

Recognition Can Be Rewarding

People work for money but go the extra mile for recognition, praise, and rewards.
- Dale Carnegie

Our community bank employee engagement survey generates performance index scores for seven important management categories... communication, empowerment and support, leadership, recognition and motivation, supervision and coaching, teamwork, and training and development.

Looking at the historical performance trends across all seven categories, we see changes in performance over time. From 2005 through 2015 the index score for Recognition and Motivation experienced some significant changes. The trend is illustrated in the following chart. Each data point reflects the average index score for a five-year period. The rating index ranges from -2 to +2.



As you examine the results, consider the industry conditions through each five-year period. The average score for 2005 to 2010 includes a recession and the initial stages of recovery. The 2010 to 2015 period included advances in technology and new banking procedures. The 2015 to 2020 average includes an extended period of low interest rates.

The 2010 to 2015 decline represented a challenge for community banks. The uncertainty generated by the recession and slow recovery had an impact on banks, customers, and staff. If you examine your employee engagement, you might have experienced a similar trend.

While there are no single solutions to increase employee engagement related to recognition and rewards, it is possible to influence employee motivation if they feel properly recognized...consistently, over time. If you're looking for ideas to fuel employee recognition, you might enjoy the following summary. The ideas were posted by the University of Washington a few years ago. We're hoping the list will provide some inspiration for affordable ways you can enhance your performance related to recognition and rewards.

No Cost Recognition Ideas

- Post a thank you note on an employee's office door or desk.
- Take time to explain to new employees the norms and culture of your department and organization.
- Give special assignments to people who show initiative.
- Arrange for a team to present the results of its efforts to upper management.
- Encourage and recognize staff who pursue continuing education.

Continued...

Recognition, continued

- Create and post an 'Employee Honor Roll' in a general staff area.
- Acknowledge individual achievements by using the employee's name when conducting meetings or newsletters.
- Send a handwritten thank-you card
- Give employees an extra-long lunch break.
- Establish a place to display memos, posters, photos and so on, recognizing progress towards goals and thanking individual employees for their help.
- Swap a task with an employee for a day - his/her choice.
- Establish a 'Behind the Scenes' award specifically for those whose actions are not usually in the limelight.
- Keep in mind that managers should serve as coaches to indirectly influence rather than demand desired behavior.
- Present State of the Area reports periodically to your employees acknowledging the work and contributions of individuals and teams.
- At a monthly staff meeting, award an Employee of the Month and invite co-workers at the meeting to say why that person is deserving of the award.
- Recognize employees who actively serve the community.
- Have staff vote for top manager, supervisor, employee and rookie of the year.
- Name a continuing recognition award after an outstanding employee.
- Include an employee in a 'special' meeting.
- Allow employees to attend meetings in your place when you are not available.
- Create an Above and Beyond the Call of Duty (ABCD) Award.
- Ask your boss to attend a meeting with your employees during which you thank individuals and groups for their specific contributions.
- Pop in at the first meeting of a special project team and express your appreciation for their involvement.
- Send a letter to all team members at the conclusion of a project thanking them for their participation.
- Start an employee recognition program. Give points for attendance, punctuality, teamwork, etc. Provide gift certificates to employees who reach certain point goals.
- Find ways to reward department-specific performance.
- Plan a surprise achievement celebration for an employee or group of employees
- Start a suggestion program.
- Privately recognize employee's personal needs and challenges.
- Write a letter of praise recognizing specific contributions and accomplishments. Send a copy to senior management and the employee's personnel file.
- When you hear a positive remark about someone, repeat it to that person as soon as possible (Face-to-face is best, email or voice mail are good in a pinch).
- Call an employee to your office to thank them (don't discuss any other issue).
- If you have a department newsletter, publish a "kudos" column and ask for nominations throughout the department.
- Publicly recognize the positive impact on operations from solutions employees suggested to solve problems.
- Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee names in status reports.
- Express an interest in employee's career development goals.

Continued...

Recognition, continued

- Post a large celebration calendar in your work area. Tack on notes of recognition to specific dates.
- Create and display a banner across the work area to acknowledge an achievement.
- Greet employees by name.
- Practice positive nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate appreciation, such as smiles or a handshake.
- Support 'flex-friendly' schedules.
- Encourage employees to identify specific areas of interest in job-related skills. Then arrange for them to spend a day with an in-house expert to learn more about the topic.
- Encourage employees to participate in community volunteer efforts.
- Share verbal accolades - forward positive voice mail messages.
- Actively listen to co-workers, especially when discussing their accomplishments and contributions.
- Use 3x5 cards to write "You're special because..." statements. People can collect the cards and refer to them when things aren't going perfectly.
- Have a recognition event created by a peer group that decides what they will give and why they will give it.
- Keep a supply of appropriately funny notes that can be given as immediate rewards. Keep the supply visible - in a basket or box in your office.
- Widely publicize suggestions used and their positive impact on your department or the organization as a whole.
- When someone has spent long hours at work, send a letter of thanks to his/her home.
- Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays.

- Arrange for an outstanding employee to have lunch with a manager or director.
- Allow an employee to choose his/her next team project as a way to thank them on a completed project.
- Recognize a team accomplishment by designating that team as consultants to other teams.
- Recognize those committed to personal health and wellness.
- Smile. It's contagious.

Low to Moderate Cost Recognition Ideas

- Plan a surprise picnic.
- Create a Hall of Fame wall with photos of outstanding employees.
- Make a photo collage about a successful project that shows the people that worked on it, its stage of development and its completion and presentation.
- Find out the person's hobby and buy an appropriate gift.
- Make and deliver a fruit basket.
- Inscribe a favorite book as a gift.
- Give the person a membership or subscription to a journal that relates to their work
- Design a 'Stress Support Kit' that includes aspirin, wind-up toys, a stress ball, candy with sayings, rubber band (for stretching themselves), etc.
- Serve ice cream sundaes to all of your employees at the end of a project.
- Once a year, have a 'Staff Appreciation Day' where the managers supply, cook and serve food.

Continued...

Recognition, continued

- Serve a hero sandwich party at the end of an assignment, for a job well done.
- Give flowers to an employee at their home or office as a thank you.
- Purchase a unique pin to serve as a memento for a task well done.
- Hold informal retreats to foster communication and set goals.
- Provide a lunch for project teams once they have made interim findings. Express your appreciation.
- Give a personalized coffee cup. This could become a gift given as a top reward and become a coveted prize/accomplishment.
- Give an employee a blue ribbon for achievement.
- Give a deserving employee a mug filled with treats.
- Give a framed poem (poster or card) as a thank you.
- Give a note reading, "Thank you. You are a !" Attach a roll of Lifesavers. Come up with other unique sayings for candy gifts.
- Give a puzzle as an award to a problem solver.
- Have weekly breakfasts with groups of employees.
- Give out gold coins for a job well done.
- Bake/bring a gift (cookies, bread, etc.) for an outstanding employee or team.
- Send birthday cards to employees' homes, signed by manager or director.

Source: University of Michigan and University of Washington

Are your employees engaged?

Do they enjoy coming in to work every day?

Do they enjoy logging in from home every day?

Would they recommend employment at your bank to their friends?

If you can't answer these questions, we can help get the answers. Our Employee Engagement Survey will help you build metrics to assess your current performance and track changes over time. A properly managed employee survey can provide insights that will improve strategic decisions and help manage your development activities. If you have questions, we are here to help.

