25 Ideas for Low Cost or No Cost Recognition

Ask an employee to mentor a new hire.

Have a monthly breakfast meeting in an outside location. Invite your team, share ideas, and recognize at least one person.

Put up a bulletin board in your department where team members (and you) post letters of thanks from students, partners, or customers.

Deliver candy or a homemade snack to your employees. Take that opportunity to learn what your people are working on and recognize their accomplishments.

Write a formal note of praise and send a copy to HR to file in your employees permanent file.

Create a funny, internal award that can be used to recognize staff.

Allow your employees to work at home for a day (or half day).

Give your employee a voucher for an hour off of work or an extra-long lunch.

Write a special message of thanks for an accomplishment—a note card, letter, poem, or song.

Create a banner or poster and hang in your work area to publicize a contribution or accomplishment.

Send a letter of praise to your employees’ spouse or family.

Recognize skilled employees with increase responsibility or by developing new skills that may help prepare them for advancement opportunities.

Announce achievements and accomplishments in team meetings, group emails, or other public venues.

Walk around your work space and greet employees every morning with “I’m glad you’re here”.

Give your employee their choice of the next project/assignment on which to work.

Volunteer to do your employees least favorite task for a week.

Have a “not a working lunch” with your employee where you don’t talk about work tasks but just enjoy each other’s company.

Give your employee a book about a topic related to your job.

Let your employee dress casual for a day.

Bring in a cup of coffee or your employee’s favorite morning beverage.

Provide “lunch on me” coupons and take your staff members out to eat.

Send handwritten notes of praise with specific examples of their accomplishments.

Have a recognition box in your office. When someone does something outstanding, let your employee choose a reward out of the box—anything from going home early, to a free car wash, to lottery tickets, to a Starbucks gift card.

Copy senior management on your thank you note to the employee.

Present a “Life Saver Award” (Life Saver candy and a certificate) to employees who pitched in during an emergency or staff shortage.