

## 101 Ideas to Motivate, Recognize and Reward Employees That Cost Nothing (or Very Little)...

*"The most motivational act we can do is to listen to our employees."* Ray Moody

1. Make eye contact and use employee's names
2. Verbal praise – A 'thank you', a nod, a smile, a handshake, a pat on the back
3. A short, written note of praise to the employee
4. Written praise to the employee's file
5. Written or verbal description of success to Senior Management with copy to employee and employee file
6. Verbal or written praise from a Senior Executive
7. Letting the person directly report on or describe his/her success to Senior Management
8. Asking the person for input, advice, or their opinion on something
9. Increased responsibility that the person will find challenging and motivating
10. Allowing the person more autonomy and independence to make decisions affecting their work, organization, strategies or work plans
11. Passing along compliments of the employee that were made by others
12. Giving the employee first choice of new tasks or new equipment
13. Put positive information in Personnel folder
14. Allow employee to represent the department at a meeting
15. Give time off – an extra break, an early out for the day, etc.
16. Provide quick follow-up on requests and other communications

## 5.12 | solutions

Ignite the potential of your people.

17. Visible recognition on a bulletin board
18. Talking to employees about something they are interested in
19. Allow employee to work on special projects of interest
20. Re-arrange work schedules, flex time
21. Job rotation
22. First choice on extra training or new equipment
23. Parking spaces, bus fare to work, etc.
24. Food – cup of coffee, donuts, cookies, etc.
25. Free use of vending machines – vending machine coupons or coins
26. Create a “Best Accomplishments” scrapbook and include picture, name, and statement of achievement
27. Name a space after an employee or put up a sign in an area (“Suzy Jones Corridor)
28. Attend a regularly-scheduled meeting and express relevant appreciation for what the team is working on
29. Show personal interest in the employee’s career development
30. Hold a project luncheon at the end of a project to celebrate as well as debrief and capture learnings
31. Honor peers who have helped you by recognizing them at your (or their) staff meeting
32. Nominate your employees for any formal award programs the organization may sponsor
33. Share latest management books or periodicals with employees
34. Allow employees to attend meetings in your place when you are not available
35. Create a “Good Tries” scrapbook and include innovations that didn’t quite achieve their full potential – recognize those who put in the effort, celebrate the successes (there usually are at least some) and the learnings so others can benefit later.

## 5.12 | solutions

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36. Say hello to employees when you pass by their desks or pass them in the hall – and possibly even recognize an recent achievement too!
37. Invite an employee (or employees) to coffee or lunch (with you and/or a Senior Executive) to recognize and appreciate their achievement
38. Establish a place to display information, posters, pictures, etc., recognizing individuals and teams and describing their accomplishments. HEROES – Honoring Excellence and Rewarding Outstanding Employee Service
39. When an employee makes a suggestion, take it seriously, evaluate it, and respond in a timely manner to the employee about the final actions regarding it.
40. When discussing an employee or team’s ideas with others, be sure you give them credit
41. When problems arise, involve them in analyzing root causes and coming up with possible solutions
42. Give special assignments to those who have shown initiative – make sure they will see this special assignment as a ‘thank you’ and not an extra burden
43. Get your employee’s pictures and a write-up in the organization-wide newsletter
44. Present “State of the Place” reports periodically so employees learn directly from you what is going on – use this time to recognize accomplishment and say thanks
45. Introduce outsiders to individuals and groups that have been making significant contributions, thereby acknowledging their work
46. Develop a “Behind the Scenes” award specifically for those whose actions are not usually in the limelight and make sure the awarding of this award does make it to the limelight!
47. Recognize and thank those who recognize others because it fosters the culture you want to develop
48. Ask employees how you could best show your appreciation. What would *they* like? Develop a list of ideas so that when you need one, it is easy to make it personal and unique

