


EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION IDEAS

A decorative graphic consisting of several parallel white lines of varying thicknesses, slanted diagonally from the bottom-left towards the top-right, located in the lower right quadrant of the image.

Effective employee recognition can drive performance and increase retention. And it doesn't have to take a lot of money—or planning. Check out these 12 creative, thoughtful, and low- or no-cost ideas that leaders can use to give employees the recognition they deserve.

The image features a solid blue background. On the right side, there are several white, parallel diagonal lines that create a sense of movement and depth, extending from the bottom right towards the top right.

1. Recognize employees in front of their peers

- This makes the recognition more meaningful and reinforces desired behaviors to the rest of the team.

2. Recognize your heroes with a surprise lunch

- Try bringing in a few large “hero” sandwiches with all the fixings.

3. 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.

4. Create a “Welcome” flyer

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

5. Write thank you notes to employees on their one-month anniversary

- Studies show the first 30 days on the job make the biggest impression.

6. Follow the five-minute rule

- 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.

7. Display photos of pets

- 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.

8. Create a “Wisdom Wall”

- 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.

9. Low-cost gifts

- 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.