

Workplace Activities for Morale

Boosting morale is about more than just keeping employees happy. A positive company morale can lead to improved efficiency and improved employee retention rates. For small businesses, scheduling morale-boosting activities without a large budget can seem to be a daunting task. However, there are a whole host of inexpensive options available to the small business.

Peer-Initiated Recognition

Start a program to encourage employees to reward each other. According to Bob Nelson, author of "1001 Ways to Reward Employees," recognition from one's peers has a special significance because the employee knows it is sincere and well-earned. An awards could be a plaque, which the employee keeps as long as she likes or until she finds someone else to pass it on to. In other companies, employees may vote for the employee of the month or for someone to win an employee excellence award.

Simple Awards

Sometimes the simplest awards can have the most meaning. For example, at AT&T Universal Card Services, they have a pad of paper shaped like a globe with "Thank You" written all over it. Anyone in the company can use the pad to send a thank you to anyone else. At Hewlett-Packard, engineers can win the Golden Banana Award, so named when an engineer who had solved a tricky problem was rewarded by his manager with the only thing the manager had on hand - a banana from his lunch. Over time, the Golden Banana has become a prestigious award that is given to the most inventive employee.

Greater Involvement

Giving employees a greater involvement in the company and more autonomy can also boost morale greatly. "Every employee should be given the chance to determine how best to do their jobs, as well as increased authority and leeway in the handling of company resources," says Nelson. Morale can be boosted by giving employees more responsibility over special projects, such as setting up a health fair, a charity drive or a food co-op.

Flexibility

According to Forbes magazine, employees often resent forced activities such as company picnics, and receive a larger morale boost from being able to work a more flexible work schedule. Letting employees work one day a week from home can help them feel more relaxed while in the office and lead to greater productivity. If that is not possible, consider offering 30-minute treat breaks during the day; let employees take an unscheduled break to play a game or eat a healthy snack.

Celebrations

Anything a bit out of the ordinary can help raise morale by giving employees something different to do. Celebrate events such as Chinese New Year with chopstick competitions and dumpling-making classes. Have employees decorate their area for holidays, such as Halloween, and offer prizes for the best decorations. Some companies offer pre-work or lunchtime yoga classes or have a massage therapist offer free shoulder massages once a month. Consider installing a company lounge where employees can play games or socialize during breaks.

Fun Days

Get creative with company away days. Organize teams from different departments and have a sports day in a local park with sports anyone can play, such as Frisbee and sack races. Employees could also compete in sports inside the office, such as a Wii video game tournament, mini-golf or paper airplane races. Keep employees fit and boost morale by organizing an inter-office softball league and giving employees time off to cheer on their team. Some companies, such as Texas-based Whataburger, even have their own company Olympics with events related to work activities.