



'WOW Moments' Helps TD Canada Trust Nurture Employee Engagement, Growth

By William Keenan Jr.

One sure way to build engagement is to involve employees in your recognition program, giving them the opportunity to praise, congratulate and support their peers for a job well done. That's what TD Canada Trust was thinking when it implemented an internal social networking program it calls "WOW Moments." This un-moderated online program gives employees the opportunity to post stories about things they've done, or that they have observed others doing, to build and support a positive customer experience.

Using a web-based social networking platform provided by Toronto-based TemboSocial, a provider of interactive engagement and community building solutions, TD Canada Trust has created a program that allows any employee to post a story related to the customer experience—and allows other employees, managers and even top executives

to comment on that story. The stories are archived and searchable by employees and managers, providing a unique resource, not only for informal recognition, but for talent spotting and creating a unique customer-oriented business culture.

For Karey Stanley, who holds the unique title of Senior Manager, Employee Spirit and Recognition at TD Bank Financial Group, WOW Moments has made her job easier by creating a repository of stories that can be used to support company-wide efforts to improve the customer experience—particularly important for a program that involves 35,000 employees in some 1,100 branches and support offices across Canada.

It seems to be working. This year alone, 65% of employees covered by the program have contributed stories. And Stanley says sharing stories with each other helps make that large and diverse community seem much smaller. "Our employees are finding that things are not so very different in various corners of the country," she notes. "We have the same challenges and the same opportunities."

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– Karey Stanley

Moments of Truth

Stanley explains that the company had a storytelling-based reward and recognition program in place for several years prior to the implementation of WOW Moments. “We called it ‘Moments of Truth.’ It was an effort to increase our customer experience results, which we measure by a customer engagement index and by awards such as JD Power,” she says. “We encouraged employees to submit their stories into a database, and from those we chose the best, most heroic stories.”

At the time, however, less than 10 of those stories were actually published. The rest stayed mostly hidden from view—at least from rank-and-file employees. But Stanley remembers that the winners of that program got huge awards. “In the first year they went to Hollywood, where we filmed a commercial on how great our customer experience was,” she says.

After a couple of years, Stanley was asked to review and revise the Moments of Truth program so it would involve and engage more people. She was a natural choice. Stanley has been with TD Canada Trust for nearly 32 years, starting on the front lines and then moving into various sales and service support roles at the regional level. Over the last 10 years she has worked in reward and recognition roles for the company—she’s also a long-time member of Recognition Professionals International, earning her Certified Recognition Professional designation along the way—and in the past year her role has evolved into her present position as Senior Manager, Employee Spirit and Recognition.

“We expanded the reward and recognition component of Moments of Truth so that we recognized 850 people out of 18,000 employees who were covered by the program,” explains Stanley, “and we made it year-long rather than a short-term program. We reduced the dollar value of the awards and added quarterly and monthly awards, so awards were much more attainable by everyone. And engagement went up because people were much more likely to win awards.”

But again, only the heroic stories were being shared. “And our President and CEO Tim Hockey was concerned that, while the heroic stories were important, what’s really important to us is the little things that people do every day that enable them to connect emotionally with customers—and those are the things we wanted to share with each other,” says Stanley.

That’s where social networking entered the picture. The company already had a page on its “intranet” site where employees could read and post responses to news and messages from company leadership, and a lot of these postings involved personal stories that often led to very visible and transparent discussions between TD Canada Trust leadership and front line employees. “Our President wanted to take it to the next level,” recalls Stanley, “so he said, ‘It doesn’t all have to be top down. Let’s let our people post their stories right to these sites and create dialogues based on these individual stories.’” That’s when the TemboSocial platform came along, and that’s how WOW Moments came into being. We launched the program on December 11, 2008, and I think we’re currently at 67,000 stories posted. It’s been a huge hit.”

Creating A Buzz

There are banners throughout the TD Canada Trust intranet site linking to the WOW Moments homepage. Once there, employees can read some of the latest stories submitted, search the archives for stories of interest to them, or submit a story of their own—about themselves or about others in the organization. Employees can also choose from a number of decorative images to support and illustrate their story.

The TemboSocial program—which it markets under the name “The Hive”—is fully integrated with the company’s HR database, so that basic details about the individuals being recognized are automatically incorporated, and so that stories can be linked to employees’ personnel files.

It also provides some very powerful metrics so, among other things, management can see how many employees are posting stories, how many have stories posted about them and how many are just reading the stories.

“And one of the great things about the stories that we’ve seen thus far is that very often they’re not just by one person about one other person, they’re about two or three other people,” Stanley says. “For every WOW Moment created in the system, there are 1.4 recipients. So it really touches many people within the organization.”

