



HR for Business - ConsultStu LLC

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Information Paper: Small Business Primer

Topic: Cost Effective Ways to Engage and Recognize Employees

Employee reward programs are created to acknowledge, motivate and engage employees in your company. Employees earn the rewards and ultimately help you meet business goals. When your budget is stretched, here are some considerations for setting up any rewards program.

- **Identify what you want to reinforce.** Know the activity or activities that you seek to reward. Is it job performance (such as sales targets, product development goals or meeting customer timetables), or behavior (such as exceptional customer service, team work or acts of leadership). Start with the end in mind, and understand what you want to reinforce.
- **It must motivate employees.** When communicating the program, advise employees that the recognition program budget is constrained, but it is important. Engage employees and solicit ideas for types of rewards. Ask for creativity to match the budget.
- **It must work for the company.** There's no point in starting a recognition program that is not going to motivate employees or help achieve business goals. To work, think through the methods of recognition and make sure they are practical to deliver. Customize it so that it matches your company culture.
- **Incorporate 4 key elements.** Recognition allows employees to **acquire** something of value for their contribution at work. The right reward will strengthen the **bonds** with co-workers (peer to peer), managers and family (family at award ceremony or they enjoy the award). **Creativity** incorporated into the program means employees will comprehend, discover, learn and take the next challenge. Lastly, employees have a desire to **defend** their status and turf, so a program needs to be fair, with opportunity for all to be included. The employee's choice of reward links these elements together.

Here are some ideas:

1. Interview and profile an employee each month, post the profile in newsletter or on the bulletin board.
2. Hand written thank you or recognition note, mailed to their home.
3. Monthly pot luck, with a theme.



4. Throw a pizza party, or a cake party in their honor. Donations could be collected and the money donated to a local charity selected by employees.
5. Give a long-lunch, extra break, or go home early certificate.
6. Honor them at the start of the next staff meeting. You could do a welcome to new employees, at the start of department meetings.
7. Post a "thank you" sign in a common area with picture.
8. Post award or recognition on the company's facebook, instagram or other social media site.
9. Give them a card with lottery tickets, movie tickets, small gift card etc... inside.
10. Have the department sign a framed photo or certificate of appreciation.
11. "Thank you" from the president and owner.
12. itunes gift card
13. Award the employee with a car wash.
14. Create a "trophy" or other award, and allow winning employee to have it displayed in their work area or department.
15. Bring in food items, leave the food in the area of the rewarded employee, and invited other employees to come and have some food and congratulate the winner.
16. Feature them in the company newsletter.
17. Have entire team honor them with a standing ovation at the start of the next staff meeting.
18. Award a cost effective professional development course or class to attend.
19. Offer to swap a task with them for a day or week
20. Recognize employees who actively serve in the community
21. "Rock star" parking spot for a week, or other period of time.
22. Name a conference room, space or area after them for a period of time.
23. Inviting their spouse in for a lunch on the company.
24. Wall of fame – pictures of staff, what they did and why it meant something
25. A vacation day.
26. New piece of office equipment to make their work easier, or more efficient
27. Bouquet of flowers.
28. Birthday cards, sympathy cards, big event cards sent to their home address.
29. A public thank you.
30. Pay for them to take a fun class, at local college or extension
31. Bagged lunch classes on a fun topic.
32. Let them suggest a way they would like to be recognized.
33. Keep the break room stocked with their favorite drink or snack.
34. Buy them tickets to a concert, show or other event.
35. Give them a small gift card from their favorite store.
36. Pick up a book or CD for them by their favorite author or artist.
37. Pick up the tab for them to have a family portrait taken.
38. Gas cards, are always appreciated.
39. Create a "day pass" that they can turn in to take any day off, no questions asked.
40. Extra percent off the existing employee discount.
41. Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays (lunch?).
42. Come up with ribbons or patches to signify accomplishments, displayed on uniform or in work area
43. Award a puzzle, or other mind game, to a problem solver



44. Ice cream social to celebrate a team accomplishment
45. Create staff appreciation day monthly, and have special events and recognitions on that day. Managers and supervisors deliver the labor, and employees can enjoy the event
46. Monthly themes to celebrate departments, or company functions. Let the department team decide what to do to recognize and inform others about what they do
47. Find out what they are passionate about and give them a gift that relates to it.
48. Friday cookouts or picnic.
49. Have a mobile car wash come to the business and clean their vehicle.
50. Get them a subscription to their favorite magazine.
51. Tape gift cards to the bottom of chair at random staff meetings or employee training
52. Pay for a membership in a professional group of their choice.
53. Give them a new, improved job title.
54. Provide them with some one-on-one mentoring.
55. Annual award ceremony and give awards to employees for their contributions.
56. Give employee a special assignment on behalf of the president, or owner
57. Celebrate important anniversaries of the business – quiz format and prizes
58. Post important company goals and objectives – and give status reports – then link unique awards to meeting these goals
59. Allow them to dress casually on a day other than Friday.
60. Partner with a local charity and “loan” an employee to the organization for the day
61. Have a massage therapist come to the office once a month and give a massage.
62. Office or department decoration contest
63. Purchase some cool company swag, or get your vendors to supply some, and give away on the spur of the moment, unexpectedly
64. Recognition program with points (like frequent flyer) and deliver awards and recognition to employee reaching certain levels (gold, platinum etc...) Map it out, post it for all.
65. Create a grab bag of inexpensive awards (listed on a spreadsheet, note cards etc..), and when an employee is recognized, let them select what they want

Watch out for some of the common pitfalls....

- ❖ Avoid popularity contests (if nomination based) – use merit
- ❖ Avoid perceptions of playing favorites
- ❖ Broadly and widely communicate the program
- ❖ Bring diverse team to make selections (managers in different roles)
- ❖ Start small and modestly, and follow through
- ❖ Don't be afraid to adjust and revise program to keep employees' interest
- ❖ Calculate the return on investment, to help determine next year's budget

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