

## Good Leaders Know the Value of Motivation

Do you recall how you felt when your hard work on a special project when unnoticed by your supervisor? Or, worse...someone else was given the recognition you deserved? Those experiences should have been a great learning experience about how important personal recognition is to most employees. The lowly undergraduate student in Psychology can talk to you about the great motivation theorists and what they say motivates people. If you took *Introduction to Management 101*, you may remember that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs showed up about Chapter Six, along with McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, Herzberg's Hygiene and Motivation Factors, and of course, Skinner's theory of reinforcing the behavior you want by providing a reward. You do not need to be a behavioral scientist to understand that everyone is motivated by "What's in this for ME?" and "What about ME?"

There are many misconceptions about what motivates employees. The cynical say it is all about money. Money is the **key** to keeping people motivated. Not true. Money matters because it helps people get what they really want. Surveys by renowned researchers, such as Dr. Ken Blanchard, author of *The One Minute Manager*, show that "appreciation for a job well done" is number one and "being in on things" is number two. We also know that employees leave jobs for less money when the new employment is more closely aligned with the values of the employee.

It is true that individuals are motivated by highly personal preferences. Some seek to serve and some seek to work in specific a geographical location, regardless of the compensation. There is no question that generational difference is a factor. Baby Boomers are motivated by companies where there is an emphasis on teamwork. Generation X and Generation Y are motivated by paid time off and work/life balance. The clever leader seeks to meet the needs of every generation and looks for motivators that appeal to all generations.

When the economy is poor and the company has very limited resources, keeping employees motivated becomes even more important. With limited resources, it is difficult to find ways to keep morale up while keeping costs down. To assist those seeking low cost and no cost motivators, I conducted a survey of a wide range of companies, both large and small, and asked what they are doing to motivate their employees. I also searched the Internet for suggestions from those who spend their time helping companies keep employees motivated. The results are listed here.

1. A visit from the top executive in the workplace? Employees want to know the CEO cares and the presence of executive management in the American workplace creates a boost in morale.
2. Leadership Team cooks or serves food brought in for staff, such as bagels and fruit in the morning; ice cream cart stops by your desk in the afternoon; sandwich bar at lunch, or grill burgers and hotdogs in the shipping bay.
3. Breakfast with the President. A small group of 3-4 and no conversation about work!
4. Cook Off. Employees offer up their best version of chili, ribs, cake, cookies, smoothies, salads, etc. Employees taste and judge. Prizes are red, blue, and white ribbons, just like the state fair. (quarterly event) and bragging rights.
5. Afternoon Birthday celebration with cake and coffee or what about Hot Fudge Monday... (low fat frozen yogurt with chocolate sauce after lunch in the break room?) Low cost, low fat...lots of fun.
6. Fruit Flowers for the Team. (Edible fruit that is shared no matter who receives it).
7. Notice to all employees of an employee's special performance.
8. Give employees credit for their good ideas.
9. Ask employees for their opinion – Any employee could have a genius idea – new or veteran.
10. Birthday card mailed to employee's home. Have someone address your envelopes; put the mail date where the stamp goes and then put the stamp on top on mail date. Sign each one personally.
11. Letter of recognition in employee's permanent file.

