



150+ Ideas for Low Cost or No Cost Recognition

- "Welcome to the team" flowers on the first day of work.
- Whenever something positive happens, put it in the "smile box" -- read once a week -- draw one for a winner (\$25 gift certificate).
- Put gold stars on employee computers or name badges along with note of thanks.
- Brown bag welcoming lunch to meet new employees.
- Post a sign at entry with employee's name.
- Have a group picnic with ice cream sundaes.
- Get to know exactly what an employee really wants.
- "You da" awards: Monthly trophy where individuals nominate one another.
- Written thank-you notes.
- The All-Star Award: \$50 gift certificate and paperweight (quarterly with public announcement in company newsletter).
- Department pizza party.
- Birthday club (to support department team building).
- Read letters from satisfied customers to all people at a team meeting.
- Do patient/customer survey and share the results with coworkers; post on the "Way to Go" bulletin board.
- Star Program: If employees do something beyond their normal job, they are given a star in public recognition.
- The Chief Operating Officer (COO) distributed ice cream to employees himself.
- Give an employee a giant Tootsie Roll.
- Golden Nugget award and certificate to employees who do an outstanding job.
- One-on-One Praising: Set interviews and meeting times with employees, who set the agenda.
- Dinner certificates.
- Continuous improvement team lunch.
- Trip to home office.
- Certificates for course completion.
- Shirts and jackets.
- Steak dinners.
- "Way to go" letter sent to individual and faxed to all locations.
- Vacation hours to be used whenever employee wants.
- Time off certificates.
- Safety Recognition Day: Upper management allows "goofy" hats, pies in face of managers, etc.
- Thank-you notes: Challenge middle managers to write 10 notes before the next staff meeting.
- "Smile About It": Secret shopper (retail) issues \$50 certificate on the spot for great customer service.
- Coffee cups.
- Pass-around trophy.
- Publishers Excellence Award: If you make the company money.
- Employee of the Month: Free lunches for the month.
- Online greeting cards.



- Extra Mile Award: For doing anything extra.
- Accuracy commendation.
- Managers Club Award: Voted on by employees.
- Top sales award.
- Top volunteers award.
- Take time for spontaneous peer recognition.
- Group get-togethers (tickets to Orioles game and lunch at Camden Club). Rent out movie theater.
- Casual day.
- "All Hands on Deck Meeting": Quarterly meetings with award presentations.
- Managers Club Award: Voted on by employees.
- Top sales award.
- Top volunteers award.
- Take time for spontaneous peer recognition.
- Group get-togethers (tickets to Orioles game and lunch at Camden Club).
- Rent out movie theater.
- Gift of \$50 or less, but very personal in nature.
- Flying in an employee's spouse when the employee has to be out of town for an extended period of time.
- Treating people as professionals.
- ZAPP Awards embracing empowerment philosophy (peer to peer, peer to management, etc.) within the following categories: Bright ideas, customer focus, gold star, and more.
- Empowerment training taught by company president: Teaches employees that they have the belief, ability, and opportunity to change & improve their own environment.
- Yearly awards named after commendable employees who have retired. Given to current employee who exemplifies similar characteristics.
- Extra lunch time.
- Rewards for good deeds.
- A simple "thank you."
- "Hall of Fame": Display employee awards and certificates on company's "Hall of Fame."
- Result Incentive Awards: Bonuses based on goals (such as safety); tied to group and individual incentives.
- Movie tickets.
- Peer Award: Team member to team member.
- Candy jar award to pass around among team members.
- Thank-you note from manager with penny taped to it.
- Flowers or candy with thank you card.
- Staff meeting outside the workplace in a more relaxed environment.
- Monthly off-site staff meeting over breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
- Department luncheons not relating to work.
- On-the-spot awards.
- Birthday cards.
- Welcome aboard cards for new employees.
- Verbal pats on the back.
- Morale Squad: Small group of volunteers with a small budget that they use for any type of morale building event.
- Get everyone together for a company-paid dinner.



