



How to build a stronger, happier workplace.



smartOne PrepaidSM Incentive Cards for Business

Introduction

Do you notice when overall team morale might be waning? Perhaps you are looking for ways to **improve the energy within your team**, in hopes of making everyone more productive.

This may seem like a tall task, but in the end, establishing a workplace in which your employees are happy and thriving can make a world of difference in creating a more productive and efficient environment.

Within an office, there are a variety of factors that go into creating a cohesive and enjoyable workplace, including open communication, mutual appreciation and **rewarding people for their efforts**.

Since each employee is different, knowing how to engage different personalities and using that information to create a stronger workplace requires you, as employers, to **determine what motivates your team and enhances the overall morale**. Here, you will find a variety of techniques and tips how to engage employees, how to develop a more loyal workforce and ultimately, how to build a stronger, happier workplace for all.

Developing a relationship and a level of understanding between employers and employees upfront often results in increased production, collaboration, and respect.



1 Establishing the proper foundation

From the moment that you invite a new employee into your organization, the development process begins. Developing a relationship and a level of understanding between employers and employees upfront often results in increased production, collaboration, and respect.

First, you have the ability to **ensure your new hires know they are welcome** and appreciated, and are not simply there to fill space. Second, give both parties time to get to know one another and their working styles. This can give the staff a better sense of who they are working for and the goals they are trying to reach, while allowing managers to adjust their approach to fit specific employees' needs.

Building this basic foundation begins the process of establishing open communication and boosting morale throughout the company. Team building strategies should not end here, as employees of all tenure should have this same experience with their managers. **Consider these strategies for getting to know your employees:**

> **Show interest and ensure that your employees know you care.** Ask questions, pay attention and show your employees that they are more than just a worker in your eyes and are a valuable asset to the company.

> **Schedule frequent one-on-one conversations with team members.** These sessions can be used for a variety of reasons but ultimately, they are an **opportunity to form a bond and increase communication.** Employees will know they have the chance to ask questions, voice concerns or share their successes.

These are just a few examples of how to engage employees and establish a strong foundation for an employer-employee relationship that supports a happy, healthy workplace. By taking the time to have a simple conversation with employees, whether it is work related or on a personal level, it is an **effective approach to gain a better understanding of how to motivate and coach employees** to make everyone's job a little bit easier.

> **Understand your staff and their individual goals.** Each team member has a unique set of talents and will feel more confident in their position with the company, if they believe that their managers have a grasp on where they would like to go.

Establishing the proper foundation (continued)

Invest in training programs.

The benefits of continuing to develop employees through educational programs far surpasses any short-term monetary savings the company may see from cutting back on organizational training.

Investing in training is important not only for new employees but as an ongoing process in which staff members can continue to expand their knowledge and learn skills to help exceed their job expectations. These programs enable employers to build a motivated workplace by sending the message to employees that they are valued; employees will then be able to take pride in their professional development and their role in the success of the business.

Many companies have found it beneficial to cross-train team members in skills that may not be directly related to their own existing role. Spending the time to train employees in areas beyond their core competency creates a more collaborative and team-oriented workplace where various departments can work together and step in to assist when necessary. It also opens up opportunities for future growth within the company.

Inter-departmental cross-training can **influence positive change** and greatly benefit various areas of an organization, including:

- **Increased** productivity
- **Higher** performance levels
- **A greater** sense of employee commitment to the organization that leads to advancement in the company
- **Building** employee confidence in their abilities to fulfill job requirements



2 Improving employee loyalty

Statistics and surveys have shown that there are a variety of reasons why employee and employer relationships are short lived. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average length of employment¹ with one organization is approximately five years until employees tend to begin looking for a new opportunity. According to research conducted by the Corporate Executive Board Company, **the top 5 reasons why employees look for new employment²** include:

- 1 **Stability:** Being able to earn a stable paycheck from a strong organization is valuable for many. Ensure employees have an **understanding of their value to the company** and that the organization has a long-term plan in place.
- 2 **Compensation:** Compensating employees fairly and at competitive rates can be enough to keep a person loyal to the company. **Stay informed of the salary and compensation packages offered within your industry and geographical area.** If budget allows, bonus programs or monthly sweepstakes can also boost company morale and productivity.
- 3 **Respect:** Employees want to be treated with respect by management just as much as a supervisor expects to be respected by employees. Managers and supervisors must treat their employees with the highest level of **respect and appreciation**, so team members do not feel they are undervalued.

