Developing a Chapter Awards Program

Toolkit

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atd CHAPTERS
Association for
Talent Development

Developing a Chapter Awards Program Toolkit

This guide has been prepared to assist chapters in the development and implementation of an awards and recognition program. Included are:

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Two basic needs of most people are recognition for their professional accomplishments and for their contributions to the organizations to which they belong. An awards program can effectively fulfill these needs for many ATD members.

In most companies, talent development leadership is provided by dedicated professionals, often with little publicity or recognition for their exceptional work. ATD can greatly enhance its visibility in communities, and contribute to the field of talent development in a broad sense, by implementing an awards program designed to honor individuals and organizations for their effective training, development, and learning practices.

A chapter awards program should be consistent with the philosophy and purposes of ATD and do not need to be limited to ATD members. Specific purposes are to recognize and honor:

- ✓ significant contributions to talent development by community individuals, groups, or organizations

- ✓ effective and innovative talent development programs and projects

- ✓ significant contributions to the effectiveness/goals of the chapter

- ✓ ATD members

- ✓ outstanding undergraduate and graduate students

Each of the objectives below has merit on its own. Together they provide multiple benefits to the chapter, to individual ATD members, and to the community served.

Individual motivation

Recognition is a powerful motivator. Tangible and emblematic validation is a great way to let your talent development practitioners or chapter volunteers know their hard work is admired and appreciated by their peers. Recognizing and supporting their efforts in public will motivate them to continue in their desire to excel.

Chapter visibility

Many companies have unique talent development practices that get results and contribute to organizational goals. Recognizing the elements that contribute to these results is a means by which the chapter can identify itself with excellence in talent development and to showcase local best practices.

Member participation

Use of a committee structure to plan and carry out the various aspects of an awards program allows for maximum participation and encourages involvement in chapter activities. It gives chapters a means by which it can involve members who are not officers in the operation of chapter business.

Program attendance

Increased member participation also encourages attendance. By spreading responsibilities among more members, a chapter provides opportunities for more people to become involved and receive recognition for their contributions. Spreading the awards throughout the year further promotes attendance at events by giving all segments of the membership reason to attend and to invite non-members to join chapter activities.

Promotion of talent development

A comprehensive awards program, properly publicized and implemented, provides visibility for the value of workplace learning to organizations. It is an excellent opportunity for the chapter to point out the significant results that talent development programs can deliver and to appropriately recognize those responsible.

ORGANIZING AWARDS PROGRAMS

The development of a credible and robust program of awards and recognition requires thoughtful, long-range planning. Chapters can begin on a modest scale and gradually expand their awards program into a more comprehensive one. In addition to recognizing deserving persons for their contributions to the chapter, the community, and for best practices in talent development, the program should be designed to bring ATD and your chapter public visibility and recognition. A poorly designed or implemented program will reflect poorly on the chapter and compromise the integrity of the entire project. Several suggestions that may be of value in initiating a chapter awards program are noted here.

1. The first step in developing a program is to appoint a chapter awards and recognition committee. This committee determines the types of recognition that are needed and develops a plan for implementation. Where an awards program already exists, the committee proposes changes or additions. Once a program is adopted by the chapter, subcommittees can be used to administer each part of the program. This places a reasonable workload on volunteers and spreads the responsibility among members.

2. One of the most critical tasks is the development of a time schedule that provides for appropriate input for nominees, adequate time for selection of award winners, proper publicity, preparation of award items, planning the awards event, and coordinating all aspects of the awards program. To establish target dates, it may help to work backwards on the calendar, step by step, marking task deadlines.

3. After all time factors have received consideration, establish an awards timetable and make it available to all chapter members. In the case of certain types of awards, such as scholarships, be sure to establish both announcement and response deadlines. After a period of trial and adjustment, there is value in maintaining a consistent pattern of dates and award presentations from year to year.

4. The awards committee should be large enough to work in subcommittees on the various awards projects: announcement, selection, publicity, protocol, procurement of appropriate awards, etc. The committee chairperson should involve chapter colleagues as needed and keep the committee informed through regular committee reports and communication.

5. Recognize the value of directly involving area community leaders and organizations in the process of selecting nominees for awards. Not only will this increase the credibility of the awards program, it will also add recognition and visibility for ATD and your chapter.

6. Although it is more time consuming to include awards for service and success outside of the chapter, external awards often bring the greatest visibility, publicity, and sense of accomplishment the chapter.

