

Show your team you care: 7 ideas for employee recognition and appreciation

Expressing employee gratitude can positively impact employees and the work they perform for your company.

Recognition leads to higher levels of productivity and retention, and recent surveys show that 82% of employees report being happier at work when their accomplishments are recognised. In turn, this leads to less burnout and turnover while creating a better place to work for everyone.

This means that showing appreciation to your employees is no longer a nice-to-have, but a critical need if you want an engaged workforce.

That's one of the reasons why so many organisations have created staff recognition programs for their workers, and if this is something *you* are yet to implement, read the rest of this article to discover 7 employee recognition and appreciation ideas that will help you show your team you care.

1. Learn how individual employees best receive appreciation

There's no denying that recognition is a great way to drive engagement at work, as evidenced by the graph below:

When giving appreciation to individuals, it's always a good idea to take the time to determine *how* each person best receives appreciation.

For instance, some employees appreciate public recognition, which means you'll do well to give them a shout-out at the next all-hands meeting. This will likely be more impactful in making the individual feel appreciated than a private reward of something like a gift voucher.

On the other hand, other employees balk at the idea of having management laud the great work they're doing to all the other workers in the company. For these individuals, a private show of appreciation is ideal.

So, for instance, you might offer them a bit of company swag, such as a branded hoodie, notepad, or mug. This is a practical gift that will allow them to show off pride for their achievement on *their* terms.

Alternatively, you might offer a private lunch with just the two of you where you can have a meaningful one-on-one conversation and the opportunity to express in person just how much you appreciate that person's work.

2. Generate unique appreciation ideas for each employee

You should never offer generic thanks to your employees. Any time you recognise their effort, make sure to do so with thoughtfulness and sincerity.

Your recognition should be specific to the employee's preferences, values, and the action that warranted the special recognition.

Make sure you choose creative rewards that show your consideration. Food, bonuses, promotions, and time off are all great rewards, but there are ways to show your gratitude that are more unique and creative.

Here are a few ideas to consider:

Continuing Education: This is something you must encourage among all your workers — whether you help pay for access to online courses, other educational events, offer time off, etc. It's also a great option when considering ways to show employee recognition and appreciation. This shows them that you appreciate them so much you want to see their career continue to grow as opposed to bosses who leave their employees to be locked into dead-end jobs.

Help with the Commute: Depending on the type of business you have, some of your workers may incur additional expenses for excessive commuting, parking, etc. Even if you can't cover all transportation costs, consider helping out by paying for things such as bus tickets, parking garage passes, etc. You can reimburse some or all of these types of expenses to help your employees.

Their Own Holiday: You can create a *staff appreciation* holiday that is dedicated specifically to your top-performing workers. Plan something special for everyone, and if you can, you might even close the shop and let the world know that your staff is off on their special day. It's an even better idea to plan something that you can do together rather than simply giving people the day off. For instance, you might have a company barbecue or book a riverboat cruise, and so on.

Don't Miss Anniversaries: A recent study shows that employees are likely to leave after just one year of employment. Millennials, in particular, move around a lot more in their careers. Because of this, it's important not to let anniversaries of employees' hire go unnoticed. Make sure you reward them for staying and call attention to them by creating short fun videos such as [Movavi Video editor](#) (my personal favourite) about their journey so far to ensure that you not only make them feel appreciated, but other staff members will see that this is something you appreciate.

3. Use surveys to find out what your employees like

When determining what to offer as rewards for employees, you can either try to make an educated guess as to what they might appreciate or you can use surveys and other tools to help you [learn exactly what your employees like](#) so you can generate creative ideas that will really show them how much you appreciate their efforts. One tool you can use is [Connecteam](#).

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This tool lets you measure employee engagement, and you can ask different questions about management's behaviour, how challenging the job is, career development, relationships with coworkers, work-life balance, and much more.

This will give you insights into your staff's likes, interests, and preferences, making it a lot easier to find relevant gifts for showing appreciation and recognition.

And remember, you can always surprise them just to show your appreciation.

For instance, send them treats such as cookies, bagels, pizzas, etc. – just because! Don't wait for someone to do something that you consider recognition-worthy before showing them how much you appreciate them.

4. Show appreciation for the whole team through activities

When expressing appreciation for a group, there are many different ways you can go about it. For instance, you might consider the following:

Catered Meals: If your organisation doesn't offer catered lunches, consider hosting one for your team as a way to show recognition and appreciation. If you already have catered meals, you might add a little something extra like a chocolate fountain or a s'mores bar to make the meal special.

Cookie Deliveries for Remote Workers: For those who can't make it to the office lunch, make them feel included by sending them scrumptious treats with a handwritten note at the same time others are gathering.

