

It's Your Yale

“Around every corner” webinar transcript

March 24, 2026

Ashley Blackwell:

Hello and welcome. My name is Ashley Blackwell, and I work as a recognition and engagement manager for the Office of Public Affairs and Communications. I want to first start out by thanking everybody for joining today for our final session in our *Celebrating moments that matter* series, “Around every corner.”

Over the past few sessions, we've explored ways recognition and celebration can strengthen connection and engagement across our teams. We know that employees who feel recognized are more engaged and more connected, but most managers don't really struggle with wanting to recognize their team. It's really about finding the time and not really knowing where to start. So, today's session is designed to be a practical guide for busy managers to create a recognition approach for their team.

We'll walk through three simple tools managers can use to create meaningful moments throughout the year. So, these include the Celebration Calendar, the Team Experience Builder, and also the Resource Hub, which lives on the Team Experience Builder webpage, and it's full of plug and play materials. Before we dive in, I want to show you one of the easiest ways that you can bring recognition to our existing meetings with no extra planning required. So, these are recognition slide templates. And they're actually from the Resource Hub and can be downloaded and customized with your team's birthdays and service anniversaries.

For example, you could just in your next team meeting with just two minutes, you can create a recognition moment. You pull up this slide, you fill in the information and you celebrate together. There's also another template that you could tap into. You can use this in your team meetings to spotlight a colleague or yourself. You can recognize a contribution. And this just helps to build stronger connections across the team. So, just to show you how simple this can be, I've added just a few celebrities' names in this happy birthday slide. And if you get the tie in, Elton John's birthday's tomorrow, so that's why we kicked off today's meeting with a little Don't Go Breaking My Heart song.

But before we move forward, I do want to ask, if anybody feels comfortable, to raise your hand using the Zoom feature to just take a moment to celebrate your birthday if it's happening in March or April. So, if you feel comfortable, please raise your hand, come off mute, tell us how you plan to celebrate. Pop it in the chat if that's better for you. Any March or April birthdays? Happy birthday, all.

We're going to move forward into our next piece, which is actually another easy way to bring the energy up in your meetings. It's actually to start off with some kind of trivia challenge or an icebreaker activity. We're going to actually play a quick example together of a trivia challenge. And this is just a three-question trivia that's inspired by what you'll find in the resource hub. You can answer directly in the chat with either A, B or C. And then if you get it right, you can use the confetti emoji to let everybody know. Bragging rights are still a thing in my book. So, what percentage of employees say recognition motivates them to do better?

It's Your Yale

Your best guess in the chat. Let's see. Awesome. Thank you all for participating. I'm going to give everyone another minute just to get your answers in. All right. I'm going to give three, two, one. The answer is 91%. So, everybody who hit C, please put some confetti up and get some bragging rights. According to a recent industry survey, 91% of employees actually say they're more likely to put in extra effort when their work gets noticed. So, good job. Our next question, true or false. Recognition is most effective when it happens months after the accomplishment. Is it A, true or B, false? I see some good answers in the chat. Everybody better be giving a confetti emoji for this one. It is false. And so, if you joined our first session, which was lead with recognition, we actually covered the five pillars of effective recognition, and the first one is timely.

We want to make sure that it is as close to the accomplishment as possible. So, pop your confetti up if you've got it right. Everyone seems to have in the chat. And I appreciate you guys paying attention and listening. That's great. Just as a reference point, we have on the resource hub for managers, which Emily will drop a link in the chat. You can come back to this graphic just as a reminder from here and there. Last question. Which of these is an example of an everyday recognition moment? Celebrating a project milestone, marking a work anniversary are both A and B.

Awesome. Awesome. I see some really great answers. And the correct one is both A and B. So, everybody who got that right, shoot up that confetti. That's awesome. And actually, to do this, to celebrate a project milestone or to mark a work anniversary, you can tap into the recognition slide templates that we actually shared earlier in today's meeting. So, hopefully, what you took from this trivia challenge is that recognition really doesn't have to be complicated or time-consuming. This is something that could run under five to seven minutes within one of your own meetings. Currently, we actually have a summer state of mind trivia. I don't know about you guys, but winter has been absolutely brutal. The sun is shining today, so I'm happy. But that summer state of mind trivia actually can be downloaded today, and you could start using it in your next team meeting. Emily dropped that link in the chat for you to download and we'll send some follow-up links also.

So, as we dive into other resources to tap into, you just saw an example of how you can create connections in just a few minutes at the start of a virtual meeting or even in person. But what's something else that you can do to just start sparking creativity? Well, that's where you can actually tap into the Celebration Calendar. It really helps to take the guesswork out of just taking an everyday moment and it gives you some built-in moments to celebrate throughout the year. Some of you might remember from our January session, "Lead with recognition," that the Celebration Calendar is a tool designed to inspire us to celebrate the small everyday moments with intention and joy. That might look like recognizing a team milestone or hosting a quick coffee chat on National Coffee Day or simply taking a moment to acknowledge an important observance.

