

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards 2013

# Simply Thank You



Category  
Internal communications

Client Company  
British Gas

Design Consultancy  
The Team

Current Date  
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Wallet card to encourage nominations from field workers

## Putting the simply back into Simply Thank You.

Thank you. It's powerful. A simple show of appreciation from a colleague or manager can make people feel great, increasing their workplace motivation, engagement levels – and ultimately increasing performance. And that's exactly what British Gas wanted to achieve through their employee recognition scheme. In such a competitive and challenging sector, making employees feel valued and recognising their contribution is more important than ever to ensure a competitive edge.

A recognition scheme, Simply Thank You, already existed. It worked by inviting employees to send examples of where colleagues had, through their behaviour or actions, embodied the key priorities of the organisation. The scheme rewarded winners on several levels from instant voucher hand-outs to monthly awards and ultimately, a quarterly and annual event for the most significant and sustained examples.

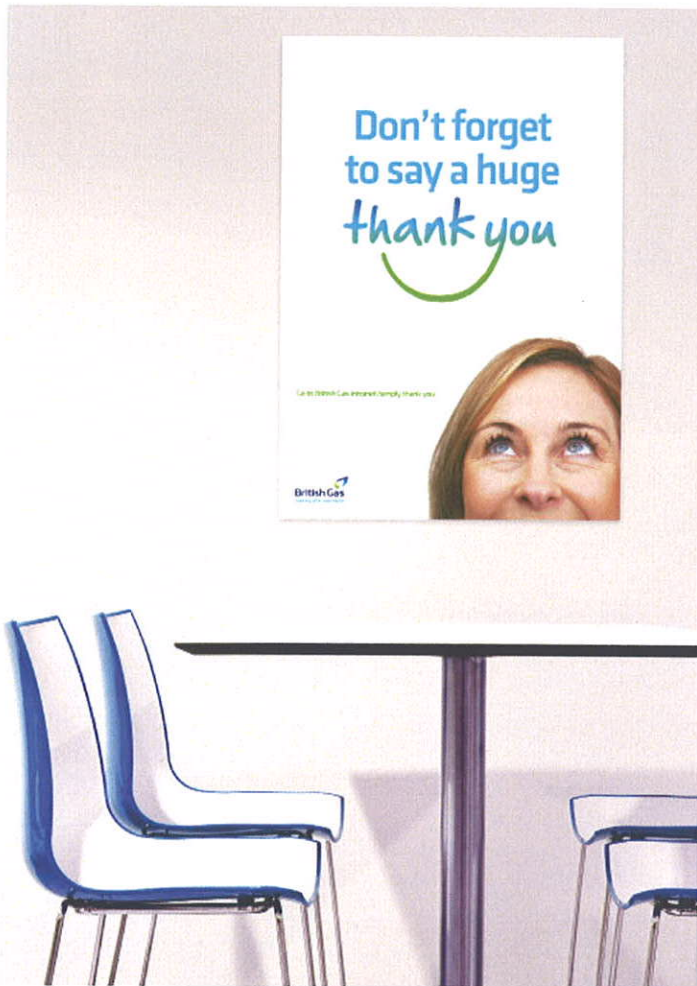
But the scheme lacked traction. Nominations often required prompting, participation was erratic and the cost of rewards, especially vouchers, was becoming prohibitive. Urgent action was required – and that's when we got involved.

We re-launched the new and improved scheme across a range of media with a new website at its heart, allowing employees to make much greater use of social media for peer-to-peer recommendations.

Since launch, the scheme has delivered a dramatic cost saving, whilst creating a platform that has transformed the culture of recognition. Compared to 2011, the average number of instant thank yous has increased by 749%. Monthly award nominations have increased by 170%.

And that's what the new Simply Thank You scheme is all about. It's a great example of the power of a simple, genuine and personal 'thank you' to colleagues for a job well done.





## Outline of brief

The key objective was simple:

Re-launch the Simply Thank You scheme to:

- reinvigorate interest
- increase engagement
- deliver cost savings

## Project launch date

- 25 June 2012

## Description

The benefit to organisations of having engaged employees is widely understood. According to a McKinsey study, employees registering high levels of engagement at work had on average a 10% higher rate of productivity than those who are unchallenged, unrecognised and disengaged. Compelling statistics, especially if you think about the potential impact on the bottom line. But what does it take to make an employee feel valued?

