

For publication

**Project Title**

RWE npower – Applause /  
Pride – Recognition Scheme

**Category:**

Internal communications

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**Design Consultancy:**

WPA Pinfold

**Date:**

03.07.14

# Giving a round of Applause to recognise success



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**Executive summary**

**Perceptions of the energy industry and npower in particular are at an all time low, with intense scrutiny from government, regulators and the media. Set against this backdrop, npower has set out on a journey towards ‘getting it right for their customers’. Employee engagement and recognition is key to improving customer experience, resulting in Applause, the first company-wide recognition scheme.**

Such focussed negative attention creates a working environment where employees find it very difficult to feel a sense of pride in working for npower.

npower is putting customers at the heart of everything it does and is currently undergoing a massive customer transformation programme to achieve this.

Its 9,000 staff, in 45 UK locations, have a vital part to play in realising this transformation, to achieve improved customer satisfaction by understanding the contribution their disparate roles have in delivering the current strategy.

The Applause Recognition and Reward Scheme brought together the most effective elements of the existing, fragmented schemes and external best practice, creating a single identity on an engaging platform for employees to recognise and celebrate the achievements and efforts of their colleagues.

The diverse nature of the employee demographic meant that the identity needed to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, creating a sense of shared ownership of the scheme and recognition as a whole, reflecting the employee ability to give recognition outside of their immediate sphere of influence.

Employees have embraced the scheme and the use of Applause has had the desired effect of increasing the visibility of the positive examples of employee behaviour.



**2013 target**  
25% of employees  
to receive Applause  
during year one



**2013 result**  
67% of employees  
have received Applause



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**Outline of Project Brief**

As part of the transformation programme to support the intention of being one of the top rated suppliers, it was identified that there was a need to help drive the change through improved employee engagement and recognition.

Historically, there was a fragmented approach towards recognition; some areas of the business had no recognition in place, whilst others ran their own local schemes, which were inconsistent in purpose and reward with no measure of effectiveness, no alignment to the overarching goal or oversight of cost and expenditure.

Applause was developed as a company-wide recognition scheme incorporating the best elements of the local schemes and external best practice, whilst giving increased visibility of employee achievements, culminating in the Pride awards ceremony.

The scheme design needed to define a common identity, through an accessible and inclusive brand and engaging look and feel. A strong theme was required to provide cohesion through launch materials, internal communications campaigns and user interface. The design was key to encouraging and recognising the behaviours at the heart of the business, leading to an overall improvement in performance.

In addition, the launch of Applause was incorporated into a new online employee portal (Your Hub) – marking a new, simplified, inclusive reward and recognition offering.

The main objectives following launch were:

- 1) to see 25% of employees receive Applause during the scheme's first year
- 2) for the business areas with existing established schemes to voluntarily adopt Applause as their chosen vehicle for recognition



**Primary objective**

To see 25% of employees receive Applause during the scheme's first year



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**Description**

npower has huge diversity in roles, from office-based call centre operators to van-based meter readers coupled with clear cultural differences.

Launched on 28th January 2013, ‘Applause’ allows every employee to recognise each other and demonstrate how they value and respect each other’s contributions.

The foundation of Applause is peer-to-peer recognition; accessible through any device, employees give instant recognition to any colleague based on 5 recognition categories:

1. Putting the customer first
2. Improving cost or quality
3. Teamwork
4. Innovate to create value
5. Creating a better or safer environment

The company’s 7 Critical Behaviours are integrated into the Applause process, through the branding and design concepts. Recognition is linked to behaviours through highlighting which of the Critical Behaviours (up to 3) were demonstrated.

The system enables wider visibility of achievements, both to other employees and to line management, enabling additional recognition, including financial awards (up to £100), and personal commendation letters from the Business Unit Director.

The best performers flow through to the annual Pride event, short listed to win one of 7 awards, with one of the winners selected to receive the overall “Pride of npower” award.

Below  
npower’s 7 Critical Behaviours



ACCOUNTABILITY



FOCUS



DRIVING  
PERFORMANCE



CUSTOMER  
FIRST



CHALLENGE



COLLABORATION



RESPECT



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**Description cont.**

Various communication channels were used as part of an ongoing campaign, utilising the engaging and identifiable branding in the scheme collateral, including:

- Interactive PDFs
  - Employee
  - Manager
- Email and Intranet banners
- E-cards
- Certificates
- Pride event
  - Pre-event collateral – nominees board
  - Event collateral – pull up banners, award design
  - Post-event collateral – winners board
- Celebration of examples in intranet news items, incorporating the Applause and Pride branding.



Above  
WPA Pinfold designed  
the online interface for  
the Applause scheme.



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**Key challenges**

Audience diversity meant that the communications media and content had to be adapted to the relevant audience at each stage of the communications plan.

Audience challenges included:

1. Field-based (metering) employees: rely on handheld PDAs, making it very difficult to engage with them through standard online and offline methods.
2. Customer contact employees: constantly on the phone, targeted on call times. Their only opportunity to take in communications and engage with the scheme is at personal break-times.

**Project launch date**

28 January 2013, with ongoing campaigns to raise awareness and maintain use of the scheme on a monthly and quarterly basis.

**Size of design budget**

Design concepts  
£10,950

System design and build  
£11,450

Total  
£22,400

**Overview of market**

Perceptions of the energy industry and npower in particular are at an all time low, with intense scrutiny from government, regulators and the media. Set against this backdrop, npower has set out on a journey towards 'getting it right for their customers'.

Such focussed negative attention creates a working environment where employees find it very difficult to feel a sense of pride in working for npower.