- Floating holidays.
- Service awards for "above and beyond" performance on a project.
- Offer to do something for someone that they would not expect.
- Send an item of recognition to someone's home.
- Spontaneous appreciation: Thank-you cards that employee can cash in for small gifts.
- Spontaneous appreciation: E-mail message with copy to manager.
- Events tickets: Baseball, football, golf.
- Quarterly perfect attendance: Choice of ½-day pay or ½-day compensatory time off.
- Annual perfect attendance: Lunch with president of division and engraved pen or pencil.
- Massage therapy
- One-on-one lunch with manager.
- AIMS Award: Attractive antique gold card preprinted with a carbon set. Recipient gets the original and the copy goes to an awards committee for further consideration (among others who got the award during the same time period).
- Secret pal (peer-to-peer): Periodic gifts or remembrances commemorating special personal events.
- Free use of a cell phone for a week.
- Let employees leave work early if they are meeting their productivity goals.
- Bring something back from vacation for your staff.
- Post a letter of thanks from a customer.
- Write a letter to the spouse or family of an employee to thank him or her for the support enabling the employee to do his or her best.
- Attach thank you's to employee paychecks.
- Bring popcorn for employees to share.
- Outdoor meetings during the summer.
- Software bug-of-the-week contest.
- Decorate your business cards with stickers and a personal note -- send as a thank-you card to others. For example, a light bulb sticker for good ideas/suggestions.
- Be creative with birthdays. Instead of a cake, have a balloon tied to the person's chair that everyone can sign. Send an e-mail reminder to other staff members asking them to stop by and give well wishes.
- "Lifesaver Awards" -- Rolls of decorated Lifesavers candy given quarterly to high achievers with e-mail announcement of individuals and their achievements sent to the division by senior vice president. Lifesavers delivered personally by the senior vice president.
- Name tags with the number of years noted -- in colors!
- Business cards personalized with nicknames!
- Give out \$2 bills -- these always have a longer-lasting and more meaningful impact than \$1 bills. Probably because the recipient appreciates the effort to go to the bank made by the presenter.
- Take employees to a really nice restaurant and make a toast to each employee for their effort.
- Buy a very large bottle of wine and have everyone sign it in commemoration of a special team achievement. Display the bottle in your office to remind employees of the achievement whenever they visit.
- Give out free sodas to employees on hot days.
- Have a marshmallow fight.



- Always take time to greet your team members.
- Give daily feedback on employee performance.
- Give praise publicly.
- Acknowledge employee milestones.
- Give employees company products in thanks.
- Time off for completing tasks on time.
- Thank-you doughnuts for the team.
- Personal recognition given directly to key employees by senior management (direct manager steps out).
- Put a Velcro wall in your parking lot and let all the employees have fun launching themselves onto the wall or just watching.
- Star coffee mugs
- Applause cards with balloons attached to be given to employees by their supervisors.
- Monthly cash reward for top sales producer.
- Mugs and t-shirts commemorating achievements.
- Bouquet of flowers given to employee who keeps it for an hour then passes it on to an employee he or she feels deserve it. That employee keeps it for an hour before passing it on. This can go on as long as the flowers stay fresh.
- Bouquet of thank yous.
- Recognition in company newsletter.
- Write three things you appreciate about each member of your team and give it to them.
- Lunch barbecue for employees hosted by management.
- "Night-on-the-town" certificates including childcare.
- Catch people doing something right!
- Celebrate holidays not usually celebrated such as Polish Independence Day and summer solstice.
- Take a ferry ride along with sack lunches as a field trip.
- Let individual departments set up their own recognition programs.
- Thank people publicly by e-mail.
- Pizza certificates -- good for a free pizza.
- Give out large, gold chocolate coins.
- Team treats (cookies, bagels, lattes).
- Ping-pong table.
- Tickets to sports events.
- Handwritten notes.
- Company-wide morale-building meetings (music/slide shows).
- Flexible work arrangements (starting/ending time).
- Adoption assistance.
- Recognize improvement, not just top performers!
- When introducing new employees to current employees, describe each current employee with an example of something great that he or she did on the job.
- Promote from within.
- Free soda, juice, or coffee.
- Give employee a small gift relative to his/her hobby.
- Reserve a front parking spot for an employee.
- Wash employee's car.



- Top manager calls employee to thank him/her.
- Call an employee into your office just to thank him/her. Don't discuss anything else.
- Help your employees when they are under pressure, but don't be the "boss." Ask how you can help, and then do what you're told to help out.
- Whenever an employee achieves a major success, allow them to blow a whistle or clang a bell. Each department can have its own signal of success.
- Recognize people on your e-mail bulletin board or marquee. Keep it there all day and ask others to add their own.

Source: Bob Nelson, www.nelson-motivation.com

