

Reward and Recognition Programs:

How to Show Appreciation for Library Employees

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Abstract

The author indicates that library managers can show appreciation for their employees in ways that do not cost much money and that promote an atmosphere of appreciation. The need for recognition is based on motivational content and process theories as well as research from both the business world and academic libraries. Included are examples of recognition programs, ideas for awards, as well advice for starting a program in the library workplace.

Keywords: rewards, awards, recognition, incentives, appreciation, praise, motivation, academic libraries, university libraries, content theory, process theory

"It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference"—Tom Brokaw (Glasscock & Gram, 1995, p. 96).

While libraries exist to serve their patrons, it is the employees, managers, and other administrators who work together to provide the service. The emphasis on library users, while important, may seem to dominate over the needs of those who serve patrons. Stephanie Wilson, as cited by Linda R. Musser (2001), writes:

In the aftermath of downsizing and restructuring, employees have often felt forgotten and demeaned as extra workloads and longer work hours have become the norm without the balance of additional employee recognition of employee performance. Even annual merit increases are at their lowest levels in 20 years. (p. 85)

According to Sue Glasscock and Kimberly Gram (1995), "[B]y concentrating only on outstanding performers, most companies recognize less than 5 percent of their workforce, often with rewards that do not reinforce their award-winning behavior" (p. 91). It is important that all employees feel appreciated for their efforts. As Glasscock and Gram describe, free turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner is not the most effective way for management to show employees gratitude (1995, p. 94).

Frank Piunno, the vice president of sales at Ecocenters Corporation, a small computer-services firm in Ohio, states, "Our people are our biggest asset... We have millions of dollars in equipment, but without our employees, we're worth nothing. If we treat our people with dignity and respect, they'll treat our customers the same way..." (Penzer, 1991, p. 38). Herbert E. Cihak, library director of the University of Kentucky College of Law at Lexington writes, "It is the duty of a library leader to focus the spotlight on his or her staff. Praise and recognition are tools that are at the disposal of all library leaders" (1999, Reward section, para. 1). Glasscock and Gram cite Stephen Covey's principle—"to always treat your employees exactly as you want them to

treat your best customers" (1995, p. 101). This perspective offers much for library staff suffering from low morale, whether due to financial cuts, routine work days, or few promotional opportunities.

In tough economic times, like that being experienced in California and around the nation, pay increases or other monetary rewards may not be workable. Dale Dauten, a management writer, commented that "most people—and the best and most competitive people—try harder at whatever game they play if someone keeps score" (White, 1999, para. 1). He also writes that "the preferred form of recognition is financial, but far less costly approaches are available," examples which include a preferred parking spot for the employee of the month or even a free pizza (Ibid, para. 7). Staff can be reenergized and motivated for work by the establishment of creative incentive programs that show genuine appreciation for the work employees do.

People, however, are motivated by different factors (Burkey-Wade, 2007, p. 140), which means that creative incentive programs may not work for everyone. According to G. Edward Evans and Patricia Layzell Ward (2007), there are several categories of motivational theories. Content theories, like those of Abraham Maslow and Clayton Alderfer, focus on assessing the "needs" of staff based on a hierarchy of needs, although Alderfer's concept does not adhere to a specific order as Maslow holds. Maslow's five levels of needs are physiological, security, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Physiological and security needs relate to physical needs of the body and money and safety, more basic needs in our society, whereas social, esteem, and self-actualization focus more on relationships and personal growth. Alderfer groups needs as being existence needs, relatedness needs, or growth needs. While none of these needs is "higher" than others, existence needs are a combination of Maslow's physiological and safety needs; relatedness refers to social and esteem needs; and growth needs refer to both esteem and self-

actualization. "The concept of growth needs is especially useful in the workplace" (Evans & Ward, 2007, p. 301). Another theory, provided by David McClelland, promotes three need profiles: those who strive for individual achievement, those who desire affiliation or close social relationships, and those who desire power in the form of directing or controlling (Ibid, p. 302).

Process theories concentrate on "the way people think about work and which goals motivate them to perform to the maximum potential" (Ibid, p. 303). Douglas MacGregor's Theory X and Theory Y and Frederick Herzberg's studies are prime examples. MacGregor's Theory X assumes that people dislike work and have little motivation to complete tasks. As such, they need to be more closely guided and controlled to accomplish work. Motivational techniques outside of physiological and security needs do not function because of this assumption of people's work habits (Ibid, p. 303). Theory Y operates on the opposite assumption: work is a natural activity, people accept and seek responsibility, and work "can be a source of satisfaction" (Ibid, p. 304). Motivational techniques are helpful for organizations that operate under Theory Y.