12. Have a "Bragging Board" section in company newsletter. ‘
13. Paid time off for whatever reason possible.
14. Arrive late/leave early ticket. – This is a simple credit card size card that lets the employee arrive an hour late or leave an hour early.
15. Recognition at an important meeting, especially when other employees are present.
16. Spot Money. Have lunch on me! A \$10.00 bill.
17. Gift cards to local restaurant, theater or video rental store. \$25.00 is the max - to avoid the taxation issue.
18. Flex time. Come in late or leave early when the business allows.
19. Midnight Visit – Leadership team visits the third shift regularly to assure they are not forgotten. Every Department Director must visit third shift once every quarter.
20. Special parking space.
21. \$25.00 holiday gift card.
22. Employee Health Fair – vendors (medical insurance company, health club, Red Cross, American Cancer Society) provide free screenings and information.
23. Private verbal praise.
24. Team potluck celebration. – Heritage day. Employees of a nation (Mexico, Haiti, Germany, China, etc.) are responsible for arranging the food of their nation. Lunch room can be decorated with flag, pictures. Great way to recognize and promote diversity.
25. Letter about employee’s accomplishments to their family. Very effective way to build loyalty.
26. Food: all-day suckers, pizza, donuts or maybe even something healthy.
27. “Get Out of Meeting” card.
28. Shop the Internet Today. Allow employees to use the Internet during lunch for anything except prohibited sites (adult content) and social networks, such as Twitter, MySpace and Facebook.
29. Notice about employee accomplishments in local newspaper.
30. Gas Up on us! Tank of gasoline for employee’s car. (This is a big deal today.)
31. Notice about employee accomplishments on company’s web site.
32. Make your employee look good in front of his/her spouse/significant other; you’ll have won a large amount of loyalty.
33. Make a company contribution to the charity of employee choice as recognition to an employee.
34. Gift of logo clothing if employee usually pays for it.
35. Good Health Fruit Day – Fruit baskets placed around the building for employees to enjoy all day.
36. Relaxation Visit – Award to employee who has rushed a project or met a tight deadline. A gift certificate for a spa visit or massage.
37. Rent a massage chair. Have it delivered to the office and let employees use it all day for 30 minutes at a time. Who? Draw names.
38. Subscribe to <http://www.workplacenet.com/> and get discount coupons for employees to use.
39. Trivia and game day. Distribute the game questions and give prizes for first one returned with correct answers (lunch time game event).
40. Portrait Wall. The walls of the reception room are filled with employee photos. Each has employee name and year the employee joined the company. People love to see their own photo on the wall. Great way to learn and remember name of new employees.
41. Discounts on products and services (phone service, auto repair, health club) arranged by the company for all employees.
42. Trivia/Jeopardy: Win a prize; one topic is company history, products, services, locations, mission statement, customers. Other topics are designed for each generation (Traditionals, Generation X, Baby Boomers and Generation Y). Hot summer day prize is a Popsicle!
43. Cookie Day – Everyone gets a ticket to redeem for juice/milk and a cookie in HR. While there, the HR staff asks if there is anything they can do, a problem they can solve, or information they can offer about benefits, etc.

44. Beautiful Baby contest. Employees enter their own baby picture. Employees buy ballots for \$1.00 each to vote for the “cutest kid.” Money goes to winner’s favorite children’s charity. Employee gets bragging rights.
45. Food in vending machines that recognize the diversity of employees; magazines in break room in languages employees read (English, Spanish, French, Chinese).

An unusual and novel idea: Companies that receive product samples from vendors allow employees to “buy” samples with Internal Gift Cards. This novel ideal involves giving employees Award Cards as special recognition for their good work. They may be awarded in different denominations (25-50-100 points). They have no cash value but may be used to buy sample products, which are displayed with point values attached. Employees are allowed to spend their “points” at a specified time on a first-come and first-served basis. You can get a really nice hammer for a hundred points. Such a deal! Many of these suggestions require very little planning and few dollars. A small employee relations committee can make it happen and will have lots of fun doing it. Whether you are the CEO, CFO, COO, CHRO, or work in any other leadership position, you have the additional duty to be the CMO – The Chief Motivation Officer. When the company is struggling, it is the duty of its leaders to avoid the gloom and doom attitude that affects productivity. The attitude of employees is always top down driven. No matter how difficult, leaders remember they set the tone and accept the responsibility to keep morale high.

*This advisory was prepared by management consultant, Nancye Combs. This advisory is not designed to replace the services of a competent legal advisor and is not specific to the laws of any specific state. It is a human resources advisory. Nancye Combs is the endorsed consultant for STAFDA (Specialty Tools & Fasteners Distributors Association, HARDI (Heating Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Distributors International and PEI (Petroleum Equipment Institute), NAHAD, the National Association of Hose Accessories Distributors, and OPEESA, the Outdoor Power Equipment and Engine Service Association. She has more than four decades of practical experience in human resources and serves clients on four continents. A recognized authority, Nancye speaks, writes, and offers expert witness testimony on management practices. She is a University instructor for human resources professionals who are seeking to become nationally certified by the Human Resources Certification Institute. Many of her colleagues provided information for this advisory. You can reach her at:*

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