

21 Ways to Energize Your Team Without Breaking the Bank

Gone are the days where quarterly bonuses, performance-based pay raises and other financial incentives motivate employees. While formal employee benefits are good for business, they are not a guarantee of employee or team performance.

In fact, studies have proven that “soft” benefits, such as employee incentive programs and a positive company culture, are directly responsible for driving increased



efficiencies, productivity among employees, and customer satisfaction. Not to mention, “employee-friendly” business practices decrease the chance of employee burnout and boost morale. A formal employee incentive program needn’t break the bank. Here are 21 ways you can incentivize your employees and create a remarkable company culture.

Blow out the candles. Host a monthly birthday breakfast for any employee with a birthday that month.

Offer an educational assistance program.

Whether it be a CE program, college course, or free online webinar, encourage your employees to continuously widen their skill set.

Create your own “Club Med.” Set aside a quiet space or unused office in your location where employees can take their break, nap, meditate or otherwise re-center him or herself. Spruce up the area with a nice coat of paint, leadership books, the latest copy of (things you’d like them to read,) board games, team photos, and customer feedback.

Turn your company into a teaching facility. Share your knowledge as a small business owner and business professional and help them acquire more marketable skills. Tap into your team’s knowledge and have them teach as well.

Host a monthly team activity that the entire team is required to attend. Determine who should be your Team Activities Group Leader (TAG) and have them check out team bonding ideas for your group(s).

Set up a loan program that provides up to one week’s pay at zero interest. The loan is paid back through payroll deductions over six months.

Look after those that matter to your employees. Show your appreciation for your employees by involving their families in their work life and work-related social activities. From family movie nights to “bring your child (or pet) to work days,” these activities can go a long way to making good on your commitment to, and appreciation of, your employees and those who support them.

Give them the day off on their birthday.

Verbally acknowledge a job well done.

- Start a rewards program. They come in too many shapes and sizes to break down for you here.
- Play the penny game: gather 5 pennies in your right pocket and make it your goal to move all of the coins from one pocket to the other by the end of the day. You are allowed to transfer a penny each time you commend an employee in real time for their actions.
- When acknowledging your team(s) for initiatives well done, be sure to do add individual public appreciation to this process.

Budget \$60 a week to stock the break room with healthy groceries - oatmeal, fresh fruit and vegetables, beverages, coffee and tea, cold cuts, etc. You could make this crazy easy and use a snack service.

Upgrade their tools. An employee might desire equipment that will make his job easier or work more efficient. For instance, an ergonomic back support, keyboard or padded floor mat. Maybe she wants a new mail scale. Make it happen!

Require your high school interns or employees to stay an extra hour to do their homework. (Make sure to pay them!)

Your employees write a handwritten note to your new customers every day, right? Now it's your turn to **recognize them with a special card.**

Offer memberships and discounts to local businesses. Whether it's a discounted gym membership, access to your season tickets, or movie tickets, these can help promote employee well-being AND help leverage relationships with other local businesses.

Without being nosy, **ask your employee's what's going on in their life.** Let them know you are there to help, if needed.

Create a 4-walls "safe house" where no negativity is allowed. You want your employees to feel good about themselves, have fun, and enjoy coming to work.

Give them a place to park it. Brick & Mortar location? Reserve the best parking spot for employees who've done something truly worthwhile. Give it signage so your clients how great you and the employee is too.

Recognize employees across all your business functions for completing critical projects or reaching certain goals. Incentives aligned with individual critical drivers, achievements or team-based success can go a long way to aligning and motivating your employees around your business objectives. (Remember those baseball or movie tickets we discussed?)

Introduce flextime. Allowing your employees to enjoy more flexible schedules is a great incentive for attracting and keeping high-performing employees. It doesn't mean they

work less time; it just means they have the benefit of working the hours that you mutually agree on outside the traditional confines of a 9-to-5 work day.

Ask about their professional and personal dreams. Let your team know you want to help them achieve their dreams since they are helping you with yours. Inquire, learn, consider you may support them.

Show you take your employees' wellness seriously. Losing just one employee to frequent sick days or a prolonged illness can be frustrating and a drain on resources as a lean business. Examples: create a wellness program (could be physical, mental and even fiscal,) extend the lunch hour once a week to allow employees to take a "30-minute power walk," or offer prizes for quitting smoking. There are a ton of ideas, just let them flow and experiment.

When structured and managed effectively, "employee-friendly" business practices not only boost morale, but also make huge strides in producing motivated teams dedicated to the success of your business and their livelihood. I challenge you to implement just one of these ideas, right now, in your company - you'll definitely see a difference in your employees' attitudes. If you don't, call me and we'll discuss, **for free**, why it didn't work. Just tell me in advance, that's what we're doing.