

The Best Employee Incentive is Recognition

This post was provided by Erin Palmer on behalf of Villanova University's online programs. Villanova offers several human resources programs online such as their [PHR certification prep course](#) in addition to their [master's degree in human resources](#) online.

In the current economy, many employers have had to scale back on bonuses and commissions while prodding their employees to do more for less. If you don't have an employee incentive program built into your budget, you're in luck. Fortunately, there is mounting evidence that the best employee incentive programs have nothing to do with monetary prizes, but instead involve the relationship that employers build with their workers. That's not to say that a bonus or gift incentive isn't appreciated, but it is wise to look for ways you can connect with your workers to help them be at their most productive.

Show you care

Many employees respond best when they feel their company cares about them and their ideas. [Unhappy employees](#) are less likely to perform at their best. How do you show you care? Sure, monetary incentives are great, but after a while that Olive Garden gift card gets a little stale. Make a genuine effort to show that you not only care about your employees' work projects, but that you also care about them. It's simple really. Take the time to make small-talk and express an interest in your employees' family life and extracurricular activities. Praise workers who have done a good job, and remember that a little bit of kindness goes a long way.

Employees who feel that their company cares about them will typically return the favor and care about their company. The worker who cares about his or her company is also going to care more about his or her job duties and will consequently perform better. It's a common sense principle that is too often overlooked.

Give attention to your employees' goals

Investing in your employees' success will give you great returns. Take an active approach and talk to employees about their goals. Create an atmosphere that is conducive to employee growth by making time outside of annual reviews to find out what employees really want to do and what they're working toward.

You may find that some of your workers are great at the projects you've assigned to them, but they also have innovative solutions to other issues that have arisen in your business. You may learn that they consider what they're doing now to be a stepping stone, and that's okay. Promotion is a huge incentive. By helping your employees reach their goals, you will be bettering your company. You can always hire someone else to fill entry-level positions that ambitious employees may vacate, but you can't always re-create the chance to mold a manager from the

ground up.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

You're a busy person, but so are your employees. There are few things as disheartening to staff as to work extremely hard on a presentation and then to look around the conference room only to notice that the manager is busy on his or her laptop or mobile device. Unplug during meetings, and give your employees the full respect and attention they deserve. That also goes for not answering emails or the phone when you're in the presence of one of your employees.

Show appreciation

Finally, use manners. A simple "thank you" for a job well done is a great way to show employees you care and you noticed their hard work. You can thank employees in the presence of others, but that isn't necessary. A genuine show of appreciation can go a long way toward helping an employee feel recognized and re-energizing their desire to do a job well.