

# EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT *and* APPRECIATION

**Top Tips to Support and Respect Your Employees**



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# 10 Creative Ways to Show Employee Appreciation



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As an employer, your workers are your lifelines. Each employee is a valuable addition to your team, and it's important they feel that way.

It's easy to say "thank you" or "good job" to recognize exceptional performance or dedication; but there are countless ways to show your support and respect for your employees. Business News Daily asked business owners and experts to share the best ways to make your employees feel more appreciated.

## **1. Use a corporate gamification system.**

"Each staff member could claim tasks of their choosing and would receive the point values associated with the tasks upon completion. These points could be redeemed by staff members at a corporate rewards portal for anything ranging from an extra vacation and work-from-home days to company-paid continuing education. It's one thing to appreciate employees in the way that makes sense to you, but the gamification platform we used allowed people to be appreciated in a way that was most meaningful to each individual." – *Josh Braaten, CEO and cofounder of Brandish Insights*

## **2. Let employees give and receive ‘props.’**

“At Badger Maps, we like to show appreciation on a regular basis and recognize employees for their work. The way we do this is that we all set aside some time at the end of the day every Friday to give props at our ‘TGIF meeting.’ Anyone on the team can give ‘props’ to anyone else on the team, which fosters an atmosphere of appreciation, respect and teamwork. It’s a time to recognize coworkers for their accomplishments and contributions that week in front of the group and show them respect for working hard and having done something great.” – *Steven Benson, founder and CEO of Badger Maps*

## **3. Feed them.**

“Bring in donuts or have a pizza party at lunch on the company dime. People ... like to be fed. This type of reward will not only bring your office together [and] ... strengthen their interpersonal relationships, but it will also give them all the feeling of being appreciated.” – *Tyler Butler, founder and principal of 11Eleven Consulting*

## **4. Express your gratitude on social media.**

“We recognize our employees on their birthdays and service anniversaries on our social channels. Each post will include a photo and something that highlights that employee’s contribution to the organization or an interesting fact that their co-workers and others may not know about them.” – *Michelle Cardin, marketing director of Shawmut Communications Group*

## **5. Plan company-wide trips.**

“After our employees worked hard to reach significant milestones, Study.com employees took a trip together to Las Vegas. Most recently, we planned a company-wide trip to Lake Tahoe. It was a great way to show we appreciated all their efforts and for our employees to have some fun and bond with coworkers.” – *Adrian Ridner, CEO and co-founder of Study.com*

## **6. Delegate a team award.**

“We bought a big teddy bear, which is permanently in our office in NYC. Those people who were affected by some activity or were overloaded by a project or just [great employees] are the owners of the bear for a week. It brings benefits from economic to a social aspect because we all reward the owner of the bears. For instance, we buy them chocolates or sweets and we leave as ‘bear food,’ although it is obvious those sweets now belong to the owner of the bear.” - *Sophie Miles, vice president of marketing and co-founder of CalculatorBuddy.com*

## **7. Offer employees a platform.**

“When we ... [ask employees to] share their story, tips, methods, etc. with others, it provides validation to them that they do have something of value to offer, and it boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem in the process. This doesn’t mean we add a training function to their currently overloaded job, but it could be sharing at a team or organizational event, award ceremony or even in a newsletter.” - *Sandy Geroux, CEO, WOWplace International*

## **8. Give employees extra time off.**

“I think the most valuable way to recognize an employee today is through time — that is, time off, time to do something else besides work. It could be family, a hobby, a charity or a short vacation. I don’t think it needs to be routine or regular, and has the most value when it’s unexpected.” - *Mark S. Valenti, president and CEO, The Sextant Group*

