

Employee Recognition - Appreciation Award Ideas

Sincere thanks never grow old. Ongoing, meaningful rewards and recognition provide an effective, low-cost way of raising morale and encouraging higher levels of performance. Here are several ideas to help you embed employee recognition into your everyday work.

Fundamental Supportive Actions

- Smile. It's contagious.
- Be positive and encouraging
- Address employees with their name
- Listen actively when interacting with your employees
- Be supportive and follow through with requests for help

Employee Recognition Ideas (no cost)

1. Create and post an "Employee Kudos Board" in common area.
2. Send a thank-you email or even, better- a card.
3. Create an Above and Beyond the Call of Duty (ABCD) Award.
4. Send an email or letter to all team members at the conclusion of a project, thanking them for their participation.
5. Provide small gift certificates (ex: coffee cards) to employees who reach certain goals.
6. When you hear a positive remark about someone, repeat it to that person as soon as possible.
7. Publish a "kudos" column and ask for nominations throughout the department in the department newsletter.
8. Publicly recognize the positive impact on operations of the solutions employees devise for problems.
9. Forward positive voicemail and email messages.
10. Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays and anniversaries.
11. Post a thank you note on an employee's cubicle or workplace.
12. Take time to explain to new employees the norms and culture of your department.
13. Arrange for a team to present the results of its efforts to upper management.
14. Encourage and recognize staff who pursue continuing education.
15. Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee's name when preparing a status report.
16. Establish a place to display memos, posters, photos and so on, recognizing progress towards goals and thanking individual employees for their help.
17. Establish a "Behind the Scenes" award specifically for those whose actions are not usually in the limelight.

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18. Give a shiny new penny for an innovative thought that has been shared.
19. Nominate the employee for a university formal award program.
20. Present “State of the Department” reports periodically to your employees acknowledging the work and contributions of individuals and teams.
21. At a monthly staff meeting, award an Employee of the Month and invite co-workers at the meeting to say why that person is deserving of the award.
22. Recognize employees who actively serve the community.
23. Have staff vote for department employee of the year.
24. Ask your boss to attend a meeting with your employees during which you thank individuals and groups for their specific contributions.
25. Pop in at the first meeting of a special project team and express your appreciation for their involvement.
26. Plan a surprise achievement celebration for an employee or group of employees.
27. Write a letter of praise recognizing specific contributions and accomplishments. Send a copy to senior management and the employee’s personnel file.
28. Visit an employee in their workspace to thank them.
29. Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee names in status reports.
30. Post a large “celebration calendar” in your work area. Tack on notes of recognition to specific dates.
31. Create and string a banner of encouragement across the work area.
32. Encourage employees to identify specific areas of interest in job-related skills. Then arrange for them to spend a day with an in-house “expert” to learn more about the topic.
33. Actively listen to co-workers, especially when discussing their accomplishments and contributions.
34. Use 3x5 cards to write “You’re special because...” statements.
35. Have a recognition event created by a peer group that decides what they will give and why they will give it.
36. Keep a supply of appropriately funny notes that can be given as immediate rewards. Keep the supply visible – in a basket or box in your office.
37. Widely publicize suggestions used and their positive impact on your department.
38. Recognize a team accomplishment by designating that team as consultants to other teams.
39. Recognize those committed to personal health and wellness.

Employee Recognition Ideas (minor to moderate cost)

1. Find out the person’s hobby and buy a small appropriate gift.
2. Give a favorite book as a gift.

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3. Serve ice cream sundaes or a hero sandwich party to all of your employees at the end of a project.
4. Give a deserving employee a mug filled with treats.
5. Plan a surprise picnic or snack.
6. Create a Hall of Fame wall with photos of outstanding employees.
7. Make a photo collage about a successful project that shows the people that worked on it, its stage of development and its completion and presentation.
8. Make and deliver a fruit basket.
9. Once a year, have a "Staff Appreciation Day" where the managers supply, cook and serve food.
10. Give flowers to an employee at their home or workspace as a thank you.
11. Purchase a unique pin to serve as a memento for a task well done.
12. Hold informal retreats to foster communication and set goals.
13. Provide a lunch for project teams at intermediate goals achieved to help keep them motivated. Express your appreciation.
14. Give a personalized coffee cup.
15. Give an employee a blue ribbon for achievement.
16. Design and give magnets with appropriate messages.
17. Give a framed poem (poster or card) as a thank you.
18. Throw a pizza lunch party for your unit.
19. Give a note reading, "Thank you. You are amazing!" Attach a roll of Lifesavers.
20. Serve popcorn and lemonade on Friday (especially after a particularly hard week).
21. Give a puzzle as an award to a problem solver.
22. Bake/bring a gift (cookies, bread, etc.) for an outstanding employee or team.
23. Send birthday cards to employees' homes, signed by manager or director.