4 **Health benefits:** In a post-recession economy and a society with high healthcare rates, employees are not only looking for competitive salaries but also **quality benefits** to eliminate their out-of-pocket costs for healthcare. An organization lacking these benefits is at risk of losing talented employees.

5 **Work-life balance:** Flexibility in scheduling and the understanding that employees have lives outside of the office, gives individuals **a sense that his/her time is important to employers.** Without work-life balance, many individuals can begin to burn out and look elsewhere for a less demanding role.

Another factor directly affecting productivity is an increase in employee turnover. High turnover causes an element of anxiety regarding job security. Also, taking on additional work can leave employees feeling overworked and resentful. **When morale is down, so is productivity.³** And conversely, when a sense of encouragement and positivity is provided, employees respond in this happier work environment with more productivity and greater efficiency.

Improving employee loyalty (continued)

Communication is key.

In order to combat high turnover, finding various methods of encouraging loyalty within your organization can ensure that staff members are encouraged to stay, feel valued and have an idea of their future with the company. **As a manager, it is important to develop trust and understanding with employees to establish a relationship that fosters loyalty on both ends.** This begins with open communication and consistent morale boosters. Consider the following ways to increase employee loyalty within your business:

- **Open communication:** Having a relationship with team members that fosters open communication can provide both employers and employees the ability to **develop a great deal of trust and confidence in one another.** This encourages collaboration and cohesiveness in the workplace and sends your staff members the message that they are heard and their opinions matter.
- **Team building:** Encourage unity between team members and supervisors with exercises that allow individuals to better understand every member on the team. By **building relationships and encouraging individuals to know their teammates,** managers create a more welcoming and collective environment in the office.

➤ **Provide a path:** Employees must have the confidence that they can have a future with the company. Taking the time to **understand the overall career goals of your team** and providing them with an idea of what their path at the company may look like can encourage a higher element of loyalty from employees.

➤ **Have confidence in employees:** Let your team know that you trust them and their vision by giving them **the power to make decisions on their own.**



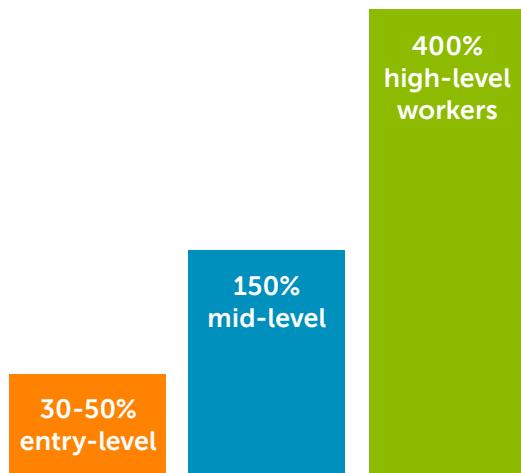
Improving employee loyalty (continued)

Reversing turn-over.

Management may not realize **the cost that goes into losing an employee and how it can have a harmful effect on business**. It is estimated that businesses suffer a loss of 30-50% of the annual salary of entry-level employees, 150% for mid-level and nearly 400% of high-level workers.⁴ There are costs associated with all aspects of compensating for a vacant position, including managers who have to reassign work, staff who have work reassigned to them, and any potential lull in productivity that comes from a person leaving.

Cost of losing an employee

Percent of annual salary lost⁴



The effects of high employee turnover can go far beyond cost, lower revenue and decreased productivity. Creating a workplace where employees enjoy themselves while still effectively doing business is one component essential to a strong and cohesive work environment.

