A case study in best practice
employee recognition and rewards

THE ACHIEVE
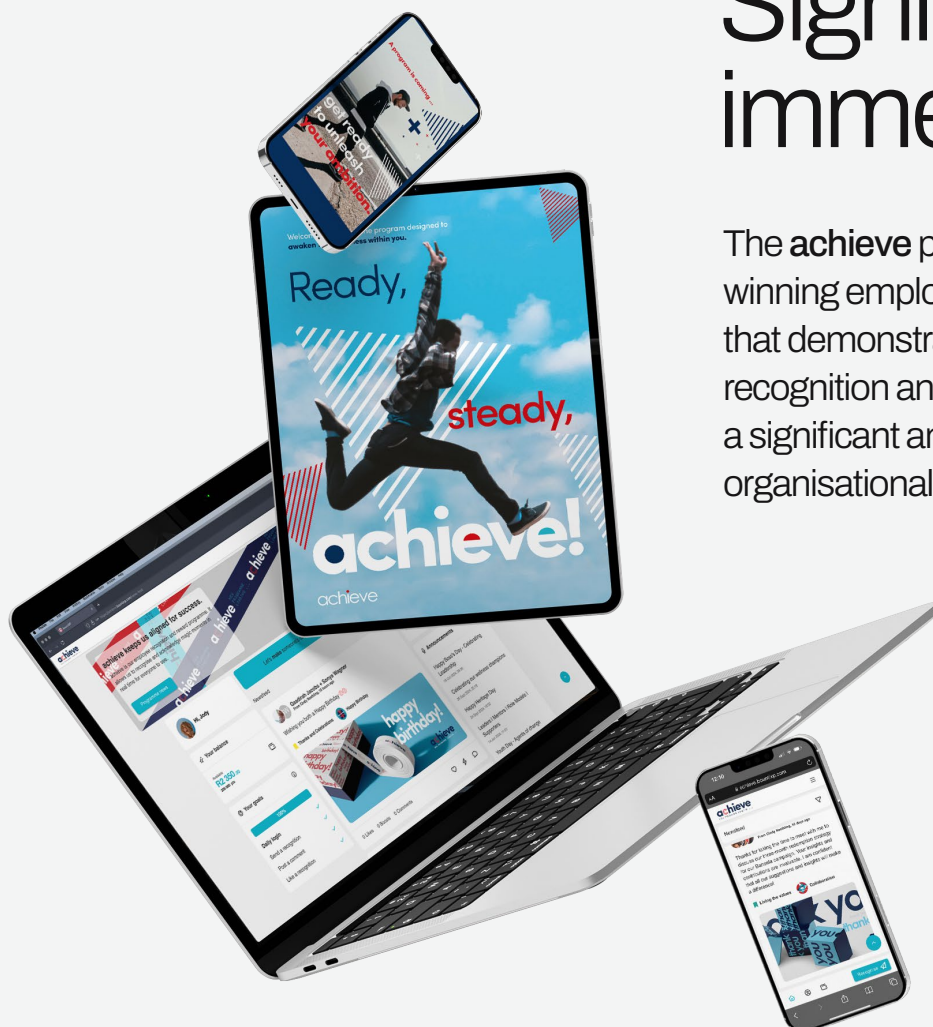# PROGRAM

Program Awards

PINNACLE
AWARD
2022 Best Practices®
Recognition Professionals
International

iA Incentive
Awards

SARA
SOUTH AFRICAN REWARD ASSOCIATION

CAPEBPO

Significant and immediate effect

The **achieve** program is an award-winning employee engagement program that demonstrates how a well-executed recognition and reward solution can have a significant and immediate impact on organisational performance.

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🇺🇸	PINNACLE AWARD **2022 Best Practices®** Recognition Professionals International	Pinnacle Award
🇬🇧	iA Incentive Awards	Best Recognition & Rewards Program – In House, 2022 winner
🇿🇦	SARA SOUTH AFRICAN REWARD ASSOCIATION	Best Reward Project of the year 2023 – podium place
🇿🇦	CAPEBPO	Top Technical Innovation Award – 2024 winner

The program earned international honours, winning the **Pinnacle Award** from **Recognition Professionals International** in the **USA** and the **Best In-house Employee Recognition and Reward Program** at the **UK's Incentive Awards** in 2023.

It also earned a podium place in the **South African Reward Association's Best Reward Program of the Year** category.