British Gas have been aiming to do just that through their Simply Thank You programme. It has been running for two years (since 2010) and is a HR-driven initiative focusing on building pride and celebrating British Gas people and their successes. Its aim is to support some of the company values of building trust and better together to create an overall more engaged and productive workforce. It is also a key deliverable in the British Gas People Plan to have great people delivering great performance.

However, there was pressure on the business to reduce the cost of the awards and at the same time, increase their effectiveness. Previously, recognition rewards ranged from instant thank yous in the form of a £5 voucher (love to shop), through to monthly awards chosen and presented by local employee panels, with the winners receiving a certificate and voucher pack. In addition, the best of the previous quarter's monthly awards were chosen as quarterly winners and invited to an annual award ceremony. Everyone was encouraged to nominate colleagues, via completing an intranet form where they feel that their contribution to the business should be recognised. But despite most employees being aware of the scheme, engagement was erratic from team to team.

Reminders appeared in various locations for office-based staff





Pop-up stands were used to support launch events and as an ongoing reminder

So to increase traction and effectiveness, the new look scheme introduced some fundamental changes – namely the simplicity, visibility, immediacy and variety of rewards. The instant voucher rewards were removed, immediately delivering a significant cost saving, and replaced with an e-mail thank you instead. And a ‘loyal service’ award was introduced too. The Loyal Service Award is recognition and celebration of key milestones in your employment, every five year milestone up to 50. This is especially relevant as many employees enjoy long careers with British Gas which is certainly something worth celebrating. Other re-launch changes to the scheme included increasing the amount of monthly awards and doubling the amount of quarterly awards. So although the immediate monetary value of the rewards was reduced, the accessibility and longer term value was increased with the emphasis firmly on simply saying ‘thank you’.

But the value of the scheme goes way beyond just a method for engaging and motivating employees – it’s also a brilliant tool for managers and leaders too. The new scheme structure provides managers and leaders with total transparency – who is being recognised for what, and at team or business area level, who you have recognised and what for – as well as who customers have commended or thanked. The new scheme is also more inclusive for field sales – often a division who, by their proximity, can feel excluded from the core organisation.