Evans and Ward (2007) explain that in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Herzberg interviewed engineers and accountants about their jobs. The results revealed that:

...positive thoughts were highest when supervisors indicated to the employees they were doing a good job...Fringe benefits did not produce positive feelings, as benefits generally produced negative thoughts when employees viewed them as inadequate. The same was true of salary. Negative thoughts and feelings resulted from the physiological and security aspects of the job; positive thoughts resulted from self-actualization, self-esteem, and social needs. (p. 308)

Herzberg's resulting theory is two-pronged. Although an article by Akobundu Dike Ugah and

Michael Okpara (2008) places Herzberg's theory as content theory rather than process theory, the authors explain that "some job conditions operate primarily to dissatisfy employees when they are not present, but the presence of these conditions does not build strong motivation" (p. 3). Herzberg called these "hygienic factors" (Evans & Ward, 2007, p. 309), and these include "company policy and administration, technical supervision, [interpersonal relationships with the supervisor, peers, and subordinates], salary, job security, personal life, working conditions, and status" (Ugah & Okpara, 2008, p. 3). The second part of Herzberg's theory is that "some job conditions build high motivation and job satisfaction, but if they are not present, they do not prove highly dissatisfying." These "motivational factors" (Evans & Ward, 2007, p. 309) include "achievement, recognition, advancement, the work itself, responsibility, and growth" (Ugah & Okpara, 2008, p. 3).

Although creative incentive programs may not make every employee enjoy their job more or necessarily increase productivity, recognition is nonetheless a strong motivator. Linda Burkey-Wade, head of the Interlibrary Loan Department at the Malpass Library at Western Illinois University, writes, "If a manager never indicates that a task has been well done, employees may be unsure of what is expected and how they are valued (2007, p. 140). Cihak (1999) writes, "Money itself is not the most significant motivator that causes job satisfaction. Other rewards may be of more lasting worth" (Reward section, para. 1). Elissa F. Topper (2004a) notes that "some research shows that reward programs that only emphasize cash incentives can actually 'de-motivate' staff by shifting the goal away from a sense of accomplishment and contribution to attaining the carrot of a fiscal award" (p. 96). Evans and Ward (2007) note:

Incentives can be tangible (for example, pay increases, better working conditions, or new staff facilities) or intangible (for example, praise, empathy, recognition of

achievement in front of peers. Each employee will respond to combinations of incentives.

The intangibles are probably more important—but also harder to identify. (p. 297)

According to Bob Nelson, as cited by Burkey-Wade, "Manager initiated rewards for performance has the most motivational impact" (2007, p.145). Research in the management realm indicates that "the value of recognition should not be underestimated in the work environment...appreciation for a job well done is the highest motivator for employees" (Musser, 2001, p. 86).

Musser (2001) indicates that "[r]ewards are one form of recognition" (p. 85-86).

Glasscock and Gram (1995) indicate that rewards and recognition are not the same.

...[R]ecognition is acknowledgement, appreciation, and approval. When combined and applied appropriately, these elements provide a psychological benefit—individuals are given a sense of belonging and are intrinsically motivated. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines *reward* in the following ways: to give a reward to or for; recompense; something that is given in return for good or evil done or received and especially that is offered or given for service. Reward clearly indicates a financial or other physical benefit. (p. 96)

Based on this definition, the authors note that competitions and contests, cash rewards, lotteries, and raises are not recognition (Glasscock & Gram, 1995, p. 99-100).

Jerry McAdams (2000) writes that there are many types of recognition programs.

"Recognition plans are investments in human capital and often reflect the culture of an organization" (McAdams, 2000, p. 20). Plans can be categorized in a number of ways. There are those which celebrate organizational objectives, and these can be "inexpensive, fun, significant,

and make a positive cultural statement. They must be frequent, open, honest, and involving. They are about focus and celebration, rather than manipulation and hype" (Ibid, p. 20). Other plans reinforce "outstanding performers, as individuals, teams, or organizational units" while still others reinforce "desired behaviors or activities" or recognize years of service to the organization (Ibid, p. 21). McAdams suggests that showing appreciation can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

Glasscock and Gram (1995) "maintain a state of the art recognition program at StorageTek that has been benchmarked by more than 30 companies" (p. 91). StorageTek, located in Louisville, Colorado, is "an information storage and retrieval manufacturer" (p. 91). In 1989, the company created a team to produce a better recognition system as part of a total quality management initiative.

