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Shay Hughes is president and COO of Hughes Marino, a nationally recognized commercial real estate firm committed to only representing tenants in their lease and purchase transactions. Hughes manages the end-to-end operations of the firm and plays a key role in all aspects of business strategy, human resources, marketing, and client relations. She has been instrumental in shaping Hughes Marino's culture, spearheading the development of the company's ten core values, and investing great time and energy into building a world-class team of professionals who are not only at the top of their game in business, but also treat one another like family.

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RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION

Two suggestions to 'WOW' your team members

In today's business climate, the competition for top talent is extremely high. While companies are constantly looking for ways to improve their strategy to attract the cream of the crop, the art of retention and happiness of those employees can often be overlooked. This is a giant missed opportunity in the business world, especially when practices to improve employee satisfaction can be easily implemented. According to a Gallup poll, the results were unanimous: employees recognized for a job well done were more productive and much happier in the workplace. At Hughes Marino, we are proud to say that we practice recognition and appreciation on a daily basis.

The practices of appreciation and recognition are innate, easy to achieve, and have the potential to dramatically affect the outcome of success for any business leader, as well as team member, in a company. As President and COO of Hughes Marino, I have had the pleasure to watch each and every one of our team members thrive, and almost every moment of growth was nurtured and encouraged by appreciation and recognition.

We based our company on the principle that our people are our most important asset. With that mindset, we made our team's happiness and success one of our top priori-

QUOTE:

ANOTHER WAY WE HAVE TAKEN CHARGE TO ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF APPRECIATION? WE ENSURE OUR TEAM MEMBERS ARE TAKEN CARE OF LIKE FAMILY. WE PROVIDE WEEKLY GROCERIES, A TEAM GYM FOR WORKOUTS, FUN ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE WEEK, AND EXTRA TIME OFF AROUND THE HOLIDAYS.

ties, beginning with each team member's first day at our company, where we have received tremendous amounts of positive feedback. On their first day, our goal is to have our new team members feel appreciated in every way possible, and also to experience the gratitude we feel as we welcome them into our family. They are greeted with a full-blown welcome, beginning with a bagel party meet-and-greet in the morning, an extensive orientation with our talent engagement team, and a fun goody bag packed with Hughes Marino gear (for themselves and significant others), books by Hughes Marino business coach Mike Robbins, notebooks, and inspirational quote cards. Last but not least, team members are gifted with WOW cards—five beautifully designed cards wrapped neatly with a bow.

While Jason (Chairman & CEO) and I always make a point to recognize a team member whenever possible, we made a conscious decision to take the concept one step further. We aimed to empower each team member with the ability to honor their peers for going above and beyond—with no rules or restrictions. We came up with an idea that has taken on a life of its own in our WOW cards, acting as the perfect tool to encourage an abundance of recognition and appreciation at our company.

Each worth \$50, everyone is given five WOW cards a year to recognize one another for selfless acts during our team meetings. A team member could be recognized for taking charge during a challenging project, organizing a fun event, or even for a random act of kindness displayed outside of our company—the possibilities are endless for the amount of wow-worthy moments that touch the hearts of our teammates.

The distribution of these cards has grown to become one of our favorite elements of every team meeting, and is the perfect opportunity to express gratitude and appreciation toward each other in front of peers. Throughout the years, WOW cards have been presented for helping strangers on the street in a time of need, for taking on projects or tasks and producing incredible results, and for amazing collaboration—the list goes on and on. We have witnessed many happy tears in the uplifting process, and the outpouring of gratitude and positivity inspires each and every one of us.

Jason and I, along with our team, have personally observed the effects of public rec-

ognition for each other. Many times, it isn't about the monetary reward (although that is nice, too!). It has more to do with the verbal reinforcement of appreciation and gratitude we show toward one another, which has a contagious effect to inspire more moments and opportunities to go above and beyond. It has done wonders to help shape our culture into the loving and supportive atmosphere that it is today.

Another way we have taken charge to encourage a culture of appreciation? We ensure our team members are taken care of like family. We provide weekly groceries, a team gym for workouts, fun activities throughout the week, and extra time off around the holidays. We appreciate our team, and by taking care of them, we have found that they take care of us right back.

Where are the opportunities for appreciation and recognition in your company? Maybe a special lunch with your team members that went above and beyond? Or maybe it's a group email congratulating a team member on a job well done. Find your WOW, and practice it on a regular basis. The more your company practices recognition and appreciation for employees, the more success you will see knocking on your door. **END**