

CREATIVE WAYS TO BOOST EMPLOYEE MORALE

Communication

- Write a personal note on employees' paycheck envelopes.
- Hold informal grapevine sessions to control the flow of the rumor mill. Listen and be completely truthful and open.
- Take one employee to breakfast or lunch once a week. Ask them for ideas to improve the organization and thank them for being on your team.
- Hold a voluntary "good news hour" once a week for 30 minutes before the workday starts. Everyone shares good things that have happened in their lives and work during the last week.
- Cover a wall in your office with butcher paper or flip chart pages. Provide markers and encourage questions, graffiti and stories. The primary ground rule is nothing mean or attacking.
- Send out organization-wide emails recognizing employees who are making a difference. Close the emails thanking everyone else in the organization for all of their hard work as well.
- Leave a voice mail message at the home of an employee acknowledging a special contribution they have made to the organization, a project or client.
- Take time to really listen to employees. Structure one-on-ones at least monthly.
- Talk with employees about what issues impact morale and how they think morale can be improved. Ask how employees personally prefer to be rewarded.

Atmosphere

- Bring in a massage therapist with a chair. Provide 15-minute "you deserve it" massages for employees.
- Sponsor a catered lunch or enjoy happy hour once every month or so to bring everyone together and help instill a family atmosphere at the office.
- Encourage daily affirmations throughout the organization. Create small cards with positive sayings such as "You made a difference today" or "I couldn't have done it without you!" A spirit of gratitude will raise the level of all interactions.
- Institute an ABCD Award for employees who have gone "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty." Spray paint an old trophy or make your own to be proudly displayed on the employee's desk.
- Organize a "white elephant" re-gift exchange. Have everyone bring the worst gifts they have received and unload them on each other.
- Hold an office competition based on current events or organizational goal. For example, how many electoral votes will Barack Obama receive? Offer a meaningful award to the winner.

- Ask trivia questions at staff meetings and give out a small prize to the first person that answers each correctly. Pick up little things from the Dollar Store to give away as prizes.
- Schedule a monthly out-of-office lunch where everyone goes.
- Put up a “sharing” bulletin board in your break room or kitchen where employees can display pictures of their families or pets and announce special occasions. It’s a good way to show that employees’ personal lives and commitments are important and valued.
- Ban complaints for one week. You’ll be frustrated and amazed at how often the urge to complain strikes.
- Implement an Employee of the Month Award. Make sure that a concrete value is associated with the award. Offer a half-day off work as the reward.
- Distribute gift cards for gas or groceries to show appreciation and let employees know that you understand how hard it can be to make ends meet.
- Give deserving employees little things like lottery tickets, movie passes, a free car wash or video rentals.
- Hold seasonal spring and fall cleanings. Take the day to organize your workspace and files. No one is allowed to check email or answer the phone. Dress comfortably. Play music. Order lunch for everyone to share.
- Display pet and owner photos. Have a contest to see who can match the pets with their owners.
- Host a “bring your pet to work” day.
- Present the “Ambassador of Positivity” award to employees who exhibit a positive attitude in the workplace.
- Celebrate everything you can – achieving short-term goals, winning a grant, a new collaboration, a happy client, a donated piece of equipment, etc.

Gift of Time

- Institute a half-day on Fridays. Encourage employees not to schedule meetings on Fridays and to leave once they have completed their immediate tasks.
- Give employees an unexpected half-day or long weekend off.
- Offer early getaways on the eve of holidays.
- Increase flexibility in hours and schedules. Allow employees to come in early/late and leave early/late as needed.
- If you solicit ideas from employees, follow through in a timely way. Don’t make the mistake of asking for feedback and shelving it.

Work

- Employ the Platinum Rule: Treat others, as they would like to be treated.
- Spend time out in the field with employees. Ask them how you can help make their jobs easier. Work alongside them. Let them teach you what they do.
- Conduct team-building activities monthly to strengthen relationships, build trust and have fun.
- Encourage employees to create awards for each other. For example, the Rumpelstiltskin Award goes to an employee who successfully “spun straw into gold” (raised a lot of money or wrote a winning grant).
- Up the ante in terms of challenging work. Counter-intuitive as it may seem, assigning more high-quality and demanding work lets employees know that you appreciate what they are doing and trust them to handle more responsibility.
- Rotate job duties and assignments. Prevent employees from getting bored with their day-to-day routines. Mix up responsibilities when appropriate.
- Provide career development opportunities during work hours. Pay employees to learn new skills while on the clock.
- Develop a Team Code of Behavior listing specific behaviors you will exhibit when interacting with each other. Make team agreements on respect, trust, accountability, communication, gossip, etc.
- Be a contagiously enthusiastic manager. If a high level of performance is to be achieved, managers and supervisors need clear goals and contagious enthusiasm about the importance of these goals
- Work on a community project. Care about the world outside of your organization. The fastest way to overcome feeling blue is to do something for someone else. Work on a group project that is unrelated to your immediate field or mission.
- Commit to building a “good morale” workplace. Establish a recognition program. Consistently “temperature check” employee morale and motivation.
- Present yourself as a human being. Be 100% authentic.

Heart, Humor and Food

- Have a calligrapher write an employee’s name on an appreciation certificate.
- Arrange to have a star named after an employee at www.spacedreamsinc.com.
- Give an employee potpourri sachet with a note saying, “*You’ve given our project the sweet smell of success!*”
- Fill an heirloom box with artifacts from the organization's past, and include a note that says, “*Thank you for being part of our history in the making.*”
- Distribute cartoons with the captions removed. Ask employees to make up their own captions and display these in the office.

- Help employees lighten up. Find ways to poke fun at yourself. How about a dartboard with your picture on it in the break room? Have you ever worn a costume when it's not Halloween? The most productive workplaces have at least 10 minutes of laughter every hour.
- Take employees on a toy or dollar store field trip. Give each employee \$10 to have fun with.
- Send thank you notes to employees' family members. "Thank you for being patient during our fall pledge drive. Your mom worked very hard and helped make the drive a huge success."
- Provide food for a "build-your-own-sandwich" day.
- Hold themed potlucks based on employees' cultural heritage, season of the year, current events, etc.
- Put a vending machine on "free vend" for a day.
- Bring certain foods for "thanking" with creative messages.
 - Cinnamon buns – *"Thanks for working your buns off!"*
 - Cupcakes – *"You take the cake!"*
 - Mixed nuts – *"I'd go nuts without you!"*
 - Wine glass filled with jellybeans – *"A toast to a job well done!"*
- Take a small box of raisins, attach a strip of magnetic tape to the back and attach a small note saying, *"Thanks for raisin' so much money."*
- Attach a note to a beautiful candle that says, *"You light up the lives of so many!"* or *"No one holds a candle to you!"*
- Surprise employees with spontaneous treats.
 - Ice cream cart
 - Popcorn or snow cone machine
 - Caramel apples
 - Nestle's \$100,000 candy bar
 - Package of Lifesavers
 - Anything chocolate

KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid)

Never underestimate the power of individual recognition and direct praise. A simple "thank you" goes a long way.