

8 Ways to Show Employees the Love...

When You Can't Show Them the Money

The U.S. is one of the toughest economic periods in recent decades, but that doesn't mean less work for you. Thankfully, you have a team of hard-working employees toiling right alongside you. But here's the real question: How long can you expect them to stick around?

Remember: Our economic situation will not always be this bad. Sure, your employees will stay with you while the job market is poor. But if they don't feel like you've treated them well or appreciated their hard work during the slow economy, they'll be on to greener pastures when things turn around.

Many restaurant operators wrongly assume that employees respond only to money, but it's important to remember that employees want the same things you want—to be appreciated, to be listened to and to be respected.

There are many great ways to keep up employee morale and build loyalty that can cost you very little or even nothing. You just have to pay attention to your employees' needs and be creative.

For example:

Say "Thank you!" It's so simple, it almost seems silly to mention it, but just telling your employees "Thank you" when they've done a great job will go a long way.

Give them inexpensive bonuses. You can show your appreciation with a gift certificate to other restaurants or tickets to a show or ball game. Alternately, consider giving them some time off during a slow period.

Provide them with free meals. Offer them free or discounted meals to keep up employee morale and to say thank you. Also, don't forget to recognize birthdays and anniversaries. Celebrate each of them in some way to show how much they are appreciated.

Award them! Whether it's a simple blue ribbon or a framed certificate, present the award in front of all of your employees and tell them exactly why you are giving it. Your employees will appreciate the recognition.

Write them a thank-you note. Taking the time to write a short thank-you note to a hardworking employee is always well worth it. And make it specific: "Thank you for staying late last Thursday" is a lot more powerful than a vague "Thanks for all your hard work!"



Help them improve themselves. Your employees appreciate it when you are willing to invest in their future and help them widen their horizons. You can do this by paying for them to attend a class at a local community college or a seminar that interests them. A happy employee is a productive one.

Help them get healthy. Providing your employees with a gym membership can have multiple benefits. You can get a group deal at your local gym, so the cost to you won't be very significant. Secondly, your employees will have more energy and their improved health will help you save on health insurance.

Ask them what they'd like to improve. Employees will often suggest changes that will help them do their jobs better and they'll feel like they have some ownership in your restaurant. But remember, you must show them you value their suggestions by acting on some of them as quickly as possible so they know you are serious.

Your employees know that times are tough, so it is unlikely that they are going to be screaming "Show me the money" at you. But when all of this is over, you don't want them looking back and thinking "Man, I really worked hard for my boss when he needed me and not once did he say thank you." Your employees want to do a great job for you. They want you to care. So show it to them! It's that simple.

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