

FRICTION

SYSTEMIC

Recognition as a System,
Not a Personality Trait

The Experiment: The Recognition Redesign

Duration: Two weeks

Time required: 45 minutes upfront, 5 minutes per week during the experiment, 15 minutes to evaluate at the end

Goal: Identify where recognition is missing or inconsistent on your team and install one simple system that makes appreciation predictable rather than personality-dependent.

Step One: Audit Your Current Recognition Culture (30 Minutes to Start)

Write honest answers to these questions:

- In the last two weeks, how many times did you specifically recognize someone on your team for something they did well? Who did you recognize, and who did you not?

- When recognition does happen on your team, what tends to trigger it? A big win? A crisis averted? Or does it happen regularly regardless of scale?

- Who on your team gets recognized most often? Who gets recognized least? Is there a pattern?

- If someone on your team were asked “does your manager notice when you do good work,” what do you think they would say?

You are looking for gaps, inconsistencies, and places where recognition is being left to chance or mood.

Step Two: Design One Simple Recognition Practice to Try (15 Minutes)

Choose one small structural change you can make in the next two weeks. It should be specific, repeatable, and independent of how you happen to be feeling on a given day.

Examples:

- Open every weekly team meeting with one specific acknowledgment of something a team member did well that week. Written down in advance, not improvised.
- Add a standing “wins” thread or channel where anyone on the team can recognize anyone else, with a norm that the manager seeds it weekly.
- End every one-on-one with one specific observation about something the person is doing well, tied to a behavior you observed.
- Send one written recognition message per week to someone who does not typically get public acknowledgment for their work.

Write down exactly what you will do, when you will do it, and what would prevent you from doing it.

Step Three: Run it for Two Weeks

Do the thing, consistently, regardless of whether the week feels like a “recognition kind of week.” At the end of each week, note:

- Did I do it?
- How did people respond?
- Who did I recognize, and who did I miss again?

Step Four: Evaluate (15 Minutes at End of Week Two)

Look back at your notes and ask:

- Did the practice feel forced, or did it start to feel natural?
- Did you notice any change in energy, engagement, or reciprocity on the team?
- Who is still not getting recognized consistently, and what would it take to change that?

Decide whether to keep the practice, adjust it, or replace it with something that fits your team's rhythm better.

Reflection prompt:

Think about the last time someone recognized your work in a way that genuinely landed. What made it land? Was it the words, the timing, the specificity, or the fact that they noticed at all? Now ask: are you giving your team that experience, or are you leaving it to chance?