

Callahan & Associates

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Employee Recognition

How to Boost Culture & Engagement



Our Speaker



Rob Hoyle
Chief People & Technology Officer
Vantage West Credit Union

About Vantage West Credit Union

- Tucson, AZ
- Approx. \$3.35B in assets
- Over 209,000 members
- 480 FTEs
- 17 branches



The Challenge/Opportunity

- Vantage West has a different kind of culture problem.
- **When talent is strong, it can make recognition harder.**
- Our purpose is **investing in people today** to create a more prosperous future. *That sentiment applies to employees as well as members.*
- We wanted to **create employee awards** that honor our credit union's commitment to a **team-first** strategic anchor.
- The outcome has been increased employee engagement and a **stronger culture**

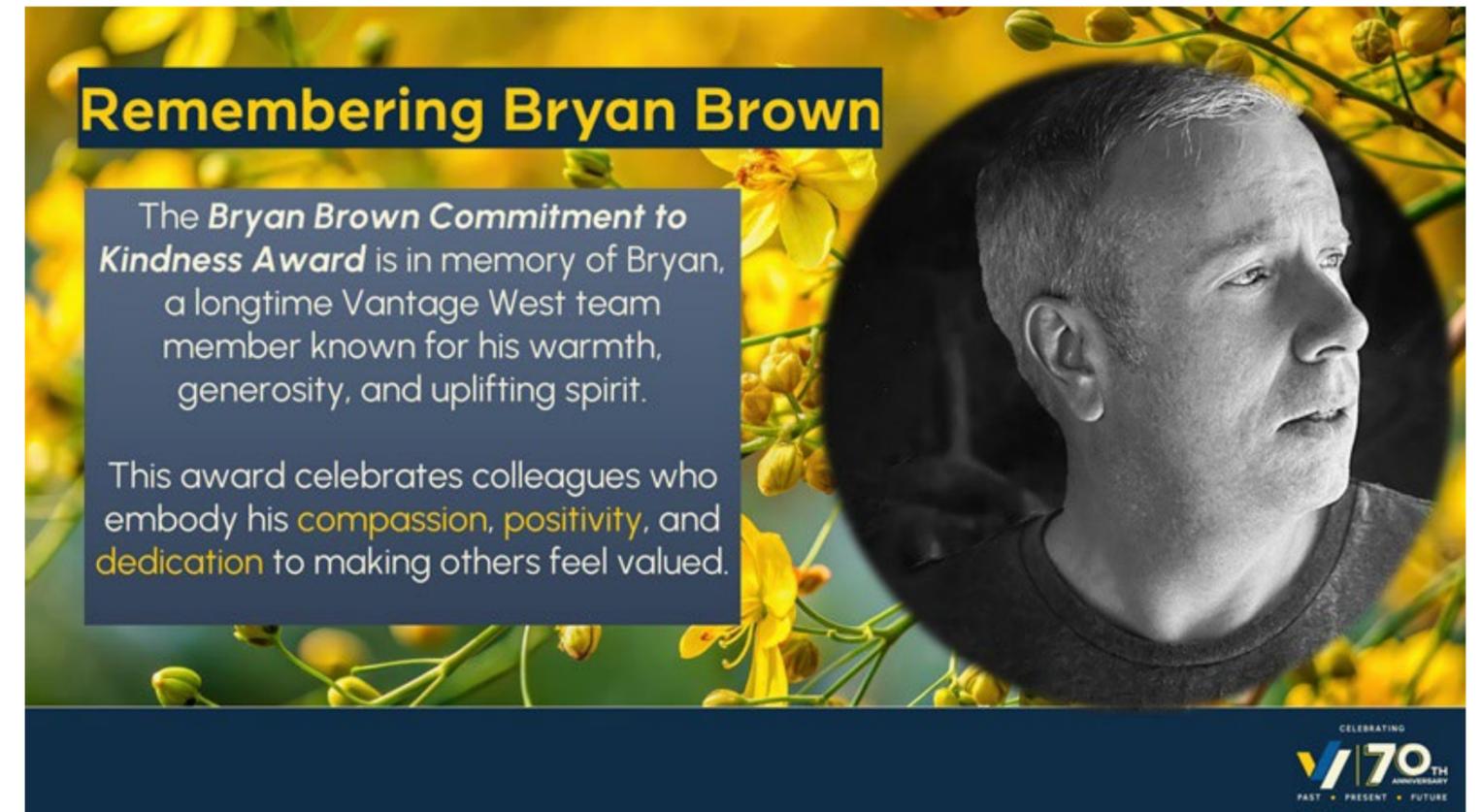


The Solution

- In 2022, the Arizona-based cooperative rolled out **two different awards** to recognize staff members.
- The *Brian Brown Commitment to Kindness Award* acknowledges employees for behaviors that have made a **positive impact** on other people.
- The *Inspiration Award* singles out employees whose actions have made a **measurable impact on the institution**.
- The distinction: *Not everyone can be an MVP, but everyone can be kind.*