Surprise Time off: If you can, surprise your team members with the day off as a way to thank them for their hard work. Everyone loves an unexpected day to relax, spend time with their loved ones, or treat themselves.

Wellness Day: With so much going on around employee wellness these days, why not bring self-care activities into the office? This is a great way to show your employees just how much you value their hard work. You can organise things such as mindfulness sessions, on-site massages, fitness classes for the team, etc.

Sponsored Volunteer Day: If your organisation loves to give back to the community, sponsoring a volunteer day is a great idea that will allow you to kill multiple birds with one stone. Your team will get to perform good deeds together (for instance, at a soup kitchen or animal shelter, etc.), and, at the same time, you'll be able to strengthen relationships between team members and build your company culture.

Assaf Cohen, who runs gaming studio *Solitaire Bliss* combines all of these

ideas.

“We’ve hosted surprise wellness offsites in places like Miami to show appreciation for our remote workers. Our team loves it, it helps create work life balance, and brings our team together.”

5. Express appreciation privately to individual employees

Not all employees appreciate public shows of recognition, and if you need to show recognition to individual employees privately, this can be done in a number of ways.

For instance, you might consider:

Positive Feedback: Expressing appreciation doesn’t always have to be a grand gesture. Sometimes, something as simple as sharing positive feedback can be extremely powerful. Make sure you do this on a regular basis, whether in person, via [email marketing tools](#), or on social media, etc. This makes for effective employee recognition, as long as your comments are thoughtful and sincere.

Value-based Rewards: Individual employees appreciate value-based awards, such as monthly or quarterly company awards for employees who are doing exceptional jobs and exemplifying the company’s values. This will not only help you boost engagement and make employees feel more appreciated, but it also serves to ensure that everyone in your organisation is aligned.

Experiential Rewards: Yet another awesome way to show gratitude to your top performers is to invest a little money to give them an experiential reward. There are companies like [Blueboard](#) that allow employees to choose their preferred experience from options including skydiving, singing lessons, cooking classes, etc. Allowing them to choose the experience they want is a great way to ensure that they *truly* enjoy the rewards you give them for their hard work.

6. Maximise the Impact of Your Recognition and Appreciation

You can express the different ways of recognition to individuals or teams, privately or publicly. However, there are some best practices to follow if you want your show of gratitude to have maximum impact.

Make it Regular. First, it's important that you show your appreciation on a regular basis. If you only demonstrate employee gratitude once in a while, it's not likely to be effective. Go beyond giving one-time shout-outs by creating a *culture of feedback*. You need to give recognition consistently, but not so often that it reduces the impact. So, as an example, you might plan efforts to show appreciation on a quarterly basis.

Make it Immediate. In addition to providing regular shows of gratitude, you must also make sure that appreciation is immediate. Soon after an employee does something that warrants it, your recognition should immediately follow. Don't wait too long between the positive action and your recognition of that employee, otherwise, it loses its meaning when the individual doesn't even remember the reason they're being rewarded.

Make it Specific. And while we're on the subject, make sure your show of gratitude is *specific*. Giving a generic "thanks" after someone has put in a ton of effort into a project takes away much of the impact and isn't a great way to show appreciation. So, make sure when you give recognition to employees that it is specific to their actions, values, and preferences.

7. Plan to recognise and reward employees

It's often easy to overlook the efforts of employees or to put off giving recognition of appreciation when managers have so many things on their plate.

Luckily, there are tools that can make it easy for you to celebrate your employees and show your appreciation for all their efforts.

Below are three top employee appreciation programs to consider. These platforms have standout features for ordering, administering, and curating your employee recognition program that will make you look good to your team.

If you're wondering which tool makes the best option for your employee recognition program, check out their [demo videos](#) to see if one fits your needs best.

Bonusly: This tool integrates directly with other communication tools and allows employees to choose the rewards they want. You'll be able to activate peer-to-peer recognition, as well as learn where your team members excel with detailed analytics.

Assembly: This platform puts appreciation at the heart of your company culture thanks to peer-to-peer incentives and rewards. Assembly offers free pricing for up to 10 seats and you can create customisable culture rewards with options from over 600 charities and gift cards.

Caroo: This is one of the easiest ways to celebrate employee anniversaries, birthdays, etc. Recipients have the option to customise their gifts for guaranteed satisfaction and you can send gifts seamlessly using the roster upload. The platform also has order tracking and many other features that make it easy for you to manage your employee recognition and appreciation program.

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This article has provided you with 7 ways to show your team you care. Just remember, there are tons more employee recognition and appreciation ideas you can use.

Most of all, don't forget to give sincere compliments and to say "thanks" more often. Those are powerful words that are often underestimated and yet can be pivotal in building a work environment where employees feel happier and more appreciated.

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