How to Reward Employees in Uncertain Times



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With limited funds, increased physical distance and general uncertainty, you might find it difficult to even consider employee rewards and recognition right now. Yet it’s arguably more important than ever to acknowledge those who continue to commit to their work, whether they are on the front lines or working from home.

If you need some inspiration for employee rewards during times of crisis, consider the following ideas.

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Delivery services for necessities

Reward employees for their hard work by helping them cover the cost of food and grocery delivery. Services like Instacart, Shipt and Postmates offer annual subscriptions for free delivery for 12 months. The services typically work with several local grocery stores and restaurants to ensure a variety of choices.

Subscription costs can be as little as $99. For your employee, this reduces the overall cost, because each delivery often includes a fee of between $4 and $10. They can order online or through the delivery service app to avoid venturing outside to stores.

Monthly gifts galore

Another option that your employees might enjoy while working remotely is a monthly gift subscription box. You have lots of options to send, including many necessities such as fresh produce, meat, prepared foods and healthy snacks. Some subscription boxes might even help deliver a well-balanced diet. That can be a welcome gift, especially when some food items are difficult to come by.

Alternatively, you can select a box themed around the recipient’s hobbies or interests. These types of subscription boxes help your team member pass the time and prove that you’ve been paying attention to them as well. Knowing what your employees like and need shows your personal interest in them. They’ll also realize that you are concerned about their physical and mental health.

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Social recognition

Your company’s employee reward doesn’t necessarily need a dollar value attached to it. Often, employees simply want some recognition for the effort they make. Why not recognize and praise them on your social media channels? Share their achievements with your audience and let them enjoy the spotlight.

You can also write a post that includes a picture or video and a summary of how valuable they are to you and your company. This is also a good way to highlight your team’s reflection of company values, which can resonate with other employees and customers.

Continuing development

Now that many workers have a bit more time on their hands, it’s a perfect opportunity to help employees focus on their personal and professional development. Ask them what skills they would like to develop, then give them the chance to choose what’s important to them.

Give them access to online courses that focus on their chosen skills. Platforms such as Udemy and Coursera offer hundreds of free or low-cost courses that you can give your employees. Even universities are introducing free and low-cost courses for continuing development opportunities.

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Once your employees take a course, ask them about their experience and what they learned. As business improves, work with them to pinpoint opportunities for the application of those skills to company goals and projects. An educational opportunity can then be the gift that keeps on giving for everyone concerned.

Paid time off

When you're working from home, it is often difficult to step away from work the way you would if you had a physical office. Consequently, your employees may find themselves working more than they should. A paid break from work helps them step away from the screen and recharge.

Even though your employees may not be able to go anywhere, they'll still appreciate that you are giving them a paid "mental health day." You can also offer it as two afternoons off if that makes it easier for your employees. Again, it shows you want what's best for your team members, including adequate physical and mental rest.

Virtual celebration

Another way to reward employees is to do something special for the whole team. As weeks of working from home drag on, motivation may become a struggle. This approach helps the team to focus on something positive while showing them how much you appreciate their efforts.

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In-person parties aren't feasible in most areas right now, so why not host an online social event? Pick a theme and encourage everyone to dress up for the theme. You can send party packages to the team so they can decorate and participate in any games you decide to include. Even just turning your regular video call into a social hour can help your team unwind.

Say thank you

Make it a habit to thank your employees for what they do. Try to reference a specific reason for your appreciation. This

adds authenticity to your message while also connecting the value you see in them with the results they’ve achieved for you and the company.

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