**Above**

An example of negative publicity in the popular press



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**Outline of design solution**

npower set out to provide an engaging recognition platform to employees that was user friendly and accessible from various locations, not just in the office environment, and one that integrated the “what” of the recognition categories with the “how” of the Critical Behaviours.

It was key that the scheme identity conveyed a sense of celebration and recognition and the concept of sharing good news across the company. It helped employees put faces on co-workers in other business units or locations, building the sense of being part of something larger than just their specific work groups.

The concept was delivered through the people that make the business what it is. When staff are featured in internal communications they feel ownership, inclusion and derive a sense of pride.

Applause has helped to make heroes of npower employees, giving real-life examples of applying their values and behaviours, and shared some best practices in tackling common issues in the energy business. The scheme has enabled employees to see how their individual roles contribute to the improvement of the business.

Through the design of personalised e-cards and acknowledgement certificates, it has also made recognition more visible within the company.

The design solution involved:

- name generation
- the development of a user friendly online interface
- the creation of personalised e-cards and certificates
- the design and deployment of an explanatory interactive PDF
- Providing a simple step-by-step guide on how to give applause.

Below  
Personalised e-cards and  
certificates to acknowledge  
Applause given



Right  
Internal comms campaign



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**Summary of results**

**Applause**

We designed the Applause communications to be very intuitive, evidenced by the fact that there was no requirement for in-depth training. The fact that employees were able to use the system with ease, with the aid of some supporting documentation (e.g. interactive PDF) supports the effectiveness of the design.

Since launch:

- 24,500 Applauses were given, with 4,049 financial awards made
- to date in 2014, 81% of employees have received recognition through Applause, with 67% having received Applause in 2013, smashing the 2013 target of 25%
- 40% of employees have given Applause to others.

67% of employees recently agreed with the statement ‘I receive recognition for a job well done from my colleagues’.

The post launch announcement on the company intranet received 7,185 page hits, with anecdotal employee feedback about the scheme through the comments on intranet news stories, some of which are captured on page 13.



81% of employees  
have received Applause  
to date



40% of employees  
have given Applause  
to others



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**Summary of results cont.**

The scheme has helped employees put faces on co-workers in other business areas and locations, building the sense of being part of something larger than just their specific work groups.

The replacement of local fragmented schemes with one common framework has contributed to organisational efficiency, removing duplication of activities to develop, promote and administer multiple schemes. Rather than cash rewards, employees are given vouchers that are redeemed online. These are now procured on more favourable terms due to the volume of the transactions controlled centrally.

Line manager / Senior manager feedback has also been positive:

“Applause has proved to be a powerful way of giving recognition; employees really like receiving an Applause and it has definitely helped morale and motivation.”  
Dawn Smitten, Development Manager (Change Optimisation),  
Business & Social Housing



“Applause provides a mechanism with which we can recognise everyone. The accessibility of Applause means it is available to all, ensuring those employees who are ‘off line,’ such as our Field Operatives, aren’t excluded.”

“...it’s a fabulous way to hear first hand the good news stories that are happening every day within our area.”



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**Summary of results cont.**

**Pride Awards**

The culmination of the Applause Recognition Scheme is the Pride Awards. 150 employees were invited to attend the Pride Event, either as shortlisted award nominees or as guests in the audience.



**Below right**  
One of the award winners

**Below**  
The Pride award



**Top**  
The Main stage –  
Graphic identity appears  
on a series of 16x9 plasma  
screens. Trophies and  
plinths complete the  
backdrop.

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**Summary of results cont.**

80% of respondents to a feedback survey held after the event stated that they felt more engaged with the company as a result of attending, with anecdotal employee feedback about the scheme through the survey as follows:



80% of respondents stated that they felt more engaged with the company.

**+200%**

'Extra' employee benefits scheme and Total Reward Statements, doubled from 500/month to 1,000/month.

"I felt that by being invited I was truly being rewarded and that the celebration of good work can only incentivise people to continue to contribute 'above the call of duty' in the future."

"I really feel that the company is recognising and valuing the commitment of its employees through Applause and the Pride Awards."

"The event made me feel valued by the company and more engaged as an employee."

"The atmosphere was really engaging, it really felt like someone was investing in me to recognise achievements which really motivated me and I felt really proud!"

**Other**

The project to integrate recognition and other employee offerings via an online portal has also had a positive effect on the average number of views of the pre-existing 'Extra' employee benefits scheme and Total Reward Statements, doubled from 500/month to 1,000/month.



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**Other influencing factors**

npower had a defined communications plan, for the post initial-design phase. The targeting and sequencing of the messages was critical; balancing creativity with data to ensure each message was effective. Data relating to internet access and the type of role were all considered to devise a targeted and integrated solution.

Some of the communication media identified and utilised were:

- 45 minute briefing webinars for 600 managers on Applause, giving an overview of the principles and benefits of recognition, explaining how Applause supports the company goals and a brief system demo – the first time such a communication method had been used within the business
- team briefs / core briefs, for onward cascade to in team meetings, etc.
- interactive guide to explain the process for employees/line managers
- pre-launch teasers and post-launch reminders – including intranet banners, posters and bespoke emails
- letters to those employees who did not have access to the online launch messaging
- targeted management engagement
- intranet stories
- ongoing management information, on a quarterly basis
- video messaging from senior population
- video shorts from Pride Award nominees.



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“Nice to see that people are being recognised for hard work, it’s certainly a morale booster for people.”

“What a great way to really recognise our people who do things great for us and also linking both the ‘What’ and the ‘How’ we go about doing our business. I can really see this being key to how we recognise those who will play an important to getting us to the WOW factor for our customers.”

“I think that Applause is a great idea as it takes two seconds to tell someone or a team that you appreciate the work that they have done. Also it gives you a bit of a boost when people recognise the hard work that you have done.”



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**Declaration**

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