A Member's Lasting Impact

- Although the *Bryan Brown Commitment to Kindness Award* celebrates employees' actions, it bears the name of a **long-time member whose kindness left a lasting impression** on the Vantage West team.
- He was the kind of person who could make any day better — supportive, funny, and always willing to help. When Brown passed away, we wanted to honor the legacy he left on our culture. So, **we created the award in his memory.**



Front & Back-Office Winners

Bertha Deane

Consumer Lending Product Specialist



"I would like to nominate Bertha Deane, as she truly exemplifies kindness, inclusiveness, positivity, compassion, and generosity in every interaction. Over the years I've worked with her. Bertha has always been approachable and welcoming instantly making others feel comfortable regardless of the situation. Her positive attitude is contagious, and she consistently lifts those around her."



Daniel Leidenz

Bilingual Member Solutions Specialist



"You can't convince me that there is a more deserving person for this award. While I've only known him for a month, Daniel is the epitome of kindness. If you're having a bad day, he won't just brush it off, he will ask you how you are, and he will genuinely care about the answer. He also gives everyone caramel and chocolate throughout the day, but that's just the icing on a large piece of cake you can call kindness. Daniel is a big reason I felt welcomed into this position."



In 2025, we named two Bryan Brown award winners. Nominations feature everyday acts of kindness and highlight employees that make the credit union a positive workplace.



How the Bryan Brown Award Program Works

- There is also a **committee made up of six individual contributors**. They each champion two candidates and discuss as a group who to name as winners.
- I serve as **executive liaison** during the nomination and selection process
- We announce award recipients at our **all-team conference**.
- Recipients receive \$500 and may select a charity of their choice to receive a \$1,000 donation in Brown's name.

Celebrating Inspired Ideas

- The Inspiration Award emerged from our NPS Action Committee, a group of **mid-level employees who review member feedback**
- The goal is to recognizing team members who move the needle, people who lead by example; The genesis of the award was **completely grassroots**.
- Nominations are tied to our core values: **proactive, committed, and kind**. Everyone can participate.
- **Executive involvement is minimal.** *The committee takes its role seriously.*
- The committee reviews submissions twice a year and **selects semi-annual winners**.
- Annually: executives nominate finalists; the committee selects a **single annual winner**.

Investing in those Making an Impact

- Semiannual winners each receive a \$100 bonus and one day of PTO.
- The annual winner earns \$1,000 plus two extra days of PTO, and paid attendance at a **conference of *their choice***.
- When someone does great work, they usually get rewarded with more work. **We decided to invest in them.**
- Vantage West recognizes Inspiration Award winners via email, internal social media, and LinkedIn posts. *Winners also take a photo with the CEO and receive a small gift.*
- Feedback has been very positive.



Vantage West Team,

It is with great pleasure that we announce the recipient of 2024's Vantage West Inspiration Award:

CONGRATULATIONS!

Adrian Jensen

Adrian serves as our Network Administrator and has consistently demonstrated outstanding dedication to our members and the team.

Selected from a pool of highly talented candidates, Adrian received multiple nominations for his remarkable and tireless support of our newly implemented branch ITM technology, which had an immediate positive impact on our members.

Among his many noteworthy contributions, he was recognized for his calm and methodical approach to troubleshooting and meticulous problem-solving, often under pressure. This dedication and perseverance earned him the respect and admiration of his colleagues while directly impacting the efficiency of the entire Credit Union. Adrian's support, in turn, allowed our branch teams to maintain their focus on providing the world-class service our members consistently tell us they love so much!

Beyond his technical expertise, Adrian embodies our Core Values of being **Committed, Kind, and Proactive.**

Best Practices & Future Plans

- “Team First” works.
- Employee Recognition is a journey.
- Developing a strategy that considers departmental efforts as well as CU-wide goals
- We plan to *stay the course while turning one-off recognition into an ongoing habit. “Give everyone a whistle”*
- When it comes to employee engagement strategies for credit unions: make sure they’re **meaningful**.
- Tie it to **real values and culture**. If it feels contrived, it won’t last.
- **Make it easy** to nominate and remind people often.
- Must be **based on merit**, not popularity.



Questions?



Presented by Guest Speaker

Rob Hoyle