

“In the arena of human life the honors and rewards fall to those who show their good qualities in action.”

- Aristotle (384–322 BC) Greek philosopher,
- studied under Plato, tutored Alexander the Great
Nicomachean Ethics (4th c. BC)

Easy Ways to Reward Your Staff

By Michael A. Taylor

One of the bigger challenges of being a manager or business owner is figuring out how to motivate and reward your employees. One of the key points in effectively managing human resources is to catch people doing something right and tell them about it immediately. It takes some work to recognize and properly reward your staff. The payoff can be huge – in a highly motivated and loyal crew that enjoys their work enough to become long-term employees that represent you and your business well. You may also find that you have created a culture where people are eager to apply to work for you because of your reputation of treating employees well. I have a few suggestions on ways you can reward your staff – without breaking the bank.

On a daily basis you can try to greet every person by name and with a genuine smile. I want my employees to know that I value their place in our organization. Getting personally involved has limits but a simple; “I hope your dog is doing better after his surgery” or “I’m sorry your son was sick and missed school yesterday” shows compassion and interest and means a lot to a person. Take every opportunity to praise them in public. A little goes a long way. It takes a little planning and preparation but rewarding your employees does not have to be expensive. Being effective may require a concerted effort and a time commitment but the effort does pay off.

At a recent Gymnastics conference, Steve Greeley from Imagymnation in Simi Valley, CA shared with the attendees of a business round table his experience in hosting an extremely successful Christmas party for his employees. He presented gifts and presents for his staff and the event has turned into an annual event that his workers look forward to all year. His success in appreciating his staff reminded me of a staff party I facilitated a few years ago; a little breakfast party that cost me less than \$100 (including pancakes) in which I was able to reward a staff of 15. I created awards for my workers that ranged from a pair of hand painted rubber gloves for the PreSchool teacher who I recognized for having cleaned up the most “accidents” after the little ones to a roll of Scotch tape for the employee who had “stuck with it through a tough time.” It was a challenge to my creativity but I was able to come up with things like a trowel for my receptionist for being able to “smooth things over with the irate parents” and a box of nails for the employee who was “tough as nails” and never missed a day of work. Little trophies with pipe cleaner figures in blocks of foam were a huge hit. The important thing throughout was we all laughed and enjoyed ourselves.

A great reward for your staff is when you help make work fun. Just like we want our kids to enjoy Gymnastics, we want our teachers to enjoy their jobs. Have little birthday celebrations – complete with a goofy hat and a cupcake with a candle. Give them a hand-written thank you card. Let them choose the music at the gym. Ring a bell and make public announcements lauding their accomplishments. Every employee is unique and different things work for different people. You will have to decide what motivates your staff. The key is to be sincere, do the best you can without worrying about not doing it well enough.

One thing to remember is to avoid the word “but” when rewarding a job well done. It takes away everything you may be trying to accomplish by saying, “You did a great job on that project, but I would have...” or “Nice work, but did you ever try...”

If you still haven't decided how to reward your employees, I have included a list of suggestions below. There are also a number of great business management books available, from *The One Minute Manager* by Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson to Bob Nelson's *1001 Ways to Reward Employees* just to name a couple. If you have a program that has worked for you, I invite you to contact me so I can add to this list:

- Say thanks
- Smile
- Discounts for staff
- Promote from within
- Give credit
- Birthday cards
- Bring treats
- Movie passes
- Buy a soda
- Lunch with the boss
- Staff uniforms
- Newsletter recognition
- Send to conferences
- Special parking place
- Employee of the month
- Day off
- Free massage
- Casual dress day
- Book or magazine
- CD or tape
- Nominate them for an award
- Wash their car
- Have a contest
- Ask for their advice
- Gift certificates
- Name an award in their honor
- Photo on the wall of fame
- Thank you card
- Boss for a day
- Make a button
- Pat on the back
- Handshake
- Bottle of water
- Special coupon
- Listen
- E-mail a thank you

About the Author:

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