But at its core, the Celebration Calendar is just a simple, powerful planning tool that helps build connection through creativity. It's meant to be flexible, and you can use it however works for you. So, that could be week to week, month to month or even quarterly. It's a guide to help you thoughtfully incorporate moments like appreciation days, wellness and community events, and cultural heritage months. Ultimately, the goal is to make celebration feel as natural and integrated into the vibe of the workplace as possible. This tool isn't really about adding more to your plate. It's about noticing moments that already are there and just doing something small with them. So, for example, I don't want to test

It's Your Yale

anyone's eyesight, but if you look into the April section, I just want to call out for you to remember for later in today's session. For on April 19th, it's actually the start of volunteer week.

So, just hold that little nugget of information and we'll talk through how you might be able to use this Celebration Calendar to create opportunities for your team. So, the Celebration Calendar helps you notice those moments. But if you want to take it a step further by getting your staff out of their day-to-day routine, this is where you can tap into the Team Experience Builder. This tool is actually designed to avoid having to plan something from scratch because you have turnkey experiences that you can tap into. I'm going to show you a quick walkthrough of the Team Experience Builder so that you can see just how easy it is to navigate to the site and then find something for your team to do. So, on the It's Your Yale homepage, you're going to navigate up to the Working at Yale bucket.

And then from there, you're just going to go down to the Team Experience Builder tab and you're going to click it. And right there, you're on the landing page. It's really that easy. There are two main navigations within this page. There's the Book an experience, and then there's also the Resource Hub, which is what we've collected some items for today. And I'm going to pause this for one second. Sorry. I want to just call out that this blue band, we have two spotlights. So, we have an activity spotlight, which often we will have a tour venue that's new. If you have already been to this site, you will have seen the Peabody Museum Tour highlighted here at some point. And then we also offer the resource spotlight. For the activity spotlight for today, I just want to bring attention to it. You can turn commencement into a team building opportunity. Managers are invited to sign up with interested members of their team to volunteer together for the special day. And participating teams actually will be entered into a random prize drawing for a pizza party, so it's a really cool activity. Feel free to sign up if that sounds interesting to you.

As you continue through the webpage just scrolling down, you'll see the FAQs. You can expand all of these if you'd like. Just read through them, whatever feels convenient. You'll also see a testimonial of colleagues across campus who actually have used this to build moments with their team. You'll see some news articles, as well as a feedback and contact us survey.

From there, let's head into the book experience page and see what it offers. So, this booking page offers curated options that are already built out for you. We work with amazing partners across the university to bring these tours to life. And one of our newest tours is actually the Yale Peabody Discovery Tour, where for the first half hour, you get to meet with a scientist, and he gives you an overview of the Peabody. And then the second half is actually a scavenger hunt activity that you get to explore all three floors with your team and fill out that together. So, from there, it's really straightforward. You select a venue you'd like to explore with your team. It brings you to the Calendly signup. You can scroll through how to register, the overview, the capacity. And then you can select a date, as well as the time, and then you'll be prompted to fill out all of these prompts. You press schedule events once that's done. And then from there, you'll get an email from Calendly where that is one step that we can't do for you, but we have made it as easy as possible.

On the Resource Hub, we have a sample invite and some sample copy. So, what you can do with the Calendly booking page, you can customize this sample copy to send the Outlook invitation to your teammates. So, hopefully, this is as turnkey and easy as possible to use.

It's Your Yale

Speaking of the Resource Hub, I just want to go through a couple of the options here, so that when you are exploring, hopefully after today's session, you can find them easily. First, I want to call out the virtual activities. This is where you'll actually find the team trivia and other activities you can do within your team meetings. A lot of these work in the virtual settings, but you can certainly do them in person as well.

There's also the recognition bucket. This is where you'll find the Recognition Hub for managers, the preferences card, the recognition slide templates that we used earlier today, and the staff celebration calendar. Now, for those of you, I'm testing memory now, we talked about during the celebration calendar slide, we talked about that April 19th, the start of volunteer week. How you can utilize these resources together is you look at a date on the calendar. You identified that you want to do something for volunteer week. You head over to the Resource Hub, and you look into the volunteer bucket. And these are all places that are within the New Haven community, where you can potentially plan a volunteer group activity with your team for the week of April 19th.

So, that's just how you can tap into these tools and use them together in tandem. For Local Eats, we have recommendations of places across the New Haven area from coffee shops, but also some international cuisine places that we think are just amazing. We update this every now and then quarterly to every six months. But hopefully, there's more than enough that can get you through for the time being. Just some other venues to explore. This section is pretty straightforward. These link out to the websites and how to contact or book a tour. What I love to call attention to is actually the Yale Outdoor Center. This is not in New Haven. It's in East Lyme, but it would be a wonderful place to have a retreat or a team meeting in those summer months, because they actually offer meeting spaces, different variety. So, if you're looking for meeting spaces though within the New Haven area or on campus, 25Live is a really great resource. And then you'll also find the sample invite there that we talked about earlier and also current meeting notes from the Managers Essentials series.

So, just to recap, if there is one thing that you can take away from today's session is that I hope that recognition doesn't have to be big to be meaningful. It just has to be intentional and consistent. So, for example, you can plan the moment with the Celebration Calendar. You can bring it to life by using something from the Resource Hub or you can plan a shared experience with the Team Experience Builder. Together, these resources really help make sure that meaningful moments are never far away; they're just around the corner.