



## CASE STUDY: THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA

# Engaging employees through multidirectional recognition

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The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is Canada's only bank devoted exclusively to entrepreneurs. With a best in class client experience and a promise to create better business journeys for their 50,000+ clients across Canada, BDC wanted to ensure that their 2,300 employees' experience was just as enriching and engaging. They had already celebrated their 12th consecutive year as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers but wanted to do more. That's when they decided to take their recognition program to the next level.

"One of BDC's goals is to be a great place to work, which means we want our programs and practices to foster high employee engagement," says Karine Clément-Debrosse, Senior Advisor, Employee Experience at BDC. "Our recognition program, exclamation, is one of the initiatives we've implemented to continuously promote a culture of appreciation and stimulate timely, specific, and multidirectional recognition."

### THE CHALLENGE

BDC already had programs and practices in place to foster high employee engagement, including a program for monetary rewards and a more exclusive President's Award. But with a new and fresh brand makeover in 2016, BDC wanted to take recognition to the next level and launch a program that would allow every employee to give recognition to any colleague to better reflect their new brand.

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**"Traditionally, recognition was handed out in a top down way at BDC. We wanted to emphasize more peer-to-peer recognition," says Clément-Debrosse.**

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In a time where great organizations are looking for ways to leverage every competitive advantage they have, BDC wanted to improve their recognition culture overall. That's when they teamed up with O.C. Tanner. The two worked together to design a new online, multidirectional recognition solution that would enable every employee to appreciate their peers and celebrate career milestones.

### THE SOLUTION

With a presence across Canada, BDC needed an online recognition platform in both French and English that reflected the organization's culture, no matter where an employee was located.

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**"It's difficult to go by someone's office to say thank you when I'm based in Ontario and they're based in Vancouver.**

**This technology allows us to do that electronically,” says François Lecavalier, Senior Vice President of Corporate Development. “It’s one of the elements that makes us a great place to work.”**

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BDC found that having a recognition platform that celebrates great work, great results and important milestones fit perfectly with their existing culture.

“Appreciating and recognizing employees throughout the year is becoming just as important as having an annual review,” says Leanne Duzsik, Senior Client Relationship Officer. “It also builds momentum in getting results and working hard to achieve those results.”

By partnering with O.C. Tanner and assembling a team of cross-functional experts, BDC was able to successfully launch their recognition strategy that included the new online platform, exclamation and a custom Yearbook<sup>MC</sup> that allows leaders and peers to add comments to an employee’s personalized booklet on specific employment anniversaries.

“BDC’s recognition program is simple, fair and easy to use. Most importantly, it’s accessible to all employees,” says Mary-Ann Wenzler-Wiebe, Vice President, Southwestern Ontario. “The tool is great and ultimately helps drive the culture, which is what makes it really effective.”

### **The Results**

Since launching their online recognition program in 2016, BDC has seen a number of positive results. This includes engaging and retaining strong talent whose objectives align with the organization’s.

“People come to work for us because there’s no ambiguity around our mission and vision. Employees realize they can be entrepreneurial in order to deliver results,” says Wenzler-Wiebe. “Having a recognition program, a tool in place, helps everyone stay accountable as we recognize great work and great results.”

BDC is eager to onboard employees in a way that connects them with the organization’s culture, mission and purpose.

“Not only is it a good retention strategy, but it’s something we show when we bring people onboard. They’re constantly astounded at the efforts we put in to make people feel welcome and valued, and to help them be the best they can be,” says Wenzler-Wiebe.

This rich experience can be seen in how BDC celebrates all first-year employees by celebrating them in their headquarters, in Montreal, Canada. This gives new employees face-to-face time with leaders, a chance to connect with their peers across the country, and it’s when employees receive their first

Yearbook<sup>MC</sup>, which highlights BDC’s mission and personalized messages from their colleagues.

“I think the one-year Yearbook<sup>MC</sup> goes beyond the booklet, especially nowadays,” says Lecavalier. “If you look at statistics, people tend to work for an employer for shorter periods of time, especially millennials. If you wait to celebrate their hard work, they may have already left, and you missed out on cementing that relationship. It sends a strong message that this organization cares about their employees and helps them feel like they belong at BDC.”

Overall, BDC found success with their online recognition platform because it helped them reinforce the strong culture they already had in place. It was a tool that gave them an easy, smooth, and digital way of keeping their organization employee-focused.

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**“Appreciating our peers is increasingly embedded in the way we do things. It is becoming common practice,” says Clément-Debrosse.**

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“At the individual level, showing gratitude to someone is a way to make people feel appreciated, unique and valued. At the organizational level, peer-to-peer recognition helps maintain an energized environment, allows for more connection between people and makes the employee experience meaningful.”

### **Outcomes are everything**

We’d love to share what we’ve helped BDC and thousands of our other clients achieve.

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