While this may take time to establish, a strong environment can be accomplished by investing more time in the hiring and onboarding process as well:

> **Ensure understanding:** Updated and frequently reviewed job descriptions should provide employees with true-to-life details around their daily duties. While the job descriptions may be vague during the interview process, new team members should leave with a clear understanding of what their day-to-day workload will include. **It is also a best practice to have management and staff review job descriptions on a frequent basis** (monthly, quarterly, or yearly) to ensure relevancy to the changing business.

> **Offer competitive salaries:** You may know the phrase "I work to live, not live to work." The driving factor for many employees is their paycheck and **offering competitive, yet appropriate salaries to employees will result in a happier, driven workforce**. Knowing that they are being paid an amount that is in line with their industry peers ensures that employees don't feel they are being shorted in terms of compensation. On top of salaries, many employees require benefits for themselves and their families and should be provided quality options from their employer.

Improving employee loyalty (continued)

- **Have room for growth:** Regardless of what level an employee is in the company hierarchy, most individuals are constantly looking for opportunities to advance their careers. Although there may not always be immediate openings, having the potential and option to grow will keep them engaged and more likely to remain with an organization.
- **Be flexible:** Flexible work environments that understand that employees have obligations and priorities outside of the office results in a happier, less stressed staff. There are many ways to provide flexible work schedules, including the option to work from home or allowing employees to choose their own schedules. Flexibility to leave work for a doctor's appointment or family event without penalty can make a company more attractive for employees.
- **Provide good work conditions:** Working in an office with old equipment or outdated technology is not desirable for any employee. Employers should consistently update their technology and improve the staff's work environment to boost productivity. A workplace should also be clean, lit properly and safe for employees.
- **Reward and recognize:** Most employees appreciate recognition for their hard work and accomplishments. Taking the time to individually acknowledge the efforts of team members who have gone above and beyond their job duties reminds staff that they are appreciated and their work has not gone unnoticed. Personalization is the key to these types of rewards. To add an element of fun around the office or within teams, employers can also use rewards to conduct in-office competitions and contests to boost morale.

How employees feel at work



40%
feel underappreciated



43%
say they have not been
recognized in over 3 months



55%
feel they have not been rewarded
appropriately for performance

Improving employee loyalty (continued)

Creating an environment where employees feel appreciated and valued is essential to an effective workplace. It can eliminate a many of the headaches associated with high turnover rates. **Workers who feel underappreciated in the workplace have shown they will begin looking for new opportunities.** Employees strongly feel that their work should be acknowledged regularly; unfortunately, this is an area where many organizations are lacking.

A study done by Globoforce found that on top of the 40% of workers who feel underappreciated, 43% had not been recognized in over 3 months and 55% strongly believe that they are not rewarded appropriately for their performance.

These statistics show a gap between what employees feel is important and what employers think is expected from their staff. Closing this gap and finding various ways to acknowledge team members on a regular basis begins to eliminate this divide and create a more collaborative, enjoyable workplace.

Consider incorporating these strategies to ensure employees feel appreciated:

- **Be realistic:** Setting realistic expectations eliminates defeat in the workplace. Managers are encouraged to be honest with employees and ensure they understand what is being asked of them

and why. If an individual is being asked to take on an abundance of work to make up for a lack of resources, they will appreciate an upfront and honest approach from their managers.

➤ **Communicate:** Open communication creates successful relationships between staff members. In terms of recognition, taking the time to communicate with employees, checking in to ensure there are no questions or concerns to be addressed, and engaging with individuals on daily projects can create a more team-oriented work environment.

➤ **Utilize employees in the right spaces:** Like any sports team, organizations and managers should put employees in positions to best utilize their skills. This not only makes employees happier in their roles, but shows employees that their managers acknowledge their skills and appreciate them. This can benefit the overall organization as employers can utilize employees' skills to their best potential and employees are put in a position to succeed.

➤ **Say thank you:** A simple thank you can do wonders for making team members feel that their work is appreciated.

