

50 FREE IDEAS

Boosting Moral & Engagement Without Spending A Dime

In tight financial times, ongoing, meaningful rewards and recognition provide an effective, low cost way of raising morale and encouraging higher levels of performance. Here are 50 ideas to help you embed employee recognition into your everyday work.

1. Post a thank you note or Bravo! Card on an employee's door or cubicle.
2. Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays.
3. Take time to explain to new employees the norms and culture of your department.
4. Give special assignments to people who show initiative.
5. Arrange for a team to present the results of its efforts to upper management.
6. Encourage and recognize staff who pursue continuing education.
7. Create and post an "Employee Honor Roll" in reception area.
8. On a rotating basis, designate "mystery recognizers"—employees empowered to hand out Bravo! Cards for a variety of achievements.
9. Establish a place to display memos, posters, photos and so on, recognizing progress towards goals and thanking individual employees for their help.
10. Swap a task with an employee for a day – his/her choice.
11. Establish a "Behind the Scenes" award specifically for those whose actions are not usually in the limelight.
12. Give a shiny new penny for a thought that has been shared.
13. Nominate the employee for a formal Bravo! Award.
14. Keep in mind that managers should serve as coaches to indirectly influence rather than demand desired behavior.
15. Present "state of the department/school" reports periodically to your employees acknowledging the work and contributions of individuals and teams.
16. 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.

17. Recognize employees who actively serve the community.
18. Have staff vote for top manager, supervisor, employee and rookie of the year. Name a continuing recognition award after an outstanding employee.
19. Include an employee in a "special" meeting. Allow employees to attend meetings in your place when you are not available.
20. Create an Above and Beyond the Call of Duty (ABCD) Award.
21. Ask your boss to attend a meeting with your employees, during which you thank individuals and groups for their specific contributions.
22. Pop in at the first meeting of a special project team and express your appreciation for their involvement.
23. Send a letter to all team members at the conclusion of a project, thanking them for their participation.
24. Give recognition for attendance, punctuality, teamwork, etc.
25. Provide gift certificates to employees who reach certain goals.
26. Find ways to reward department/school-specific performance.
27. Plan a surprise achievement celebration for an employee or group of employees.
28. Start a suggestion program. Privately recognize employee's personal needs and challenges. Write a letter of praise recognizing specific contributions and accomplishments. Send a copy to senior management and the employee's personnel file.
29. When you hear a positive remark about someone, repeat it to that person as soon as possible (Face-to-face is best, e-mail or voice mail are good in a pinch).
30. Call an employee to your office to thank them (don't discuss any other issue).
31. If you have a department newsletter, publish a "kudos" column and ask for nominations throughout the department.
32. Publicly recognize the positive impact on operations of the solutions employees devise for problems.
33. Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee names in status reports.
34. Express an interest in employee's career development goals.
35. Post a large "celebration calendar" in your work area.
36. Create and string an employee appreciation banner across the work area.
37. Greet employees by name and practice positive nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate appreciation, such as smiles, or a handshake.
38. 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.
39. Encourage employees to participate in community volunteer efforts.
40. Share verbal accolades – forward positive voice mail messages.
41. Actively listen to co-workers, especially when discussing their accomplishments and contributions.

42. Use Bravo! Cards to write special appreciation statements. People can collect the cards and refer to them when things aren't going perfectly.
43. Have a recognition event created by a peer group that decides what they will give and why they will give it.
44. 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.
45. Widely publicize suggestions used and their positive impact on your department/school.
46. When someone has spent long hours at work, send a letter of thanks to his/her home.
47. Arrange for an outstanding employee to have lunch with a higher-level manager.
48. Recognize a team accomplishment by designating that team as consultants to other teams.
49. Recognize those committed to personal health and wellness.
50. Smile at your employees. It's contagious.

Some content adapted from the University of Michigan

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