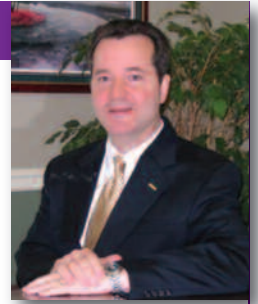


Employee Rewards & Recognition: A Reference Guide



By Philip Dickey, MPH, PHR

It is a fact of life that everyone wants to be appreciated - this is true of physicians, practice managers, and employees. We never outgrow this need and even if it looks like we are independent, self-sufficient and on top of the world, the fact is we need to feel valued.

Although this might sound like common sense, often the simplest forms of appreciation are not shown in medical practices. Physicians and practice managers are frequently too busy to remember or don't take the time. Studies have shown that recognition, rewards and positive reinforcement all work, and that recognition for a job well done is a top motivator of employee performance. When a physician or practice manager first learns this fundamental principle, the typical reaction is to think employees only appreciate rewards and recognition that directly translate to their pocketbooks, usually in the form of raises or promotions. While both are important to employees, what tends to motivate them to perform is the thoughtful, personal kind of recognition — a good ol' pat on the back! The need for motivated employees is unquestionable, and what better time to start appreciating your employees than the beginning of the New Year.

WHAT TO DO

A physician or practice manager must think in terms of formal and informal rewards and recognition. A formal approach typically means anything related to an established program; an informal approach would be more spontaneous. Reward and recognition programs do not have to be complicated. In fact, informal recognition is simplest

and can serve to effectively achieve behavior that can lead to the more formal rewards.

FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES

Always match the reward to the person. We are all different when it comes to motivation. Start with an employee's personal preferences and reward him or her with what is truly rewarding to them. Such rewards may be personal or official, public or private, and may be gifts, activities, or actions. Have each employee complete a list of things that motivate them.

Match the reward to the achievement. Effective reinforcement should be customized to take into account the significance of the achievement. An employee who does something "BIG" should be rewarded in a more substantial way than one who does something on a smaller scale.

Be timely and specific. To be effective, rewards need to be given as soon as possible after the desired behavior or achievement. It has been shown rewards that come too long after the action serve little in the way of getting the employee to repeat it.

The most effective rewards ultimately link to formal programs. A thank-you letter or public praise can be an important means of acknowledging an employee's efforts, but if that is the only form of recognition a physician or practice manager uses, such rewards will soon lose their effectiveness. A good rule of thumb is: for every three informal rewards (e.g., a thank you or pat on the back), there should be a more formal acknowledgment (e.g., a day off from work), and for every three of those, there should be a still more formal reward (e.g., a plaque, public praise

at a staff meeting). These kinds of rewards and recognition ultimately lead to bigger formal rewards such as raises and promotions.

FINALLY

After putting in the time and effort to develop a recognition program, keep it fresh by reviewing it and staying on top of what works and what does not. Your efforts will be rewarded many times over! ■

Mr. Dickey is HR services director and chief operating officer of DoctorsManagement, LLC. This article is intended as general information and is not a substitute for legal or other professional advice.

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Motivational Tips

- Call an employee into your office just to thank him or her. Don't discuss any other issue.
- Post a thank-you note on the employee's office door.
- Wash the employee's car in the parking lot during lunch.
- When discussing an employee's or a group's ideas with other people, peers or higher management, make sure you give credit.
- Create a Hall of Fame wall with photos of outstanding employees.