

27 IDEAS TO RECOGNIZE STAFF

With employee recognition, a little creativity goes a really long way. As Maya Angelou said, “People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Most leaders understand that recognizing employees really pays off in terms of engagement, productivity, retention, and creating a place where people generally feel good about going to work. Here are creative, budget-conscious ways to make someone’s day.

1 Rock their world
Say thanks to the rock stars in your office by transforming an ordinary rock into a fun and unique recognition memento. [Download the free printable](#) to create your own ‘rock star.’

2 Double the recognition
When you recognize someone, give them two treats and two thank you notes. Ask them to keep one set and use the other to recognize another employee. A great way to encourage peer-to-peer recognition using the “Pay it Forward” approach.

3 Say it with food
Decorate a jar of salsa for an employee who is “on fire” with whatever their tasks or goals are. Or give jelly and a thank you message to someone who always helps out in a “jam.”

4 Thanks for the memories
Celebrate achievements by creating a team scrapbook to keep in a common area. If you’re not crafty, ask employees to pitch in.

5 Every day counts
Show employees you’re paying attention by recognizing their days of service. So instead of celebrating a five-year milestone, say thanks for 1,825 days of service.

6 Getting to know you
Implement a “Get to Know You” program by spotlighting a different employee each week. Send out a group email, or reserve a space on a bulletin board to post photos of the person and fun facts about them.

7 Coffee, anyone?
Perk up your team in the afternoon with a surprise coffee break! Bring in lattes for everyone, make some cards that say “Thanks a Latte!” (or simply write this on the coffee cups), and deliver your recognition.

8

Make some noise

Download an “applause” app on your smartphone, and give deserving employees a spontaneous standing ovation throughout the day. Search “applause” in your app store.

9

Recognition that sticks

Fill a pad of sticky notes with praise and thoughtful comments. Then stick them all over an employee’s work area, a team’s area, or all over the office.

10

Make it Public

Recognize employees in front of their peers. This makes the recognition more meaningful and reinforces desired behaviors to the rest of the team.

11

Serve Up Lunch

Recognize your heroes with a surprise lunch. Try bringing in a few large “hero” sandwiches with all the fixings.

12

Show How Much you Value Staff

Write your team a check for “One Million Thanks.” Enlarge a check on a copier machine, or order one online at <https://www.bigcheckstore.com>.

13

Get to Know Staff

Get to know a new hire or an employee with whom you don’t normally interact. Information you learn, such as favorite food or color, could be useful in future recognition efforts.

14

Welcome Staff in a Profound Way

Create a “Welcome” flyer for new employees to let them know you are excited to have them on board. Get other employees to sign it.

15

Meaningful Acknowledgement

Studies show the first 30 days on the job make the biggest impression. Write thank you notes to employees on their one-month anniversary and annually thereafter.

16

Timely Recognition is Important

Employee recognition has more impact when it’s timely, so follow the five-minute rule. When you hear or see a positive comment about an employee, recognize that person in five minutes or less.

17

Make it Public

Use your company’s marketing site and Facebook page to recognize staff accomplishments. It’s a great way to show off your team to prospective families and recruits.

18 Acknowledge the Hard Stuff
Every workplace has challenging situations. Reward employees who keep their cool and composure with Popsicles®, ice cream, or a cold beverage.

19 Make it Personal
Employees love showing off their pets. Have them bring in a photo of a current or past pet. Post the photos in the team area, and see who can guess which pet belongs to which employee.

20 Acknowledge Wisdom
Create a “Wisdom Wall” filled with quotes from your employees. It will show your team that you respect them and serve as inspiration for peers. Update the wall regularly.

21 On the Spot Recognition
Go to a dollar store and pick out a variety of low-cost gifts to use for on-the-spot recognition. Try to connect the item to an act. For example, a mini-flashlight for someone whose positive attitude shines in dark situations.

22 Recognize the Good
Create a poster for each employee with a positive attribute for each letter in his or her name. For example: Pam = Patient, Attentive, and Multi-tasker.

23 Acknowledge Personal Achievements or Milestones
Did an employee run a marathon, donate blood, volunteer at an animal shelter, or buy a new house? Acknowledge personal achievements during meetings or in writing.

24 Relevance Matters
It’s often the thought that counts in recognition. If an employee likes rock climbing, give them a book on rock climbing with an inscription of your thanks. Or if someone is a movie buff, give a movie theater gift card.

25 The Power of Personal Thanks
Call an employee to your office to say thank you. Since many employees assume that something is wrong when they are called to a supervisor’s office, they will be especially pleased to receive your honest gratitude for a job well done.

26 Regular Celebrations
Celebrate diversity by taking your team “around the world” with monthly luncheons or potlucks. Have a different international theme each month. Try serving pasta for Italy, tacos for Mexico, croissants with ham and cheese for France, etc. Print and post national flags in the break room.

27 Acknowledge the Key Players
Create custom baseball cards for your employees. Include a photo and statistic (e.g., Worked 12 months without being absent, Achieved CDA May, 20xx, 15 years with ABC Learning Center). Use these acknowledgements during a Staff Meeting or Retreat.