7. Whenever an organization decides to recognize excellence through scholarships, awards, and public acclaim, precision and thoroughness are important. Carefully develop policies and procedures to help guard against errors, oversights, or omissions. Be open and fair to ensure a credible selection process. The awards committee should have procedures in place for announcing dates, distributing criteria, nomination processes, and making final judgments. Procedures should include a statement that the award committee members are not eligible to receive awards that they judge. (However, if a President's Award is decided by the President, and not the committee, then a committee member could receive this award.) Thoughtful development of guidelines and timetables, followed by precise and unhurried committee work will bring distinction to your awards program.

IDENTIFYING CHAPTER AWARDS

Awards to individual talent development practitioners

Various ATD chapters honor outstanding individual contributions to the talent development profession with these awards.

- Professional of the Year
- Distinguished Service
- Community Partnership
- President's Award
- Professional Awards

Group or organization awards

Chapters also may wish to consider special awards to local organizations, public or private groups, businesses, or corporations. Titles for such awards include:

- Champion Award
- Distinguished Achievement
- Guest Speaker Award

Chapter member awards

It is also appropriate for chapters to develop an awards program designed to recognize ATD members for their outstanding contributions to the chapter and local talent development community. This recognition helps to keep members involved in the chapter and helps with retention. Titles appropriate for such awards are:

- Annual _____ Chapter awards
- Member of the Year
- Past Presidents' Award
- ATD _____ Chapter Service Award
- Volunteer of the Year
- Chapter Hall of Fame
- 5, 10, 25, 50 Year Membership Recognition
- Founders' or Charter Members' Recognition

Chapters may also recognize groups of members during several chapter meetings spread throughout the year. Consider holding a meeting each year which includes one or more of the following:

- Charter Members' Night
- Emeritus Members' Night
- Past Presidents' Evening
- Decade, Quarter Century, or Half Century Clubs

Student awards

It is common for chapters to recognize outstanding graduate or undergraduate students. Typical titles include:

Outstanding Graduate Student

- Student of the Year
- _____ Scholarship

SELECTING AWARD RECIPIENTS

Criteria for selecting recipients of awards needs to be developed at the local level. Each community and each chapter is unique and should design its awards program and selection criteria to reflect community characteristics and to fulfill chapter goals and objectives.

There are, however, common elements that chapters may wish to consider in implementing an awards program.

- Recipients are judged in consideration of their contributions and accomplishments in talent development.
- Contributions are recognized in terms of ATD's ideals of talent development.
- Recipients are selected on the basis of long-term contributions and significant individual accomplishments.

Awards criteria

Specific criteria for selection of recipients should be defined for each award. A standard nomination form should be prepared that presents the criteria for selection, requests the required data for making the selection, establishes a time line, and identifies the selection committee.

PRESENTING AWARDS

Two important factors need to serve as the foundation for presenting the awards. First, make awards and recognition tangible. Second, spread the presentations throughout the year.

Making awards tangible

Chapter award honorees are generally provided with an appropriate symbol, suitably inscribed, of the award received. The following are typical items:

- Individual plaques
- Framed certificates of award, honor, or commendation
- Trophies
- Cash Awards
- Scholarships
- Chapter Service Pin
- Chapter Past President's Pin
- ATD publications, clothing, accessories, or logo items
- Other gifts and mementos (chapters sometimes create original awards or present practical gifts such as pens, desk sets, calendar books, etc.)

Recognition throughout the year

By presenting the awards at different occasions, chapters can increase member participation and chapter visibility. Suggestions for year-long recognition programs include:

- Annually hold a chapter "birthday" party in the month the chapter was chartered and recognize the chapter's charter members.
- Honor all past presidents at the installation of new officers.
- Present community and professional awards at an annual banquet.
- Recognize 5, 10, 25, and 50-year members at new member orientations.
- Hold one or more "special nights" to recognize community leaders, etc.

CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING A CHAPTER AWARDS PROGRAM

- ✓ Appoint an awards committee and appropriate subcommittees for awards program implementation
- ✓ *Recommend awards and recognition to be given
- ✓ *Establish criteria for eligibility and selection of recipients
- ✓ Establish timelines and set task deadlines
- ✓ Distribute criteria and solicit nominations on a standard form
- ✓ Review nominations against criteria and make selection(s)
- ✓ Prepare advance news release for publicity
- ✓ Select and prepare appropriate award items
- ✓ Make logistical arrangements for the formal presentation
- ✓ Present periodic progress reports to the chapter board
- ✓ Present an annual report on the awards program to the chapter board

*These items are necessary only when a new award is being initiated.