

Employee Appreciation Ideas



1. Celebrate those happy birthdays.

If your staff doesn't mind (some may want to fly under the radar on their birthday), celebrate their birthdays!

Cater in a meal or get a cake as appropriate. Be creative, if virtual. Birthdays are for gifts; what would your staff appreciate the most?

2. Cheers from peers.

Make it easy for your staff to show appreciation for each other. Coworkers are aware of more than you might think during the day-to-day activities. Give them a chance to call out the positive things people are doing so they come to your attention, as well as everyone else's attention.

3. Ask your employees what they would like.

Talk with your employees to find out what type of recognition they prefer to receive. The best way to show you appreciate an individual is to find out what they really like, what they'd be interested in, their hobbies, or what they want the most. Ask if they prefer to receive recognition in private, small group/team celebration, large group/public setting or has no preference. Find out if they prefer verbal words of thanks, written note, email acknowledgement, opportunity to work with others or expand knowledge or skill. Personalization is key.

4. Have a trophy.

In professional sports, the grand champion trophies travel from one year's winner to the next. Create a trophy of sorts (an actual trophy, or something more humorous) that is recognized as a symbol of

staff appreciation, and pass it around the workplace to staff members who have accomplished something good.

5. Track team wins.

Think of how nonprofits use a thermometer or some other visual device to show the gradual increase of donations as they get closer to a goal. Whether you use an actual visual approach, or keep everyone updated in regular meetings, you can do the same.

What goals do various teams have? A little friendly competition is good, and as your staff keeps climbing towards a particular goal, you can not only congratulate their hard work, but spur them on for a reward for whichever team makes the mark first.

6. Thank you notes are not dead.

An actual piece of paper that tells a staff member that you appreciate them, thanking them for their work, can go a long way in a digital world. Whether it's as simple as a quick post-it note or an actual card or a note on their office door, try cracking out the age-old practice of thank you notes.

7. Give employees real choice and real voice.

Allow your staff to choose a project to work on. Listen to their ideas or concerns, and take action on them.

8. Don't knock the wall of fame.

A wall of staff photos might seem a bit old school, but hey, it was popular for a reason. Think about placing it in your break area or by your huddle board.

9. Treats, just because.

Who doesn't like a surprise treat that no one expected? Have a pizza lunch. Grab bagels or muffins and leave them in the break room. Treat your staff, just because you appreciate them.

10. Party all the time.

We already mentioned birthday parties as a way to show appreciation for individuals, but why not celebrate together, as a complete staff, on other special occasions? Holidays, meeting project goals, Wednesdays, because it's five o'clock somewhere— sometimes the celebration for a non-obvious

reason is the most fun. And, in those cases, choose a day and a time when staff might be struggling to chug through the week or day.

11. Give rewards that are career-based.

A career-based reward is great for employees and will benefit your business as well. You can send employees to leadership training or let them choose an online class they would like to take. Even if it's not directly related to their current job, you can show your employees you're invested in them and their career.

12. Do not miss the anniversaries.

Don't let the anniversary of an employee's hire go unnoticed. Reward them for staying. Call attention to them and their accomplishments.

13. Encourage continuing education.

Show staff you appreciate them by helping them grow in their career. Mentor, direct and encourage them to use available resources to develop and grow.

14. Notice the small moments.

Sometimes it's as simple as calling a staff member into your office to say "I've noticed what you're doing around here, and I appreciate it so much." For some people, that's actually enough, to know that someone has noticed.

15. Recognize non-work achievements.

You have people on your staff who are doing incredible things. They are creating, volunteering, and doing all kinds of activities on their own time. Why not recognize them in front of the group? We all like to have people know more about us, but most of us don't want to brag about ourselves. Do the bragging for your staff, and show your whole team how amazing everyone is.

16. Calculate how your business has positively impacted the community.

Whether it's through green energy, volunteer hours, or donations, let your staff know that the work they are doing is not only appreciated by you, but by the community at large. Help them get excited about the good they are doing even while they are earning a living.

17. Have a lunch and learn.

Most of us like a chance to let others know interesting things about ourselves. Have a lunch time where your staff can share a hobby or interest with the rest of the staff. It's a fun way to get to know each other and learn something you may never have thought to look into.

18. Last but not least: Say “thank you”!

When is the last time you simply said thank you? Sometimes we think that because completing work tasks is expected, there is no need for a thank you.

A thank you, whether the work is required or not, is such a simple way to show appreciation. You might not think it matters, but there is a noticeable attitude difference between a staff whose boss genuinely thanks them periodically compared to one where the staff never hears it. While not everyone needs a “thank you” to do a good job, many do. It won't hurt those who don't need to hear it, but it will mean much to those who do.