

101 Ways to Recognize People



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 101 ideas to help you embed employee recognition into your everyday work.

1. Create a Hall of Fame wall with photos of outstanding employees.
2. Give employees time off to give blood.
3. Arrange for a team to present the results of its efforts to upper management.
4. Encourage, enable and empower staff to excel.
5. Plan a surprise picnic.
6. Answer your assistant's telephone for a day.
7. Encourage and recognize staff who pursue continuing education.
8. Post a thank you note on an employee's door.
9. Wash the employee's car in the parking lot during the lunch hour.
10. Create and post an "Employee Honor Roll" in reception area.
11. Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee's name when preparing a status report
12. 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.
13. Bring an employee bagged lunches for a week.
14. Find out the person's hobby and buy an appropriate gift.
15. Make a thank-you card by hand.
16. Cover the person's desk with balloons.
17. Make and deliver a fruit basket.
18. Inscribe a favorite book as a gift.

19. Establish a place to display memos, posters, photos and so on, recognizing progress towards goals and thanking individual employees for their help.
20. Swap a task with an employee for a day – his/her choice.
21. Establish a “Behind the Scenes” award specifically for those whose actions are not usually in the limelight.
22. Give the person a copy of the latest best-selling management or business book or a subscription to a trade magazine.
23. Nominate the employee for a formal award program (UMatter or Workplace Award).
24. Keep in mind that managers should serve as coaches to indirectly influence rather than demand desired behavior.
25. Take time to explain to new employees the norms and culture of your department.
26. Give special assignments to people who show initiative.
27. Give out Felix and Oscar awards to people with the neatest and messiest desks.
28. Design a “Stress Support Kit” that included aspirin, a comedy cassette, wind up toys and a stress ball – or design your own.
29. Present “State of the Department” reports periodically to your employees acknowledging the work and contributions of individuals and teams.
30. At a monthly staff meeting, award an Employee of the Month and have everyone at the meeting stand up and say why that person is deserving of the award.
31. Set up a miniature golf course in your office, using whatever materials you have on hand. Set aside an afternoon or evening to hold a mini golf tournament. Have each area design their own “hole” and give a prize.
32. If your team is under pressure, bring a bag of marbles to work and take a break to have a contest – a sure stress reliever.
33. Serve ice cream sundaes to all of your employees at the end of a project.
34. Once a year, have a “Staff Appreciation Day” where the managers supply, cook and serve food.
35. Recognize employees who actively serve the community.
36. Serve a team a hero party sandwich at the end of an assignment, for a job well done.
37. Give employees an extra long lunch break.
38. Have staff vote for top manager, supervisor, employee and rookie of the year.
39. Name a continuing recognition award after an outstanding employee.
40. Include an employee in a “special” meeting.
41. Give a shiny new penny for a thought that has been shared.
42. Send flowers to an employee’s home as a thank you.

43. Allow employees to attend meetings in your place when you are not available.
44. Purchase a unique pin to serve as a memento for a task well done.
45. Wear color-coded name tags in a staff meeting to indicate significant achievements – such as length of service, successful project completion, etc.
46. Create an Above and Beyond the Call of Duty (ABCD) Award.
47. Hold informal retreats to foster communication and set goals.
48. Ask your boss to attend a meeting with your employees during which you thank individuals and groups for their specific contributions.
49. Pop in at the first meeting of a special project team and express your appreciation for their involvement.
50. Provide a lunch for project teams once they have made interim findings. Express your appreciation.
51. Send a letter to all team members at the conclusion of a project, thanking them for their participation.
52. Start an employee recognition program. Give points for attendance, punctuality, teamwork, etc. Provide gift certificates to employees who reach certain point goals.
53. Find ways to reward department-specific performance.
54. Give a personalized coffee cup.
55. Plan a surprise achievement celebration for an employee or group of employees.
56. Start a suggestion program.
57. Give Mr. Goodbar (candy bar) Awards
58. Recognize employee's personal needs and challenges.
59. Give an employee a blue ribbon for achievement.
60. Write a letter of praise recognizing specific contributions and accomplishments. Send a copy to senior management and the employee's personnel file.
61. 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 an pinch).
62. Call an employee to your office to thank them (don't discuss any other issue).
63. If you have a department newsletter, publish a "kudos" column and ask for nominations throughout the department.
64. Publicly recognize the positive impact on operations of the solutions employees devise for problems.
65. Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee names in status reports.
66. Video tape a special event and share copies with participants.
67. Express an interest in employee's career development goals.

68. Post a large "celebration calendar" in your work area. Tack on notes of recognition to specific dates.
69. Design and give magnets with appropriate messages.
70. Create and string a banner across the work area.
71. Give a deserving employee a mug filled with treats.
72. Give a framed poem (poster or card) as a thank you.
73. Greet employees by name.
74. Practice positive nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate appreciation.
75. Support "flex-friendly" schedules.
76. 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.
77. Encourage employees to participate in community volunteer efforts.
78. Share verbal accolades – forward positive voice mail messages.
79. Actively listen to co-workers, especially when discussing their accomplishments and contributions.
80. Use 3x5 cards to write "You're special because..." statements. People can collect the cards and refer to them when things aren't going perfectly.
81. Have a recognition event created by a peer group that decides what they will give and why they will give it. 82. 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.
83. Widely publicize suggestions used and their positive impact on your department.
84. When someone has spent long hours at work, send a letter of thanks to his/her home.
85. Throw a pizza lunch party for your unit.
86. Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays.
87. Give a note reading, "Thank you. You are a _____!" Attach a roll of Lifesavers.
88. Make a necklace of lifesavers and give it to someone "For being the "lifesaver of _____."
89. Serve popcorn and lemonade on Friday (especially after a particularly hard week).
90. Allow an employee to choose his/her next assignment.
91. At an employee meeting, randomly tape gift certificates to the bottom of chairs (for the first time, choose chairs only in the front row).
92. Recognize a team accomplishment by designating that team as consultants to other teams.

93. Give a puzzle as an award to a problem solver.
94. Recognize those committed to personal health and wellness.
95. Have weekly breakfasts with groups of employees.
96. Treat an employee to lunch.
97. Give out gold coins for a job well done.
98. Bake a gift (cookies, bread, etc.) for an outstanding employee or team.
99. Send birthday cards to employees' homes, signed by dean or director.
100. Have an outstanding employee spend a day with a dean or director.
101. Smile. It's contagious.

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