Determining the methods to use when rewarding employees is dependent on knowing the employee and what would effectively motivate him/her. Allocating funds for employee recognition is important and should be considered in the budgeting process. **Many professionals estimate that approximately 1-2% of an individual's salary should be spent on encouragement⁵ and rewards.**

Each organization is different and operates in its own way and while the thought of building an employee incentive program may be daunting, these programs can include a variety of opportunities, such as:

- Wellness programs
- Peer recognition
- Incentive from management

Offering rewards will likely **increase participation and boost morale in the office.** For example, incenting employees to participate in a wellness program that encourages healthy lifestyles and wellness can improve the overall health of team members, reducing absentee days or trips to the doctor's office. Offering peer recognition for co-workers to acknowledge above and beyond performances by their team members engages employees and is a simple way to make acknowledging hard work a regular and collective effort in the office.

In terms of acknowledgment from management and supervisors, rewards can include:

- **Contests:** Create team or individual competitions to **add an element of fun to the office.** Reward the winners with incentives for reaching their goals or effectively working together to complete a task.
- **Spot Awards:** These awards can be used for quick acknowledgment of **performance in the moment** that it occurs. This can include reward/recognition certificates, prepaid award cards or trophies that can be displayed around the office.
- **Years of Service:** When employees reach a milestone in their time with an organization, **make them feel appreciated and valued** by providing an award to commemorate their tenure.
- **Incentives:** Organizations with sales performance as part of a job description can **motivate employees with competitions** to earn the highest sales numbers and acknowledge those who succeed throughout.
- **Spontaneous:** During the holiday seasons or perhaps on the company anniversary, reward employees for their help making the year a success. **Acknowledging the fact that the employees are an integral part of the company's success** reminds staff members that they are valued.

Rewarding employees (continued)

Depending on budget and the individual employee, there are endless ways to incentivize and reward. **Consider the following approaches:**



Prepaid cards

Purchasing prepaid cards as a method of recognition **gives employees flexibility over how to use their incentives.** Cards can be ordered with company logos and personalized messages to thank staff members and show appreciation.



Trophies and awards

Order employee awards and trophies for employees with words of encouragement or congratulations. It will be a **lasting reminder of their efforts and the value** their work was to the organization.



Perks

For a low-cost way to motivate employees, consider offering employees special treatment to acknowledge their efforts. Perks can include **days off, special parking spots, a longer lunch break or casual dress days.** Other perks could also be company merchandise or travel packages.



Bonuses and raises

The traditional method of acknowledging employees is still just as effective. Staff members can be motivated by **monetary awards, which can result in improved productivity and quality of work.**



Intangibles

Not all acknowledgments have to be a tangible gift. For example, recognizing an employee for their work can be in the form of **praise or public acknowledgment.** For some employees, providing them with new responsibilities or increasing their involvement in new projects is enough to show that you value their efforts.

Conclusion

Creating a happier and stronger workplace can be achieved by ensuring the individuals that work within the office are in a place they feel valued and appreciated. During a time where companies are facing cutbacks and have fewer resources, **it is more important than ever to maintain a workplace in which employees feel secure and valued.**

Managers should consider implementing these programs in order to demonstrate their respect and appreciation for employees. **In turn, a stronger, happier workplace will see decreased turnover rates and ultimately decreased costs associated with turnover and employee dissatisfaction.** A workplace with open communication that takes the time to fully train and continuously educate their employees can be key to developing loyal employees. Creating the feeling and belief that employees are valued within the organization can make a big difference in the company's overall success.

To take your business to the next level, build lasting relationships within an office of loyal employees and reward the individuals that ultimately make being in business possible.

Take the steps to creating a stronger, happier workplace where employees feel appreciated and motivated.

Reward staff with a gift they can use anywhere Visa® Debit Cards or Debit MasterCard® are accepted.

Show your gratitude with smartOne Prepaid Award Cards, the perfect incentive for any occasion.

These prepaid cards can be personalized with the employee's name, a custom embossed message and even the organization's brand image.

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