasterCards and WOW Scratchcards (airtime, shopping and entertainment basic prizes) are prevalent.

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The WOW worker recognition programme at a clothing factory in Cape Town is now entering its 4th year.

Here 1500 workers are recognised and rewarded with increasingly better results (continued improvement of production efficiencies across the 74 "lines" that make up the factory), allowing the company to perform in a particularly tough competition arena that includes the world's foremost clothing manufacturer nation, China.

Recognition and Rewards in this large clothing factory take the form of team awards for both monthly improvements and top performers in production efficiency.

For achieving these measurable results all members of the winning teams receive scratchcard prizes and teams fly WOW flags as public affirmation of their recent successes.

Quarterly Targets:

In addition, there are awards for reaching quarterly targets in respect of both production and quality (factory-wide), whereby all staff members are rewarded with a shopping voucher when specific short term targets are achieved.

Using store vouchers (with choice for the worker) ensures that there is a link between the behaviour and the reward. Simply adding the amount to wage slips proved counterproductive in the past.

Peer Nominations:

There is continuing messaging and communication to secure the behaviour changes. The programme also includes peer nominations, with certificates of recognition for all nominees and small symbolic branded prizes.

Because the programme focuses on positive successes of individuals and teams it has the ability to secure impact from its communications.

This communication channel is then used creatively to highlight a variety of management initiatives that are in effect "employee benefits". Normally these initiatives would not be positively heralded on the shop floor, as is the case now.

At a construction company in KwaZulu-Natal 1020 workers participate in a WOW recognition programme with the primary focus on improving safety and reducing absenteeism.



Workers earn points for safety suggestions, for assisting in improving safety standards by reporting near-miss incidents to prevent further occurrences, for outstanding safety in a department and for perfect attendance records.

Points are redeemed for store vouchers of their choice. The results have been emphatic. Key to the success is that the build-up of points throughout the year allows for anticipation and excitement to be leveraged in the communications.

Personalised messaging drives participants to internalise key behaviours to improve the safety of the total working environment.

At a metal industry company in Cape Town, the WOW programme for 300 workers is designed to improve performance across teams, improve production quality and reduce absenteeism. A combination of team awards with scratchcard prizes, individual awards for exceptional performance in the form of mega scratchcard prizes and peer nominations with lucky draw prizes is used. The WOW absenteeism model has also been included on this site. Early reports show strong take-up and immediate positives. The upcoming second quarter review will lock down the value of the changes in behaviour and allow a simple ROI to be calculated.

Overall, this site's programme has resulted in a more motivated staff body and a revitalised atmosphere of celebration and fun in the workplace.

Conclusion:

- WOW utilises proven modules to which workers can relate directly.
- WOW programmes are imaginatively named and communicated.
- These are fixed term promotions to limit any development of entitlement. WOW programmes are voluntary for the workers.
- All WOW factory programmes exist successfully in heavily unionised environments.

For more information visit: www.wow4results.co.za