In addition to its role as a recognition tool, the program asks employees to submit their stories under one of eight key strategies related to the customer experience, so that other employees can search stories to help them understand what a particular strategy is all about, as well as to give them some ideas and examples of how to implement it.

The company also provides for all of its “people managers”—branch managers, district vice presidents, etc.—a daily digest of WOW Moments that have been posted about their employees. “We’re also providing tips and tactics to these managers on how to use WOW Moments as a coaching tool, not only by recognizing the employee personally, but by talking about how the story reflects the company’s leadership principles or key strategies,” Stanley says. “Managers can also use the stories in their morning daily huddle to say, ‘Hey, look at all these great stories about how we’re connecting with customers. Let’s think about other things we can do to connect.’”

There was some concern at first that an un-moderated social media forum like this might lead to inappropriate comments, violations of privacy and “general chaos,” but Stanley says they realized very quickly that these people are in front of customers every day, “where we trust them to do the right thing. And there are certain commitments that employees make as part of our employment standards, so there’s really very little risk to having un-moderated conversations.”

She also notes that someone scans the stories, mostly for privacy issues like sharing an account number or using a customer’s name, and there have been a few—very few—inappropriate stories. “... maybe five or ten out of the 67,000 stories posted,” Stanley says.

A Culture of Recognition

One of the goals of the WOW Moments program is to create a culture of recognition, and Stanley notes that it also aligns nicely with TD Canada Trust’s other reward and recognition efforts. “The WOW Moment program is specific to our customer experience initiative,” she says. “We have other initiatives like product campaigns that are more driven by sales metrics.”

For instance, the company has a points-for-merchandise program based on product campaigns, and it has six such campaigns annually. “In every product campaign we have about 25 employees that earn end-of-campaign awards based on their sales and service contributions,” Stanley says.

At the highest level, the company has a two-tiered reward and recognition program it calls the “Champions Club.” In the top tier, top-quartile district Vice Presidents and Branch Managers qualify for Champions Club membership for one year based on specific sales and service metrics. Part of that membership involves a three-night event at a resort property attended by all of the company’s Senior Vice Presidents and other key execs where top performing managers are recognized and rewarded.

The second tier of the Champions Club offers similar rewards and recognition for rank-and-file employees who meet top-performer standards. "This is for below-the-branch management level to the very front line, and across the country we recognize more than 1,500 people at eight similar events at destinations across Canada," Stanley notes. "Overall, we recognize about 8% of our rank-and-file employees. So this is pretty huge, and it captures a lot of attention."

She adds that there are specific metrics for each position to qualify for Champions Club, "so a person who does well in terms of WOW Moments but isn't performing with a balanced approach in terms of sales and service will not necessarily be recognized through the Champions Club."

Managers and employees get a monthly report on where they rank versus their peers in the Champions Club metrics, "and we have a very disciplined process of monthly 'focused coaching' based on where you rank as part of this process," Stanley explains.

Another successful recognition tool that the company offers is eCards—by which any manager or employee can recognize, thank, or congratulate any other employee for any number or reasons. "We have a person who is constantly refreshing those cards on a regular basis, so they're always new and fun, and employees have leapt at that," Stanley says. "And while they're not archived for any reason, we do track the numbers. This year alone our employees have exchanged 140,000 eCards."

Getting to 'WOW'

While all of these programs are important and valuable, the employee engagement levels achieved by the WOW Moments program are special. "This program is about making that emotional connection with customers, how you made a difference with that customer, and walking through that process," Stanley says. "But what makes it really powerful is the connection with our business leaders—having leaders read these stories, comment on them and maybe pull one out to use as an article on our company homepage to highlight a front line person. The fact that the company President might go in and post a comment on a front line person's story—that really takes it to a level that we never anticipated."

Key Benefits of Peer Recognition Via Social Networking

An internal social networking platform like TemboSocial's 'The Hive'—which TD Canada Trust has implemented under the title of WOW Moments—offers a number of benefits besides the chief one of building employee engagement, says Steven Green, President of TemboSocial. They include:

- Increasing retention and discretionary effort**
 Public validation by your peers makes you feel valued. If you believe that your efforts matter, then you'll be less likely to leave and more likely to make greater contributions.
- Reinforcing corporate culture and building institutional memory**
 The program serves as a repository of stories that would otherwise go untold. The act of publically celebrating these stories helps to shape the culture of the company.
- Fostering collaboration**
 Searching and browsing the stories in the program is easy and interesting. It's easier to connect with distant colleagues after you've read a compelling story about them.
- Improving talent spotting**
 When your peers recognize your contributions, they're publicly validating your skills. Since the program is searchable, your successes are seen by the entire company. The sender also benefits by visibly demonstrating managerial skills.

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