

## **The Real Reason Employees Work: 36 Proven Ways To Motivate**

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If you still think money is the #1 motivator ... your wrong! Money is important, but if someone doesn't like their job or the way they are treated, I don't care how much you pay them, they still won't like it. In fact, in numerous surveys the #1 motivating factor to get employees to perform at their best focuses on appreciation and recognition.

While money is important to employees, what tends to motivate them to perform at high levels is the thoughtful, personal kind of recognition that signifies true appreciation for a job well done.

The best way to provide recognition and appreciation is through the use of rewards. To make our rewards work, we must first follow certain basic guidelines:

1. Design rewards based on the individual's personal preferences. For example to reward a workaholic with a day off could be seen by the employee as, "What did I do wrong?" instead of a show of appreciation as it was meant to be. To really understand what is important to each employee it's essential to get to know each employee well and find out what they think are important rewards.
2. Reward for achievement - Rewards should be based on what was actually done. For example, if someone has given you an idea that has saved you money, that person should get a bigger reward versus someone who just did you a small favor.
3. Time your rewards. Rewards and recognition should be given as soon as possible after the desired behavior. Reward and recognition that come long after the achievement do little to motivate the employee.

To help you provide the recognition, appreciation and rewards that truly motivate, here are thirty-six inexpensive but effective ideas that you can use immediately:

- Say thank you. This is so easy, but often overlooked.
- A pat on the back.
- A smile.
- Public recognition in front of peers.
- Manage by wandering around (MBWA). Get out from behind your desk and see what your employees are doing. It shows you care and are interested in what they do.
- A letter of praise from a customer or vendor shared directly with the employee who delivered the service.
- Develop a wall of fame. A letter from a customer or vendor praising an employee, posted on the company bulletin board.
- Listening to an employee who has an idea for improving efficiency or effectiveness and then acting affirmatively on that suggestion.
- Ask your employee what non-monetary rewards they would like to have and, if possible provide them.
- Provide training to employees. Offer them opportunities to improve themselves. For example, one client of mine had me train all their employees in success skills. This not only helped the company, but it was seen by the employees that management really cared about them.
- Bring in coffee, donuts and snacks on a regular basis and also do it when it is not expected.
- Provide free lunches to employees when you seen them doing something above and beyond.
- Walk your talk. Lead by example: Do what you say you're going to do and keep all your promises.

- Involve employees in decisions that directly affect them. People have a need to belong. Make them feel like they are an important part of your business.
- Praise them. Each day your goal should be to catch employees doing something right so you can praise them. This makes them feel valuable and valued.
- Listen to your employees. There really is a reason that you have two ears and one mouth. Listening tells you what employees need; it keeps you from making mistakes with them; it wins their respect; it enables you to negotiate successfully with them; it raises their self-esteem; it minimizes their frustration and it communicates that you care.
- Let your employees know they are VIPs too! Arrange discounts with local theaters, restaurants, sports events or other things important to them. This will not only motivate them, but they will tell everyone what a great place they work for.
- Give credit where credit is due. One of the best ways to achieve results is to give credit to the appropriate employees.
- Go out of your way to help employees. A little extra effort, some personal inconvenience, goes a long way with subordinates in confirming the feeling that what they are doing is important to you --- and that they are too.
- Have family day. Encourage employees to bring in families to see the office or plant one afternoon. Follow up with a picnic. What you spend in half a day's down-time will be rewarded many times over by family good will, and of course, word of mouth.
- When paychecks go out, write a note on the envelope recognizing an employee's accomplishment(s).
- Encourage employees to praise good work of their fellow employees.
- Conduct an out-to-dinner program for employees. Award dinners for two for doing something special like coming in on a day off or working through a break. You could also provide dinners to employees who get praised by customers.
- Go to lunch with each one of your employees on a quarterly basis. Ask the question, "What do we need to do to keep you with us?"
- Remember birthdays ... birthday card, cake or gift.
- Invite employees to your home for a special event and recognize them in front of their spouses and co-workers.
- Give employees rewards for customers they bring in.
- Offer rewards for great ideas. If it saves money or brings in business, give the employee a percentage of the savings or profit.
- Be sympathetic to personal problems.
- Have regular meetings to let employees know what is going on in the company. It's important that everyone feels they belong.
- Order a pizza or a huge submarine sandwich for a communal lunch.
- Send \$10, \$25 or more to a spouse with a thank-you note for his or her support during the employee's overtime.
- Buy gift certificates.
- Pay an employees rent for a month.
- Pay for the tutoring of an employee's child.
- Give employees who recruit new workers a cash bonus.

These are but a few of the strategies you can use. Remember, everyone is different and what motivates one person may not motivate another. In fact, giving the same reward to every member of the company - not only does not inspire employees to excel, but it may actually damage performance as top achievers see no acknowledgment of the exceptional job they have done.

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