



CASE STUDY

AI Fire Ignites Loyalty with Manager-Led Recognition

How One Recognition Strategy Is Driving Retention,
Culture, and Performance Across 40 Locations



The Company

AI Fire, through its brands Academy Fire and Impact Fire, delivers fire and life safety services nationwide. With more than 40 locations and up to 10 acquisitions per year, AI Fire needed a way to unify its growing workforce and retain top talent in a competitive industry.

The Challenges

- 1** Retain employees in a high-turnover, decentralized environment.
- 2** Accelerate culture integration for newly acquired teams.
- 3** Replace scattered incentives with consistent, meaningful recognition.
- 4** Equip managers with tools and expectations to lead culture from the front AI Fire understood that building a strong culture couldn't be top-down alone. Manager involvement was essential. *Engagement had to start at the team level.*

The Solution

Manager-to-Peer Recognition That Scales

AI Fire launched a recognition program that empowers leaders to recognize their people in real time, every month. The program includes:

- Monthly point budgets for managers, scaled by team size
- Cross-functional recognition through shared services
- Automated rewards for birthdays and service anniversaries
- A custom-branded merchandise store for employee choice
- New hire gifts mailed directly to employee homes

The system allows flexibility across locations, while giving every manager a structured, scalable way to engage their team.

Manager Buy-In

The Core of the Program's Success

Manager engagement isn't a nice-to-have. It's non-negotiable.

- Every manager is expected to use their entire point balance each month. Recognition isn't optional. There's always someone to appreciate.
- eCards are used for milestone moments like birthdays and work anniversaries, helping keep engagement consistent even when points aren't issued.
- Old habits like gift cards and raffles are being phased out in favor of trackable, impactful recognition.





How AI Fire Drives Manager Engagement

- Monthly communication and check-ins happen when point balances are replenished.
- Program visibility is built into the company's HRIS dashboard, keeping recognition front and center.
- Teams are encouraged to tie recognition to local initiatives such as safety campaigns and training completions.
- HR and executive leaders lead by example, issuing points regularly to their teams and to managers themselves, modeling exactly what strong recognition looks like. This cadence has helped turn recognition into a habit, not a task. Managers see the impact, and employees feel the difference.

Training and Rollout Strategy

Initial rollout included virtual training and toolkits. Local HR leaders supported adoption at the site level. For new acquisitions, the program is launched when local leaders are ready, with hands-on communication and training led by HR.

The Results

Recognition has become a culture driver across AI Fire. Managers are actively engaged. Employees feel seen, valued, and connected. New teams onboard faster and align more quickly with company values. With manager accountability baked in, recognition isn't just another HR initiative. It's a business strategy that's helping AI Fire retain great people and scale culture with confidence.

Want to build a culture like this?

Let's talk about how manager-led recognition can strengthen retention, unify your teams, and move your culture forward.

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