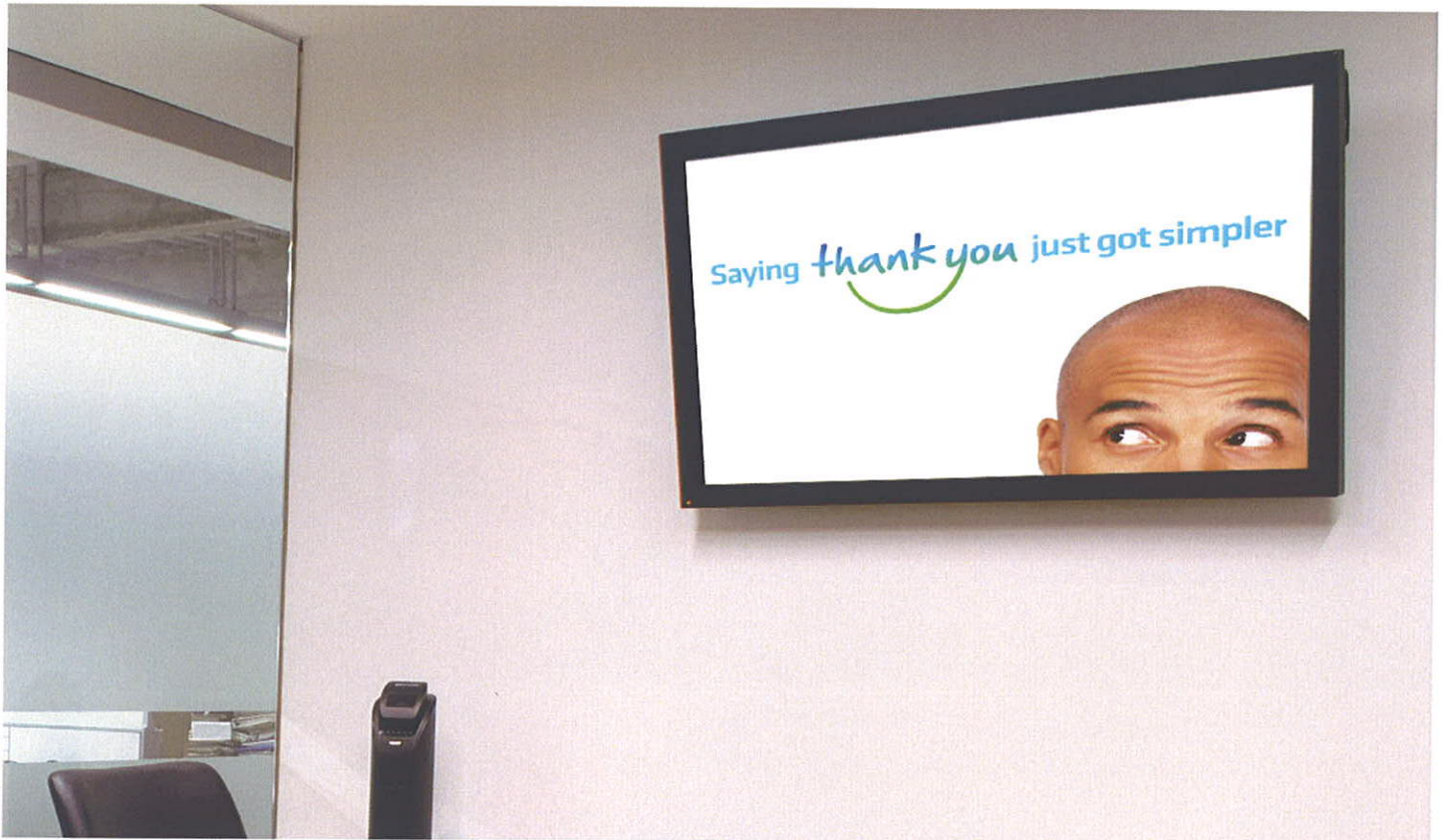
### Overview of market

The utilities market comes under constant media scrutiny around pricing and services. This puts a lot of (direct and often in-direct) pressure on the workforce, both in the field and back at base, which feels especially harsh when the reasons often feel unfair or simply beyond their control. So helping employees to feel valued and encouraged has become more important than ever in such an unforgiving and competitive market place. The Simply Thank You scheme is one way of doing this – a simple and literal way of returning value to employees to keep them focused on positive achievements.

Ensuring that the scheme was effective and fit for purpose was therefore a key business priority. The mechanics of the existing scheme were cumbersome and relied on cards being visible around the offices to prompt colleagues to nominate. Despite these reminders and knowing that ‘being recognised’ was high on people’s wish list, it was difficult to get real traction with the scheme and nominations were erratic or non-existent from some departments. Combine this with high running costs and it was becoming prohibitive to maintain or scale this important programme. So it was vital that the re-launch provided a change of pace and made a dramatic and immediate impact, as there was no time to lose. And talking of time, there was a window of just eight weeks to change the structure, look and feel of the scheme.

### Outline of design solution





Animated screen savers were deployed across every PC and plasma screen in British Gas

Simple, effective, human, immediate; the guiding principles for what our new, and differentiating, visual identity had to achieve.

We are signalling a new and effective recognition programme, so we kept it visually simple, to make participation look easy. And we avoided classic reward and recognition clichés, such as stars or trophies, to signpost that this was something a bit different.

We made it active by incorporating the words thank you into messaging and contained a graphic smile within the words, to create a 'smile in the mind'. And it's all about people, so we used images of people to give a sense of how it feels to receive recognition, focusing on the smile or the sparkle in the eyes – but without identifying individual employees.

The solution had to be flexible to effectively apply across a variety of different on and offline media, pre and post launch. Online had now become a crucial part of the programme, meaning that some of the nomination and recognition process could take place via an automated process. The intranet featured an intuitive online system where anyone could recognise a colleague in just a couple of clicks. And on the external website, a 'Facebook/social media' approach meant that there was the opportunity for continual employee engagement and interest. In addition, text was now a way of nominating colleagues, which was great for people out in the field, such as engineers.



Quarterly award certificate



Personalised instant Thank You cards

'looking forward to coming into work knowing there might be some thank yous waiting for you'

Simply Thank You Facebook page

#### Immediate impact: year-on-year comparison

- Instant thank yous – improvement of 749%.
- Monthly award nominations – increase of 170%.

#### A positive result across the board

The new scheme has created a platform for truly transforming the culture of recognition within the organisation and generated an unprecedented response that has got employees talking.

And no one had issue with the loss of the vouchers as part of the new initiative, demonstrating that value comes in all shapes and sizes, but means the most when it shows genuine and personal thought.