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Considerations for Creating a Rewards & Recognition Program

December 2019 / Employers Council

Reward and recognition programs are not one size fits all. You can create an informal or a formal program. What's important is that your program is linked meaningfully to your company's strategy.

Basics to consider:

- Provide Immediate Recognition: Recognize and praise employees as soon as the task is complete. Employees may feel unappreciated if they are not recognized in a timely manner, which can decrease motivation.
 - Recognize Small Improvements: Even though a manager may view an employee's improvement as a small accomplishment, the employee might view the same improvement as a significant accomplishment. All accomplishments, no matter how large or how small, should not go without some form of positive recognition.
 - Provide Incentives: Always provide some form of incentive, which does not always mean a monetary reward. There are many non-monetary incentives you can use to show employees they are appreciated and respected (i.e. verbal or written thank-you, recognition in staff meeting, etc.).
 - Recognize What Is Important to *Employees*: Employees should feel that their managers care about them as human beings. Make sure that recognition is on a personal level and is sincere. Employees need to feel appreciated and respected. Show employees that they are valuable assets to the company and worthy of praise.
- Determine who is eligible for recognition
 - Define performance measures that trigger an award
 - Identify who are the decision makers in approving rewards
 - Choose the awards – employees are motivated by different things and it may be most effective to offer both cash and noncash incentives to make the program meaningful to all participants
 - Communicate the program
 - Present the awards
 - Continuously evaluate the program's effectiveness – be prepared to change and modify the program

Customize your rewards and recognition to align with what motivates your employees:

- Do they want to be involved in work decisions?
- Do they want to have fun?
- Do they want to have variety?
- Do they want to know their opinions matter?
- Do they feel empowered to make their own decisions?
- Do they enjoy being part of a team?
- Are their strengths being used?
- Are they being encouraged?
- Do they feel part of your overall company strategy and goals? Are they connected to your mission?

Things that will de-motivate your employees:

- Violating trust
- Inconsistency and playing favorites
- Dishonesty
- Unclear expectations
- Micro-management
- Being taken for granted

For a formal program follow these steps:

- Determine who the program is intended to motivate
- Determine why and how this program will benefit your organization - what is the goal?
- Establish a budget