These accolades were an endorsement of the program's effectiveness and the company's commitment to best practices in employee recognition and incentives.

Re-energise, re-focus!
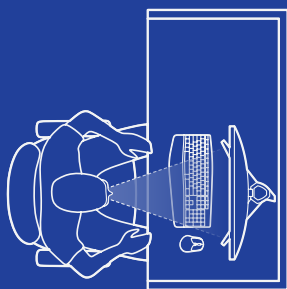
Achievement Awards Group faced a challenge following the COVID-19 pandemic. Morale was at a low ebb, employee engagement below par and business performance was being negatively affected.

On top of this, the Total Rewards Model highlighted a gap in the company's reward mix and the need for a more purposeful approach to employee recognition.

The company's Exco knew that a high impact intervention was needed to address the gap and re-energise the business.

The **'achieve'** program was conceived.

An investment, not an expense

From the outset, Achievement Awards Group fully embraced the challenge and committed itself to allocating the necessary resources, investing generously in rewards and rigorously applying best practices.

Crucially, the team adopted a "recognition investment' rather than "recognition cost" mindset.

achieve was rolled out with four clear goals:

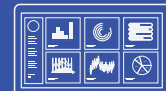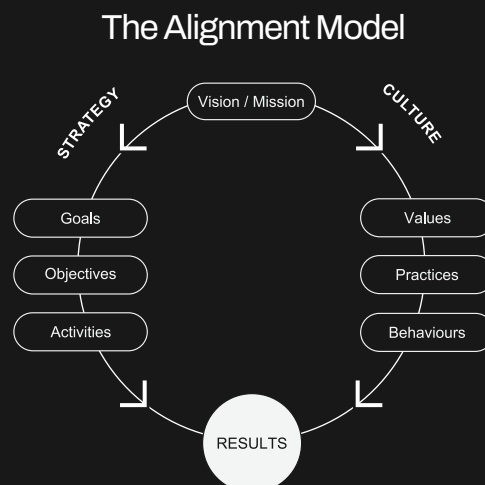| 01	02
Re-energise the business and improve morale.	Improve employee engagement.
03	04
Realign employees with the company's values and business priorities.	Improve operational performance metrics across the board.

The program was introduced to the organisation with a high-profile launch that comprised a mix of face-to-face and virtual activities.

Program design

The **achieve** program was built on the foundation of the 'Alignment Model'. This highlights the importance of focussing on both culture and strategy for optimised business results - the importance of aligning the people with the plan.

With this top of mind, the program was designed to bring employee recognition and rewards to bear on both sides of the model. That is, recognition for both living company values and achieving specific goals.

The Alignment Model

STRATEGY

CULTURE

Vision / Mission

Goals

Values

Objectives

Practices

Activities

Behaviours

RESULTS

Acknowledgement: Aligning the Human Performance System
D. Tosti & J. Amarant hpt Handbook

Program framework

The company adopted a four-tiered recognition framework:

Tier 4: Pinnacle recognition
A high prestige, formal event to recognise top performers.
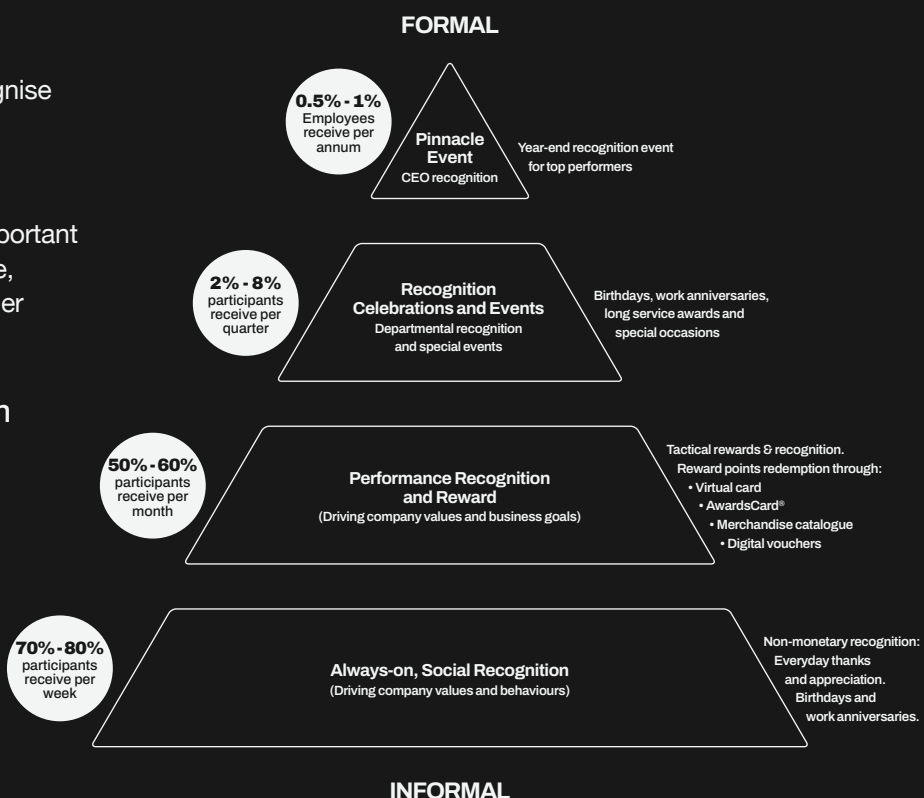
Tier 3: Celebrations
Both formal and informal, to mark important milestones. For example, long service, work anniversaries, birthdays and other special occasions.

