
Exceptional organizations find a way to recognize, reward, and retain good people. They understand that recognition penetrates where money cannot.

It doesn’t take a lot of time or money to reinvest in the staff that helped the success of your practice. There should always be room within your budget to recognize your staff for going the extra mile.

**WHY GIVE RECOGNITION**

- Motivates people to reach goals
- Fosters increased productivity
- Makes people feel valued
- Improves employee retention
- Promotes positive behavior
- Builds teamwork

**WHERE TO GIVE RECOGNITION**

- Special events such as a banquet or luncheon
- Staff meetings
- Company-wide meetings
- “Wall of Fame” or bulletin board
- Social media (Facebook or Twitter)
- One-on-one encounters

**WHEN TO GIVE RECOGNITION**

If you look for recognition opportunities, you will find them. Take advantage of those “spur of the moment” opportunities. Do not wait until a later time to recognize them; do it when you see it. Here are some occasions to provide recognition to your staff:

- When great customer service is provided
- Reaching goals or milestones
- Accomplishments such as certification, learning new computer software, bringing in new ideas to the practice, or lending a helping hand to other staff
- Performance reviews
- When they identify wasteful processes or find ways to improve efficiency
- Employee’s birthday

“Instruction does much, but encouragement everything.”
— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

**Words of Encouragement**

“Thank you for going above and beyond in all that you do.”

“You are an example of our tradition of excellence.”

“You are making a difference in our office and in your profession.”

“You set high standards for others to strive toward.”

“Your outstanding contributions help our office stand above the rest.”

“You are a top quality performer. You are key to our success.”

“Your motivation and determination lead others to higher performance.”

HOW TO PROVIDE RECOGNITION

FOR STARTERS:
- Recognize an employee’s aptitude or skill by inviting him/her to teach or coach others in a technique.
- Recognize employees for their hard work with a classified ad in the local newspaper or on social media.
- Dedicate a special parking spot for an Employee of the Month.
- Create an employee “Wall of Fame.” Post thank you notes from patients, pictures of staff’s children or weddings, news clippings of staff involvement in the community.
- Name areas or rooms in the practice after staff who have been there the longest. Change when they retire or are no longer employed at office.
- Have a special name tag for being the most helpful or going above and beyond. Rotate the name tag on a monthly basis.
- Make a Quotation Book. Staff design a background with an inspirational quote on it. Pick one each month from the book to display for all to see.
- Provide a drop cloth/banner and markers on the staff lounge table. Have them create on their own, or write “Why I love my job…”
- Have staff design and work on a float for a community parade.
- Provide a picnic table so staff can eat their lunch outside on nice days.

MORE IDEAS

1. Write words of appreciation on the back of your paycheck envelopes. Possibilities may include words such as “Our practice is doing well because of your hard work. Thank you for all you do.”
2. Call a local radio station and dedicate a song to your staff during work hours. Use the press release in your Paraoptometric Recognition Week kit for the radio station to use as an introduction before the song begins.
3. Use colored chalk to write a message of appreciation to your employees on the parking lot/walkway to the entrance of the building in which they work.
4. Each day of the week give your staff a playing card. At the end of Paraoptometric Recognition Week employees play their best poker hand and the winner gets a prize.
5. Schedule a five-minute break during which everyone says something nice to co-workers recognizing them for their contributions to the success of the practice.
6. Hire a local artist to draw caricatures of your employees during their break/ lunch hour and display in the office.
7. Leave small surprises such as a candy bars, key chains, or practice-identified merchandise in the form of caps or T-shirts in each employee’s work area.
8. Bring in soft drinks, bottled water and juices to stock the staff refrigerator for the week.
9. Write a thank you note to each employee’s spouse or children. Suggestion: “Please accept my sincere appreciation for the support you have given to your mother (dad, wife or husband) in his/her pursuit of a career with our practice. I’m fortunate to have him/her on the team and want you to know how lucky you are to have him/her as your parent/spouse. He/she is a great asset to our team.”
10. Make a CD using “eye-related” songs and play a game of “Name that Tune” during lunch hour with your staff.

11. Recognize employees for extra efforts by leaving a two dollar bill for them with a note.

12. Showcase photos of your employees at work and display in your office during PRW.


14. Surprise your staff with funny screensavers for their computers.

15. Recognize energetic employees with Energizer batteries and a certificate.

16. Provide business cards for staff. There are many online businesses that provide 250 cards for free.

17. Design a bingo card and play bingo for prizes each day during lunchtime. There are Websites to generate your own “customized” bingo cards.

18. Hire a photographer to come in and photograph your team of employees.

19. Hold a polka dot day. Everyone dresses in polka dots. The winner is the one wearing the most “dots.”

20. Have a grab bag of privileges/tokens of appreciation for employees to receive each day. Ideas: leave one hour early, arrive one hour late, special parking privilege, free lunch, fruit smoothie, lottery tickets, etc. to use throughout the year.

21. During Paraoptometric Recognition Week mark the entrance to your office as “VIP entrance” then a sign by the door, “Through this door pass the most dedicated staff in town. You are the BEST. Thank you for being here.”

22. Send a letter to the employee’s family praising their accomplishments.

23. Read letters from satisfied patients at staff meetings, then post them on your website or Facebook page.

24. Recognize employees with badges or pins to wear on their shirt.

25. Share stories in staff meetings about co-workers who have gone out of their way for patients or staff.

26. Have a money jar for staff recognition. Everytime someone does something worthy of recognition, the practice puts a quarter in the jar. When filled, the staff can vote on how the money is to be used.

27. Purchase tubs of cookie dough for each staff member with the note attached to it – “We wanted to give you a little dough to show our appreciation. Thank you for all you do!”

28. Make pancakes for a staff breakfast with a variety of syrups. Make a sign that states, “We’re ‘pouring out’ our gratitude and hoping you have a Paraoptometric Recognition Week to ‘flip over!’”

29. Purchase bottles of 7up for each staff member and attach a note stating, “Here are ‘seven’ reasons why you are ‘up’-preciated.” List on the note seven reasons why you appreciate your staff.

30. Bring in a big tray of cinnamon rolls for a mid-day snack for staff. Make a sign to place in front of the tray stating, “You’re on a roll…keep up the good work!”

31. At an employee meeting, surprise staff by taping gift certificates to the bottom of the chairs.

32. Have nametags made for certified staff, highlighting their certification level.

33. Create posters and hang them around the office with pictures of the staff along with nicknames you have created that reflect their work personality. For example, Michelle: The Rockstar, Katie: The Problem Solver, Cheryl: The Busy Bee, etc.

34. Give each member of your staff a spring bulb to plant outside of your office. Attach a note that reads “We look forward to seeing you bloom.”

35. Give each member of your staff a scented candle with a note attached that reads, “No one holds a candle to you!”

36. Make cupcakes or purchase gift certificates from a local bakery for your staff. Make a sign that states, “You take the cake!” Have either the certificates or cupcakes for each staff person by the sign.

37. Provide beads and accessories for each staff person to make their own bracelet. Allow time throughout the day for staff to get “crafty.”

38. Perform community service together as a group.

39. Give employees a handful of “Thanks! You made my day!” cards to fill out for each other.

40. Send in photos of your staff during Paraoptometric Recognition Week to PRC@aoa.org to be entered in our photo contest for a chance to win free study materials!

Many of the ideas are excerpts from “450 Low-Cost No-Cost strategies for recognizing, rewarding and retaining good people”, Volume 1 & 2 by Carol A. Hacker.