Low/No Cost Recognition Ideas for Employees

The recognition committee has provided an extensive list of suggestions that may be used to recognize the efforts and accomplishments of staff. Please do not use cash, gift cards, debit cards or gift certificates for employee recognition; the IRS considers these gifts taxable to the employee. Before proceeding, please work with your FTC/BSC.

No cost individual and group recognition

- Smile. It’s contagious
- Support “flex-friendly” schedules
- Personally thank staff for doing a good job
- Notice and praise progress towards a goal
- Take time to meet/listen to staff; open door policy
- Involve staff in decision making process
- Acknowledge each team member’s contribution
- Provide immediate positive reinforcement
- Commend staff for small successes
- Praise the employee publicly
- Email a note of appreciation and copy the individual’s supervisor
- Post a thank you note on the employee’s door
- Encourage, enable and empower staff to excel
- Start a suggestion program
- Casual dress on Fridays
- Recognize those committed to personal health and wellness
- Encourage/recognize staff who pursue continuing education
- Encourage participation in community volunteer efforts
- Widely publicize suggestions used and the impact to the department
- Share positive feedback as soon as possible

Low cost individual recognition

- Car wash and wax
- Round of golf
- Occasional lunch or dinner
- “Kudos” candy bars
- Magazine subscription
- Theatre or movie tickets
- One day parking pass
- Nominations for quarterly staff member
- Nominations for special acknowledgements
- New/varied work or special assignment
- Attendance at work-related seminar
- Give a personalized coffee mug
- Afternoon off for project completion
- Institutional logo items
- Create a trophy to be passed around to a different employee each month
- Day off
- Day off for birthday
- Date of hire anniversary celebration

Low cost group recognition

- Intermittent parties with food or a departmental luncheon
- Occasionally hold a meeting offsite and provide a breakfast or lunch
- Outing to sporting or other events
- Years of service celebration
- Occasional free refreshments
- Host a dish-to-pass lunch and furnish a thank you dessert
- Off-campus retreats
- Team morale-building activities
- Arrange for a team to present the results of its efforts to upper management
- Intermittent breakfast with employees
- Present “State of the Department” reports to your employees acknowledging the work and contributions of individuals and teams
- Serve a treat to all of your employees at the end of a project (e.g. favorite foods or veggies, cracker and cheese trays, baked goods or sundaes)
- Schedule an afternoon or extended lunch hour to play games – board games, softball, soccer, volleyball, mini golf

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