

Practical Strategies Online. Winter 2008

The email and Web newsletter on organization and management issues for business from Michael H. Smith, Ph.D. and Associates

Feature

New Ways To Keep Your Best Employees During Difficult Times

Three books on how to motivate employees

There are three business books, all in the list format, that offer the reader a lot of mini-suggestions on how to motivate, inspire and reward people. They are:

1001 Ways to Reward Employees and **1001 Ways to Energize Employees**

by Bob Nelson

Managing With Heart: 205 Ways to Make Your Employees Feel Appreciated

by Sharon Good.

The obvious critique of the whole category is that these books are pretty easy to write. Collect or brainstorm a bunch of ideas and you've got a book.

However, if they're easy to write, then they're also easy to read and use as well. And that's a point in their favor. You can browse through them and read them in a traffic jam or a line at the airport and get some great ideas.

Many useful ideas on employee motivation....

There are many useful ideas in these books. For example, Sharon Good suggests that people might be given:

A special bonus that's not at year end

Assigned parking spaces

A day off on their birthday

The right to make personal phone calls

These are simple ideas that can be very effective. But there are also tips that seem to be obvious filler in her book, e.g., Good urges you to treat people with respect, which is both obvious and rather nebulous. And she repeats the idea of feeding staff in a half-dozen ways: donuts, pizza, breakfast, lunch, etc.

How well known companies motivate employees....

Nelson's books are a little more substantial than Good's because he actually researched the specific ways that well-known companies have rewarded and motivated their employees. The fact that real businesses have done these things makes his books more credible. For example:

At Eastman Kodak, employees who submit useful suggestions receive 15% of the out-of-pocket savings from their idea for two years;

At American President Lines, people who are performing well receive personal letters and phone calls from top management acknowledging their work;

Wilson Learning Corp. gives all new employees a Mickey Mouse watch after three months to remind them to have fun at work;

After a profitable year, all the employees at Stone Container Corp. got a free TV; the next good year they were given a free DVD player;

At Merle Norman Cosmetics, employees are given free movies for Saturday nights.

Little things count when motivating employees....

The main point of these books is that little things count. If a number of these little things are done for staff, they do add up. All together, they give people the message that the organization cares about their efforts and their well-being. In other words, doing these kinds of things demonstrates to employees that they are seen as human beings who have real needs for approval, comfort, fun, recognition, etc.

Simple and low cost method for motivating employees....

The best part is that these things are simple to do and extremely low-cost (if not completely free). Companies don't have to create a huge motivation program that costs thousands of dollars to get people to feel good about

their work.

So try some of these simple tips. The results will surprise you.

Published by:

Michael H. Smith, Ph.D.
Michael H. Smith, Ph.D. and Associates

Conflict Resolution * Productivity Improvement

3640 Grand Avenue, Suite 204 Oakland, CA 94610
Tel: 510-832-8500 Fax: 510-832-8505
email: mhsmith@michaelhsmithphd.com

Visit our World Wide Web site at: www.michaelhsmithphd.com

Member of:

- Bar Association of San Francisco
- Northern California Human Resources Assoc.
- American Society for Training and Development