Tier 2: Performance recognition and reward
Tangible, immediate rewards for achieving performance goals or exemplifying company values.

Tier 1: Social recognition
Non-monetary, everyday appreciation aimed at improving connections between employees and fostering a culture of gratitude.

FORMAL

0.5% - 1% Employees receive per annum

Pinnacle Event
CEO recognition

Year-end recognition event for top performers

2% - 8% participants receive per quarter

Recognition Celebrations and Events
Departmental recognition and special events

Birthdays, work anniversaries, long service awards and special occasions

50% - 60% participants receive per month

Performance Recognition and Reward
(Driving company values and business goals)

Tactical rewards & recognition. Reward points redemption through:
• Virtual card
• AwardsCard®
• Merchandise catalogue
• Digital vouchers

70% - 80% participants receive per week

Always-on, Social Recognition
(Driving company values and behaviours)

Non-monetary recognition: Everyday thanks and appreciation. Birthdays and work anniversaries.

INFORMAL

Program execution

Critical to the success of the program was application of Achievement Awards Group's **'Nine-Box Implementation System'**. This provided a structured, best practice framework for execution and ensured a rigorous and disciplined focus on each component essential for program optimisation.

Nine-Box Implementation System
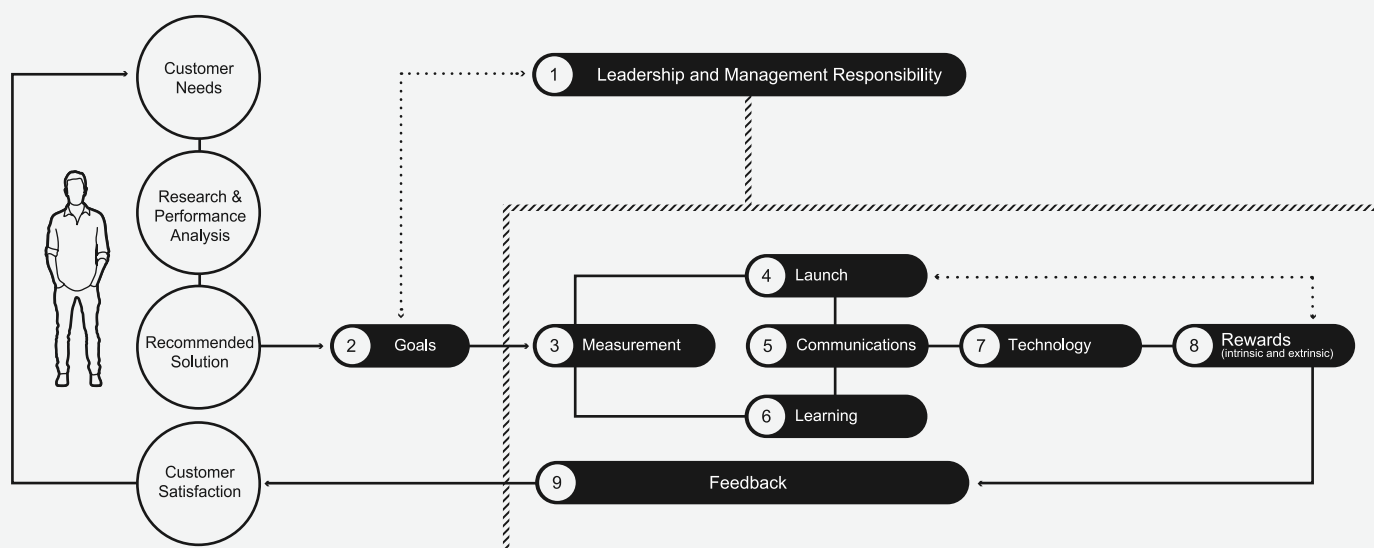
Program goals were clearly defined, and ongoing success was sustained by a supporting communication strategy. Motivational posts, regular emails, e-newsletters, competitions and desk drops kept engagement levels high and the program top of mind.

