

Recognition Boosts Retention



Motivating employees and engaging them in their jobs is one of all managers' most important tasks. It may also be one of their most difficult tasks. To be most effective, managers must determine what employees value. What motivates one employee or group of employees will not motivate others. Is it recognition, cash, time off, trust, quality management, opportunities for growth, or something else specific to your workplace? This information can be gathered in a number of ways, including discussions with employees, employee opinion surveys, and exit interviews.

Recognition can be a powerful motivator because it is personal and ties employers and employees emotionally. Employees who are recognized generally feel their work is valued by the organization, so the effort and/or long hours the work required were worthwhile. The employee may become more engaged in the job because the relationship is mutually beneficial. The employee develops a keen interest in the success of the company.

When designing a reward and recognition program, the program should be in line with the organization's values and business strategy. It should reward behaviors and accomplishments that support the organization's goals. To ensure the success of the program:

- Invite employees to participate in the program's development and execution.
- Include a variety of types of rewards/recognition because not every reward is meaningful to every employee.
- Structure the program so the rewards/recognition are easy to implement and changed frequently.
- Make sure the program is effectively communicated to employees and is highly visible.
- Rewards and recognition vary widely in form. Consider these ideas for recognizing or rewarding your employees:
- Coordinate a celebration of the achievements of an employee or group of employees. This could be a catered lunch or treats for everyone mid-afternoon.
- Acknowledge individual employees' contributions when providing status reports.



Research has shown that few employees leave their jobs solely because they feel the pay or benefits are inadequate. Most departing employees are motivated to leave because of dissatisfaction with other aspects of their jobs:

- They are unhappy with management and the way they managed.
- They felt they received no respect for good work.
- They said they received limited opportunities for advancement.
- They were bored with the job.

- Call an employee into your office just to thank him or her—don't discuss any other issue.
- Thank employees publicly—in front of rest of the department or company.
- Seek input from high-performing employees on what resources would help them do their jobs even better.
- Upon completion of a group project that required extra effort, reward the group with extra time off.
- Give an outstanding employee a three-day weekend.
- Have picnic or party and invite significant others or families. By including these people the organization acknowledges employees' have a life outside work.

Providing opportunities for growth and advancement may also be a form of recognition. All too often, an employee who is doing a great job is not offered—or is even discouraged from applying for—other opportunities within the company. The employee is valuable to the company in the current role and the manager may not want to risk losing the employee to another position or department. But encouraging good employees to expand their skills within the company provides recognition of a job well done and job satisfaction for the employee, and results in a more skilled, flexible, and engaged employee for the organization.

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Why are employees leaving your organization?

If one of the reasons is that employees don't feel their hard work is appreciated, perhaps it's time to let your employees know their work is valued and to reward those who have given extraordinary effort on behalf of the organization. It is certainly better to tell them now than to tell them in their exit interview!

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