

Surviving a Challenging Market

This column will answer the most pressing questions we receive from members struggling in today's challenging market.



CONSTRUCT | MARKET | PROTECT

QI just laid off several employees, how do I keep remaining staff working at peak performance and maintain a positive mood in the workplace?

AWhen handing out raises and bonuses isn't an option, two of the simplest ways to boost morale and performance are recognition and acknowledgement.

Motivational expert Frederick Herzberg reported in the Harvard Business Review that recognition is 300 percent more important to motivate employees than the size of their salary or compensation package. With an expression of appreciation making such a strong impact, companies can improve morale without spending a dime.

In these lean times, how can an employer show their staff the love?

Make Recognition a Daily Habit

Use genuine everyday expressions of appreciation. Don't wait for big events to recognize staff members. When deserved, acknowledge them often and in small ways. An e-mail, quick call or even a high five in the hallway are simple ways to show you appreciate their efforts.

Celebrate in Public

Former President and CEO of GE, Jack Welch advises, "When an individual does something notable, make a big deal about it." This not only motivates the employee receiving recognition, but impacts others who witness the kudos. Use memos, company newsletters, staff meetings or any company gathering to recognize individuals and their achievements.

Acknowledge in Private

Employees also appreciate when their efforts are acknowledged privately.

Ask rather than tell

Develop the habit of asking questions rather than telling

employees everything you think they need to know. This creates an atmosphere of collaboration and is also a powerful form of recognition because employees feel respected and see that their opinions are valued.

Recognize an Individual in Relation to the Company's Core Values

For instance, when an employee provides exceptional service, acknowledge that by saying something like, "That's exactly what we mean when we talk about customer service our way."

Delegate to Employees

Delegate responsibilities that expand your employees' contributions. Effective delegation increases trust and gives employees the sense that they are growing with the company.

Be Real

Be genuine in your recognition. Phony praise and false accolades are easily sniffed out and send an unintended negative message to your staff.

Little Things Do Mean A Lot

A Cleveland-based supplier of print and promotional products provided cheap surprises for their employees—the most popular? Managers cleaned the snow off staff members' cars. Founder of the company, Greg Muzzillo, says the innovative perk was fun and he has no intention of giving up his pursuit of unique ways to reward employees. He also expects 2010 to be one of his best years on record, despite the poor economy and layoffs.

Laying off employees is no fun and the mantra, "you should just be happy to have a job" won't improve morale around the office. As companies struggle in this slowed economy, the difference between stopping or accelerating business is your employees' hard work and dedication. Broadcasting to remaining staff your appreciation of their efforts will pay off for everyone—you, your company and your employees.