At launch, a blended training approach ensured that all stakeholder groups understood the program's purpose and were equipped to play their full part. Critically, line managers received specific training around recognition best practice and how to maximise the program's impact within their teams.

The company invested 4% of total salary costs into the employee rewards budget. This generous allocation, when compared to industry norms of between 1% and 3%, was an important contributor to the success of the program.

bounti XP

Program technology

Achievement Awards Group deployed **bountiXP**, their all-in-one, cloud-based engagement platform to enable the recognition and reward process. **bountiXP** provided employees with a seamless, consumer-grade engagement experience. Accessible via desktop and mobile, the system allowed recognition and rewards to flow freely - upwards, downwards and laterally - through the business.

The platform's sophisticated points system enabled budget-holding managers to issue on-the-spot rewards. Employees were able to redeem their points immediately via five different channels:

- Virtual card for online shopping and digital wallets
- Physical card for in-store shopping
- The XP Store – an extensive in-platform merchandise catalogue
- A digital voucher mall with 50 voucher partners
- Travel and experience rewards

Built-in platform dashboards and reports provided 24/7 data for program management and an intuitive, back-end administration console enabled high levels of program flexibility and agility.

bountiXP's functionality ensured that the program was able to deliver on all six recognition and reward best practice principles:
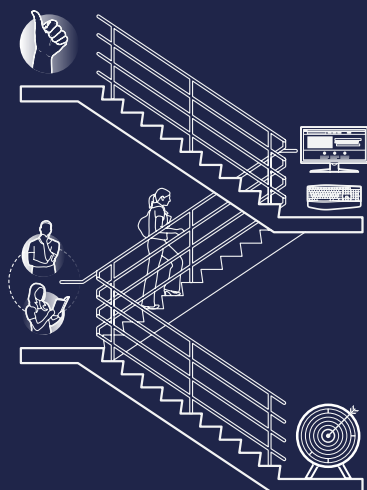
01	02	03
Inclusivity	**Visibility**	**Immediacy**
04	05	06
Frequency	**Autonomy (of rewards choice)**	**Agility**

Measuring impact

Exco wanted to know if the program was making a sustained difference, so impact was monitored using a four-level, hierarchical framework.

Level 1	Participant satisfaction
Level 2	Program engagement
Level 3	Employee engagement
Level 4	Business impact

A rigorous governance structure was put in place with scheduled meetings and regular feedback from stakeholders. This feedback and monitoring process informed necessary adjustments, ensuring the program's ongoing relevance and success.

Results

The **achieve** program had an immediate and sustained effect on the business, both qualitatively and quantitively.

Recognition and rewards were placed front and centre of the employee engagement strategy, improving connections between colleagues, teams and managers, and providing a real-time showcase for positive feedback.

This made Achievement Awards Group a happier, healthier place to work, and it reinforced values-based behaviours that improved overall performance.

By linking recognition and rewards to specific KPIs, for both individuals and teams, the company gained fast traction on key operational indicators. Quality and customer satisfaction metrics improved immediately and tracked consistently above industry benchmarks.

Significantly, 'better than benchmark' performance was also achieved in the Contact Centre operations in terms of staff retention and attendance.

Program outcomes

Participant satisfaction

What do staff say about the program?

54%	38%	92%
awesome	excellent	approval rating

Program engagement

To what extent have employees engaged in the program?

The percentage of employees sending recognitions every month doubled from **34%** ▸ **69%**

On average, **93%** of staff received recognition every month.

Employee engagement

Is there a measurable shift in employee engagement and satisfaction scores?

