

Thriving Through Recognition: The Combined Impact of Leadership-Driven and Peer-to-Peer Recognition

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Introduction: Research in psychology shows that people perform optimally when they feel valued and appreciated. When employees thrive, they experience greater energy and engagement in their roles. The Nurse Thriving Conceptual Model identifies recognition as a key organizational strategy to ignite vitality and learning among the staff. This project explores the impact of integrating peer-to-peer with traditional leadership recognition to enhance staff thriving within the PACU.

Identification of the Problem: Peer-to-peer recognition is not an established or consistent practice among PACU staff.

QI Question/Purpose of the Study: To foster a culture of recognition that integrates leadership-driven and peer-to-peer approaches, promoting thriving among PACU nurses.

Methods:

- Educated leadership on effective recognition practices.
- Conducted staff in-service sessions emphasizing the importance of peer-to-peer recognition.
- Performed staff (N=21) interviews led by PACU leadership to assess perceptions of thriving at work.
- Implemented vitality-focused interventions, e.g., community outreach volunteering, institutional eCards through the institution's recognition platform, and private and public acknowledgment.
- Supported Learning-focused interventions, e.g., achievement celebrations

Outcomes/Results: Pre- (N=24) and post-intervention (N=35) surveys revealed a clear improvement in staff perceptions of recognition and thriving. Staff rated recognition as important or extremely important, increasing from 87% pre-intervention to 94% post-intervention. The agreement that recognition improves motivation, well-being, and engagement rose from 88% to 100%. Leadership recognition helps thriving: 92% vs. 94% of respondents rated it as important or extremely important. Peer-to-Peer Recognition helps thriving: 79% vs. 86% rated it important / extremely important. Staff interviews revealed that 38% identified peer-to-peer recognition as a key contributor to their sense of thriving at work.

Discussion: Findings demonstrate a positive correlation between recognition, motivation, engagement, sense of belonging, and well-being. This aligns with the Nurse Thriving Conceptual Model, reinforcing recognition as a key driver of vitality and professional learning in the workplace.

Conclusion: Recognition, whether from leaders or peers, plays a powerful role in fostering a culture of thriving among PACU staff. Staff expressed that thriving is best sustained when recognition is a shared responsibility between leadership and peers.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: Integrating peer-to-peer recognition with traditional leadership acknowledgement strengthens teamwork, engagement, and well-being in the PACU setting. Future research should explore sustainable recognition frameworks that promote thriving in other settings.