

Employee Motivation



You've worked hard to find and hire fantastic employees. Now, how do you *keep* them happily employed?

In tightening labor markets like ours, employees get to be increasingly choosy about where they work and how long they stay there. That means employers like you need to do everything possible to reward your employees with work and perks that are simply too good to leave.

Paycheck + 10

Employees ultimately work for pay, and they expect and deserve to be fairly compensated. But money itself only serves as a short-term motivator; when given a pay raise, for instance, employee engagement is typically boosted for just a couple of weeks or months before inevitably returning to usual, pre-raise levels.



At Leap Solutions, we know that true job satisfaction (and the drive to succeed that comes along with it) isn't about money or benefits—it's about how employees are treated and whether they feel genuinely valued at work. Focus your management efforts on these Top Ten employee motivators, and you virtually guarantee yourselves happier and more productive and loyal workers:

1. **Engaging work.** Observe and ask about the kinds of work and the conditions in which your individual employees thrive and, whenever feasible, tailor their tasks and environment accordingly. Assign stimulating projects that utilize employee skills and allow them to showcase strengths. Don't burden them with an unreasonable workload that could lead to burnout, but do challenge them to continually stretch and grow. Set and communicate clear expectations, remove roadblocks and empower your employees with the support, resources and authority they need to excel at their jobs.
2. **Trust.** Establish mutual trust with your employees based on a foundation of solid, open communication. When you show faith and confidence in your employees' talents, abilities and potential, they are more likely to believe in themselves and deliver on those talents, abilities and potential. Likewise, if you are honest and transparent, hold yourself accountable to your best work and consistently follow through on your word, your employees will be inclined to model the same traits.
3. **The BIG picture.** Openly and frequently communicate your goals and vision not just for the department but for the organization as a whole. Employees who are privy to the big picture can see how they are integral to it, which gives greater meaning and purpose to their work. Including employee input in larger business decisions shows that you value their experience and expertise. It also affords you fresh ideas and vital perspective.
4. **Validation.** Employees at all levels want to be seen and heard. Avoid formal evaluation surprises by hosting regular one-on-ones to deliver timely and specific feedback with the clear and constant intention of helping employees succeed; preserve dignity and show empathy during constructive critique; invite ongoing dialog and listen closely to understand, validate and address employee experiences, viewpoints and concerns.

5. Appreciation. Employees want to feel appreciated for their contributions and highlighted for the work they accomplish. Take notice of successes, both large and small, and make the time to acknowledge and celebrate them right away. The format doesn't matter—a simple conversation or quick email, an unanticipated reward or treat, public praise, you name it—so long as your gratitude is prompt, genuine and heartfelt. Maintain employee files to document positive impressions and accomplishments, and refer to them when preparing and presenting your periodic formal evaluations. Employees are truly encouraged to know their bosses recognize, understand and value what they do throughout the year.

6. Respect. Employees count on managers to be fair and equitable, consistent and considerate. Don't play favorites, and don't talk negatively about other employees. Express interest and get to know your employees as whole people, including their passions outside of work, and use discretion and compassion when personal issues arise. Help your employees build careers that mesh with their professional *and* personal priorities.

7. Culture. Create and nurture an organizational culture that is supportive, collaborative and fun. Periodic catered lunches at team meetings, out-of-the-ordinary planning meetings, off-site retreats, social activities and events, both at work and outside of it...these are the kinds of things that foster coworker camaraderie and make employees eager to come to work.

8. Job security. Instill confidence by communicating your assurance (when realistic and truthful) that, barring unforeseen circumstances, there will be a place for them at your company so long as your employees continue to work hard and grow.

9. Coaching. Identify and nurture potential in your employees, and guide and support them through difficult situations and conversations with quality coaching. Serve as mentor yourself or arrange outside mentorships; establish mutually beneficial partnerships within the organization; assign special projects or teams; and/or invest in professional coaching to strengthen your employees while keeping a constant eye toward meeting current and future business needs, challenges and goals.

10. **Growth.** Great managers advocate for their employees and create opportunities for employee growth, development and advancement. Get to know your employees' personal and professional ambitions and desired career paths, and do everything you can to help them get there. An investment in employee growth and success through education, professional associations and conferences, training and certification programs is an investment in the growth and success of your entire organization.



Motivators > Perks

When you hear about unique and trendy employee perks such as nap pods, daily concierge services and workplace yoga sessions, you might be tempted to rethink your own offerings in the hopes of setting your company apart. But we urge you to stay focused on your intent: to motivate your employees and

Using the above Top Ten employee motivators as your guide, really get to know your employees as individuals; they'll show you what energizes them and what they actually value. Employee perks needn't be costly or complicated, and they needn't be the same for all (so long as you stay mindful of fairness and perception). An employee saving up to purchase a first home might treasure even a small pay raise above all else; a new parent could especially value a flexible work schedule or telecommuting arrangement; a travel enthusiast could cherish time off or alternative work weeks; a weekend athlete or someone exploring a healthier lifestyle might enjoy a subsidized membership to a fitness club or wellness program; anyone would welcome the occasional "extras" in recognition for a job well done, such as a handwritten thank-you note or fresh flowers on a desk, an unexpected gift card or tickets to a show, or an early closing on a summer Friday. (Just don't gift a great bottle of wine to someone who doesn't drink alcohol or Giants tickets to someone who doesn't care for baseball!)

You can't necessarily afford everything you might like to offer your employees, but you can *a/ways* afford creative, well-thought gestures that speak to what they value. Showing your employees that you see them, you know them, and you care about their happiness and success can be critical to retaining them. Remember, the real gift is in your act of taking notice of their good work, acknowledging their contributions and encouraging them to grow and prosper along with your organization.

ARE YOU READY TO LEAP? ®