## **9. Encourage their feedback.**

“We distribute a quarterly pulse survey that allows them to give us [anonymous] feedback about the company at a macro level. We ask a set of 15 questions around teamwork, leadership, career growth, etc. each quarter, to measure movement on any dimension, and then we give them three open text boxes to answer the questions: What are we doing well? What do we need to improve? What else is on your mind? We get our results each month with an average participation rate of about 75 percent, and have more than 225 lines of data from the responses to those three open-ended questions. This allows all employees to

feel heard and want to contribute to making our company win.” – *Mai Ton, vice president of human resources at White Ops*

#### **10. Host events for the entire company.**

“Company events are usually quite popular when we do team building activities. All employees want to feel part of the team and believe strongly in the company. If we can create a positive, fun and flexible workplace, most employees appreciate the independence of knowing they are trusted to get the work done and feel part of a team.” – *Patric Palm, CEO of Favro*

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# What Is the Whole-Person Approach to Training and Development?



Credit: Sergey Nivens/Shutterstock

If you own a business and want the best employees possible, ones who are really dedicated to their work, the best way to do that might be to take on what's known as the whole-person approach. This method is getting more and more attention among training and development professionals, and for good reason.

The whole-person approach is a holistic method that accounts for an individual's life and their vision of self, and offers up the resources that person needs to make that vision real. Developing the "whole person" requires an investment in professional, personal and skill-related areas in a way that supports mental, emotional, spiritual and physical well-being.

"These are all important, as they tackle personal development in different ways," said Stacey Engle, executive vice president at Fierce Communications. "There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to embracing the whole person, but instead, organizations will be most successful if they address the concept on a personal level."

Here are some ways that companies can implement the whole-person approach

with their employees.

### **1. Offer personal development funds.**

These funds allow employees to spend a certain amount of money, usually decided by the company, on whatever type of activity they like, including fitness classes, art lessons and gym memberships.

“At Fierce, every employee is given an annual personal development fund to use for any activity we feel will help us grow in the ways we want to,” Engle said.

Incentives like these also speak to a company’s culture. If your company wants a program like this but just can’t fit it in the budget, Engle suggests spreading the message anyway. Let the employees know that you want what’s best for them and support where they are going.

### **2. Allow flex time if possible.**

Flexibility with work schedule comes in handy if employees are taking continuing education classes or involved in activities that happen during the normal work hours.

“Flex time requires employees to work the same number of hours and during days and times that function with their pursuits outside of work,” Engle said.

“Accountability is needed here – give trust and hold you employees ‘able.’”

### **3. Provide learning opportunities.**

“Offer opportunities to educate employees on the latest advancements in training, technology and industry,” Engle said. She added that covering the entry or sign-up fee for online courses or learning events is a great way to get your employees involved and interested.

“Most importantly, offer human-to-human support. A mentorship program, for example, can be a welcome addition at any organization.”

#### **4. Offer participant-driven learning.**

Giving employees the option to learn about advanced technology and workplace-related topics is great, but it's also important to keep personal preferences in mind, provide options that allow employees to work at their own pace, and support them in those efforts. This will ensure they take in more of the knowledge and want to apply it to their work, Engle said.

#### **5. Ask!**

Engle said that this is the most important of the suggestions. As an employer, you should be having conversations with employees individually. Ask them how they want to develop, whether it's at work or home, and what would help them get there and feel supported.

"So often, this is a conversation that simply doesn't take place," Engle said. "Truly listening to your employees on a one-to-one basis to understand what they need to feel supported both personal and professionally is the key here. Ask directly, 'How can I support you?' Depending on the answer they give you (and they may need some times to think about it), create some action items, if applicable."

#### **The benefits of employer support**

The secret to success for both employees and employers is happiness. Happy employees are more productive, effective and pleasant at work, and these are all things that could increase the bottom line.

"Many organizations think that salary and stock options are what keep people in their jobs, but studies show this isn't the case," Engle said. "Sure, it's definitely a factor, but feeling appreciated, challenged and supported are all incredibly important to any employee."

Keep in mind that not all of these suggestions are feasible for every company or employer. But the idea, Engle said, is to do what you can, right now, to support the personal growth of your employees in any way you can.

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