Employee Recognition Ideas (no cost)

1. Post a thank you note on an employee's door.
2. Take time to explain to new employees the norms and culture of your department.
3. Give special assignments to people who show initiative.
4. Arrange for a team to present the results of its efforts to upper management.
5. Encourage and recognize staff who pursue continuing education.
6. Create and post an "Employee Honor Roll" in reception area.
7. Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee's name when preparing a status report
8. Make a thank-you card by hand.
9. Give employees an extra-long lunch break.
10. Establish a place to display memos, posters, photos and so on, recognizing progress towards goals and thanking individual employees for their help.
11. Swap a task with an employee for a day – his/her choice.
12. Establish a "Behind the Scenes" award specifically for those whose actions are not usually in the limelight.
13. Nominate the employee for a University formal program like Management Institute.
14. Keep in mind that managers should serve as coaches to indirectly influence rather than demand desired behavior.
15. Present "State of the Department" reports periodically to your employees acknowledging the work and contributions of individuals and teams.
16. At a monthly staff meeting, award an Employee of the Month and invite co-workers at the meeting to say why that person is deserving of the award.
17. Recognize employees who actively serve the community.
18. Include an employee in a "special" meeting.
19. Allow employees to attend meetings in your place when you are not available.
20. Create an Above and Beyond the Call of Duty (ABCD) Award.
21. Ask your boss to attend a meeting with your employees during which you thank individuals and groups for their specific contributions.
22. Pop in at the first meeting of a special project team and express your appreciation for their involvement.
23. Send a letter to all team members at the conclusion of a project, thanking them for their participation.
24. Start an employee recognition program. Give points for attendance, punctuality, teamwork, etc. Provide gift certificates to employees who reach certain point goals.
25. Find ways to reward department-specific performance.
26. Plan a surprise achievement celebration for an employee or group of employees.
27. Start a suggestion program.
28. Privately recognize employee's personal needs and challenges.
29. Write a letter of praise recognizing specific contributions and accomplishments. Send a copy to senior management and the employee's personnel file.
30. When you hear a positive remark about someone, repeat it to that person as soon as possible (Face-to-face is best, e-mail or voice mail are good in a pinch).
31. Call an employee to your office to thank them (don't discuss any other issue).
32. If you have a department newsletter, publish a "kudos" column and ask for nominations throughout the department.
33. Publicly recognize the positive impact on operations of the solutions employees devise for problems.
34. Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee names in status reports.
35. Express an interest in employee's career development goals.

36. Post a large "celebration calendar" in your work area. Tack on notes of recognition to specific dates.
37. Create and string a banner across the work area.
38. Greet employees by name.
39. Practice positive nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate appreciation, such as smiles, or a handshake.
40. Support "flex-friendly" schedules.
41. Encourage employees to identify specific areas of interest in job-related skills. Then arrange for them to spend a day with an in-house "expert" to learn more about the topic.
42. Encourage employees to participate in community volunteer efforts.
43. Share verbal accolades – forward positive voice mail messages.
44. Actively listen to co-workers, especially when discussing their accomplishments and contributions.
45. Use 3x5 cards to write "You're special because…" statements. People can collect the cards and refer to them when things aren't going perfectly.
46. Have a recognition event created by a peer group that decides what they will give and why they will give it.
47. Keep a supply of appropriately funny notes that can be given as immediate rewards. Keep the supply visible – in a basket or box in your office.
48. Widely publicize suggestions used and their positive impact on your department.
49. When someone has spent long hours at work, send a letter of thanks to his/her home.
50. Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays.
51. Arrange for an outstanding employee to have lunch with a dean or director.
52. Allow an employee to choose his/her next assignment.
53. Recognize a team accomplishment by designating that team as consultants to other teams.
54. Recognize those committed to personal health and wellness.
55. Smile. It's contagious.

Employee Recognition Ideas (minor to moderate cost)

1. Create a Hall of Fame wall with photos of outstanding employees.
2. Make a photo collage about a successful project that shows the people that worked on it, its stage of development and its completion and presentation.
3. Find out the person's hobby and buy an appropriate gift.
4. Make and deliver a fruit basket.
5. Inscribe a favorite book as a gift.
6. Give the person a membership or subscription to a journal that relates to their work
7. Design a "Stress Support Kit" that included aspirin, a comedy cassette, wind-up toys and a stress ball – or design your own.
8. Serve ice cream sundaes to all of your employees at the end of a project.
9. Once a year, have a "Staff Appreciation Day" where the managers supply, cook and serve food.
10. Serve a team a hero party sandwich at the end of an assignment, for a job well done.
11. Give flowers to an employee at their home or office as a thank you.
12. Purchase a unique pin to serve as a memento for a task well done.
13. Hold informal retreats to foster communication and set goals.
14. Provide a lunch for project teams once they have made interim findings. Express your appreciation.
15. Give a personalized coffee cup.
16. Give an employee a blue ribbon for achievement.
17. Design and give magnets with appropriate messages.
18. Give a deserving employee a mug filled with treats.
19. Give a framed poem (poster or card) as a thank you.

20. Throw a pizza lunch party for your unit.
21. Give a note reading, "Thank you. You are a _____!" Attach a roll of Lifesavers.
22. Serve popcorn and lemonade on Friday (especially after a particularly hard week).
23. Give a puzzle as an award to a problem solver.
24. Have weekly breakfasts with groups of employees.
25. Treat an employee to lunch.
26. Give out gold coins for a job well done.
27. Bake/bring a gift (cookies, bread, etc.) for an outstanding employee or team.
28. Send birthday cards to employees' homes, signed by dean or director.