

HR TOOLKIT

Pause for Applause by Patricia Katz, Optimus Consulting

Nobody hangs around for 25 years on the promise of a long service award and a \$100 gift certificate. It's the day-to-day expressions of appreciation, not the grand formal gestures that win and hold the hearts of those who share your workplace.

Are you making the most of those everyday opportunities to let 'em know you care? Or are you missing those appreciative signposts on the road to the gold watch? On March 12 in Saskatoon, Patricia Katz of Optimus Consulting spoke about some practical ideas for HR professionals to use in expressing appreciation for others, both on the job and at home.

The following are just a few of the ideas Pat presented. For the full list, please visit the SAHRP website and look up Pat's presentation in the Members' Only – Chapter Presentation section.

Cautions in Sharing Appreciation

If recognition has not been your strength, start slowly and simply. Consider the preferences of others in choosing your form of recognition. Extend appreciation in ways that matter to them, not to you. Your sincerity will be measured by the recipient's read on your intentions.

Make sure your intentions are positive and not manipulative. Be specific and timely in showing your

appreciation. Treating everyone equally will only ensure that some will not feel recognized at all - because they don't feel all deserve it, or because the method of recognition doesn't connect with them. Be creative in your recognition gestures - don't settle for the same old, same old. Look for and create unique and unexpected opportunities to celebrate. Don't think recognition is a magic elixir. Distributing a round of corporate coffee mugs will only increase cynicism, if you are not actually addressing underlying problems that need serious attention.

Words of Thanks

- Leave voice mail messages of encouragement.
- Send a written thank you note or card. Personalize it as much as possible.
- Send an appreciative letter to employee's spouse and family members offering thanks for their support and sacrifice during a busy time.
- Initiate a stand-alone thank you conversation. Discuss no other issues.
- Start a team or department Success Journal. Record accomplishments and positive client comments. Begin your meetings by sharing entries from the journal.

Recognition & Acknowledgement

- Name an award or a program after an outstanding employee.
- Invite an individual to join a high level task force or accompany a senior person on client visit.
- Nominate colleagues for awards in professional associations or community programs.
- Profile individuals and teams on the company website.
- Survey co-workers and ask them what they would appreciate by way of recognition. Build your approach around real preferences.

No Cost Ideas

- Spend an afternoon working alongside an employee group doing their regular tasks.
- Take full responsibility. Apologize when in error.
- Be visible to colleagues and employees. Go where they are on a regular basis.
- Host Funny Fridays. Play humorous old comedy videos at lunch time on Friday.
- In your contact database or in individual file folders, jot



HR TOOLKIT (continued)

notes about individual employee interests, family news, and values. You'll have a starter profile to use when you are trying to think of meaningful ways to recognize each person.

Low Cost Ideas

- Launch Lifesaver Awards. Stock rolls of lifesavers for giveaways.
- Create a traveling trophy – a rose bowl filled with goodies passed on to someone who deserves a treat. That person refills the cup and makes the next award presentation to another deserving individual.
- Offer to wash an employee's car as a way of saying thanks.
- Celebrate Wellness Wednesdays with special activity events or treats that contributes to wellness (bottled water, power bar, free pass to gym, veggie snacks).
- Buy disposable 'Team Cameras' and encourage everyone to take candid photos of co-workers and activities. Use the photos in newsletters or make a bulletin board display.

Time In Lieu

- Spontaneously give individuals or group the rest of the day off when a project wraps or a goal is met.
- Present a bonus certificate for a two hour lunch.
- Award an extra day or several days vacation in special employment anniversary years – 5, 10, 15, 20 years.

Challenge Rewards

- Offer an employee the opportunity to represent the group to a client or an outside association.
- Invite an individual to chair a high profile group meeting or deliver a special report.
- Provide cross training opportunities or chances to work in another department for a day

© 2006 Compiled by Patricia Katz, Optimus Consulting

Patricia Katz holds a Masters degree in Continuing Education and a CHRP designation as a Certified Human Resource Professional. She has served in many executive leadership roles in regional, provincial and national professional associations. (see www.patkatz.com and www.pauseworks.com)