The percentage of staff saying "**My contribution is appreciated in this organisation**" increased from **64.4%** ▸ **73.9%**

The percentage of staff saying "**People in this organisation encourage each other**" increased from **61.8%** ▸ **74.0%**

The percentage of staff saying "**I feel valued in this organisation**" increased from **62.9%** ▸ **73.2%**

The overall employee engagement index improved from **71%** ▸ **80%**

Business impact

Has the program affected business indicators?

In terms of business results, we saw operational goals being achieved and reward payments made as a consequence, as well as measurable improvements in the Call Centre in terms of attendance, call quality and 'Overall Work Performance' which improved from **3.14** ▸ **4.03**

out of 5.00. An increase of 28%.

> *"I was very demotivated and felt that I made no real contribution. Since my Team Leader started appreciating me, the little things on the platform, such as compliments from the customer or even when I get 100% for my QA assessments for the week, I have been consistently achieving better overall performance scores and QA results. My overall performance score went from 2.5 out of 5.0 before recognition started to 4.2 out of 5.0 after I was recognised."*
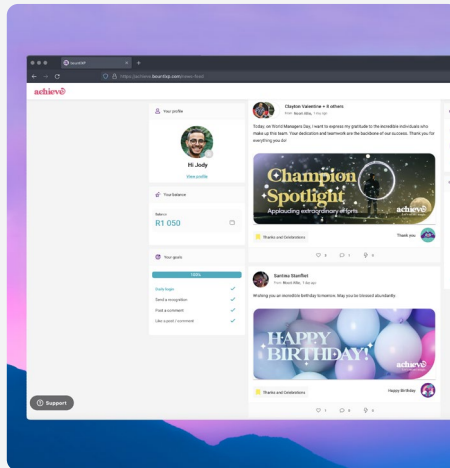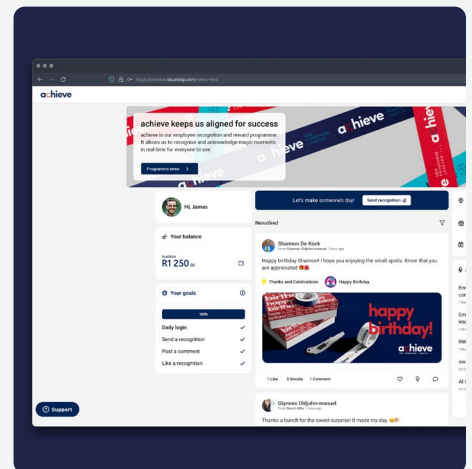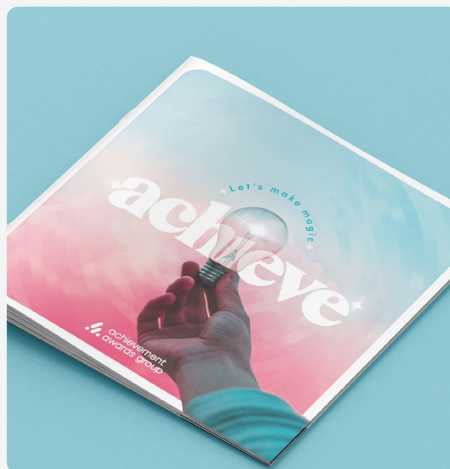
Mark
Call Centre Agent
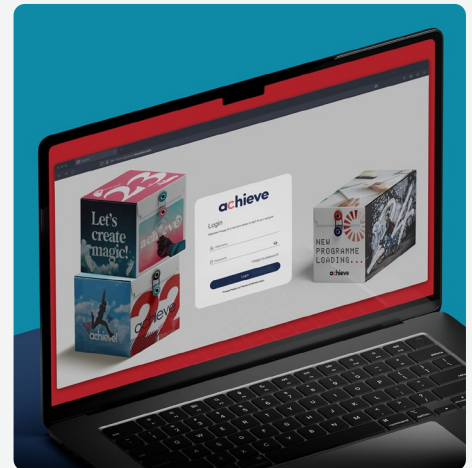
Program collateral

2022

2023

2024

Setting a new benchmark

Achievement Awards Group's **achieve** program stands out as a model for employee recognition best practice. By aligning recognition with behaviours and business goals, fostering a culture of appreciation, and by maintaining a rigorous measurement system, the company not only revitalised its workforce and set a new benchmark for employee engagement practices but made tangible impact on operational KPIs as well.

The **achieve** program proved that when employees feel heard and seen, they are more engaged, more productive, provide better customer service, and are more aligned with the company's mission and vision.

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