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49. Celebrate their contributions and accomplishments when someone enters or leaves your department – it is a great welcome for new comers and a nice way to say ‘thanks’ to those who are leaving.
50. Personalize the gift or any form recognition – make it unique and special to that person
51. Create an ongoing ‘traveling’ recognition award named after a particularly outstanding employee (or event.) The FRED Award (for being Friendly, Resourceful, Enthusiastic, and Dependable)
52. Post a client’s complimentary letter in a conspicuous place – and then file it in a “Warm Fuzzies” scrapbook
53. Make time for employees – schedule a ‘10-Minute Check-In’ to ask how they are doing and what resources they need. Do not discuss any of ‘your business’ in this session.
54. Create a “Pass Along Trophy” – person can keep it as long as they want and then it is up to them to ‘award’ it to a peer when they feel he/she deserves it and holds the ‘awards ceremony’ to recognize that individual as the trophy is passed.
55. Give a flower, a balloon, or some other inexpensive gift with the appreciation and recognition.
56. Offer to wash the employee’s car in the employee parking lot – allow the employee to supervise and others to watch
57. Create a ‘Wall of Fame’ so that recognition has lasting visibility
58. Pay for an inexpensive service: manicure, pedicure, facial, massage, etc.
59. Answer their phones and or emails for a day
60. Offer lunch coupons
61. Prepare bag lunches for an employee for a week
62. Offer time off
63. Create awards for others who help you. For example, janitors created a “Golden Broom’ award and shared it with those who helped pick up litter
64. ‘Caught In The Act of Caring’ Coupons – that can be traded for ‘prizes’

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65. Use of special equipment for a short period of time – like use of a sports car for a week
66. Use charts or posters to show accomplishments
67. Print special recognition on the employee's next order of business cards
68. Allow a 'two-hour lunch' with no time penalty
69. Hand out playing cards for accomplishments – at the end of the week, the 'best poker hand' receives a prize
70. Reward someone with a "Take the Rest of the Day Off to \_\_\_\_\_" (start your vacation early, enjoy this lovely spring (or fall) day, etc.)
71. Give an extra 15-minute break each day for a week
72. Create certificates of recognition – people tend to keep them and post them
73. Send greeting cards – be sure to write a personal message in the card to make it unique.
74. Create a silly incentive – for example, one retailer wore a really ugly tie to work and said that each employee who had a sale of a certain amount (or a certain amount of items) could cut one inch off the tie – his goal was to have the tie cut off by the end of the day!
75. Send a note to the family members thanking them for their sacrifice and understanding when an employee has had to work a lot of overtime on a project.
76. Offer to clean someone's house
77. Have an A-B-C-D award – Above & Beyond the Call of Duty
78. Management cooks for employees
79. Celebrities cook for employees
80. Management commandeers a coffee cart or some other treat cart and goes through the work area serving refreshments and thanking for accomplishments
81. Offer to baby sit for the employee

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82. Devise a game or contest that allows for as many winners as possible – not just the one who is the highest.
83. Arrange a limo to a holiday party
84. Trade workspaces for a week
85. Offer pieces over time (like Bingo pieces) and when someone gets a “Bingo” they earn a prize
86. Get a gumball machine. People earn pennies by doing things and when they put the penny in, the color of the gumball that comes out determines the prize they get
87. Make inexpensive buttons, badges, or ribbons for recognition. Cut your hand print out of construction paper and write “Pat on the Back” notes that you’ll tape to the person’s back in a fun ‘ceremony.’
88. Conduct a meeting outside because the weather is beautiful
89. Do things with color – people will see color before they see words.
90. Send an electronic thank you from one of the free greeting card sites ([www.hallmark.com](http://www.hallmark.com), [www.bluemountain.com](http://www.bluemountain.com), [www.americangreetings.com](http://www.americangreetings.com))
91. Legit Graffiti - Put flipchart or poster paper up on the wall of the work area so employees (and you!) can write kudos and thanks
92. Allow the person to ‘dress casually’ for the week...or month
93. Highlight the individual and the accomplishment on the organization’s website
94. Volunteer to do the employee’s least favorite task for a certain period of time (I’ll do your filing for a week.)
95. Create a ‘thank you’ screen saver for their computer
96. Have employees appear in company ads
97. Have a ‘regular work’ Olympics or Rodeo. While it is the regular work that is highlighted, it is made fun by the competition. For example, fastest bed maker, able to carry 5 glasses on a tray for a certain length of space the fastest with the least amount of spillage, etc.

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98. At Easter, stock up on the hollow plastic eggs, and then at some appropriate time, start a Good Egg campaign, by planting an egg on someone's desk with a note of appreciation in the egg
99. Chalk the sidewalk in front of the company with a congratulations message for a job well done.
100. Hold a 'compliments' session. A quick way is to draw names and it is the responsibility of the person who drew the name to say something that they really appreciate about the person whose name is on the sheet. A longer (and more effective) version is that one person is 'it' and you go around the group and each person says one thing that they really appreciate about that person. When that round is done, someone else becomes 'it' and the process continues. Ideally someone is writing down the compliments on a sheet that says "This is What I Appreciate About You..." and you then hand it to that person to keep.
101. Chocolate!!!! 😊