At the time, only 1.6 percent of the employee base received recognition during the course of the year. That recognition came in the form of cash awards of \$50 or \$100 given for outstanding individual contributions. Nominations were initiated by management through a lengthy and time-consuming process. (p. 91-92)

The company sought to make recognition part of their organization rather than an extra. StorageTek accomplished this by first identifying all the factors that need to be present to make an "*effective* recognition" program. The team found that the seven factors for success include being sincere, fair and consistent, timely, frequent, flexible, appropriate, and specific when recognizing employees (p. 93-95). The authors propose that whatever tools or techniques are used to show appreciation, "all seven criteria must be met" (p. 93). Musser (2001) writes, "Some key aspects of effective recognition programs...include frequency, promptness,

flexibility/creativity (e.g., tailored to an individual), simplicity, involvement of all employees, and incorporation into the culture or system" (p. 86).

StorageTek's resulting recognition program, which was first tested in various departments before becoming adopted company-wide, now has two levels of recognition.

[L]evel one recognizes the behaviors the firm wants to see repeated, such as follow-through, volunteering, pride, and excellence in daily work, and going out of one's way to help a coworker; level two recognizes a significant impact on a department, organizational, or corporate goal, such as cycle-time reduction, quality improvement, and cost reduction or avoidance. (Glasscock & Gram, 1995, p. 97)

Level one recognition is accomplished by writing thank-you cards and tokens that can be exchanged for items in the cafeteria, gym, day care, or company store. Level two recognition is shown through themed team celebrations throughout the year, "Night on the Town" awards (gift cards for dinner with family and friends), and "I Made a Difference" awards (gift cards to various department stores). As a result of this program, "[o]ver 90 percent of the work associates at StorageTek now receive recognition" (p. 92).

Due to the results of a survey conducted in the mid-late 1990s, Pennsylvania State University encouraged each of its departments to address the perceived lack of recognition and rewards programs (Musser, 2001). Pennsylvania State, university-wide, mainly offered awards that recognize "length of service or excellent job performance in the form of an Employee of the Year award" (Musser, 2001, p. 86). Only one department at Penn State, the Office of the Physical Plant, offered a less formal award, which consisted of "a Kudos candy bar...awarded by a supervisor or foreman to a staff member in recognition of work over and beyond what is

normally expected" (Ibid, p. 87). The Penn State University Libraries developed a task force to research rewards and recognition programs in an effort to improve rewards and recognition in its libraries. The task force discovered that most university libraries also employ these types of awards, but "[s]everal institutions have implemented rewards and recognition programs...[that] are given with greater frequency (either weekly or monthly) and with less fanfare than length of service or Employee of the Year awards" (Ibid, p. 87).

According to Musser, Duke University's library offers a number of STAR (Super Talent Appreciated and Recognized) awards in different categories, such as Cool Under Fire, Ice Breaker, Problem Solver, and the Bright Idea Award, "which recognizes an outstanding suggestion for improving service or efficiency" (2001, p. 87). A British study by Eileen Milner, Margaret Kinnell, and Bob Usherwood (1995) proposes that suggestion boxes be made to encourage employees to make suggestions for improvement. "Implemented ideas are rewarded by a monetary award or some other form of recognition" (Milner et al., 1995, p. 4). The monetary award does not have to be large (Ibid, p. 4). Rutgers University libraries and the University of Georgia libraries "have instituted Above and Beyond awards programs that recognize specific contributions" (Musser, 2001, p. 87).

The University of Missouri-Columbia libraries have a letter writing program in which a staff member writes a letter of appreciation for another staff member's efforts (Ibid, p. 87). The University of Michigan has an U Matter program that "presents ten awards per month to recipients who also are recognized at an annual staff recognition event. The awardees receive a gold U Matter pin presented by unit supervisors" (Ibid, p. 87). St. Edwards has a RAVE (Recognizing All Valuable Employees) program. Anyone can nominate a faculty or staff member "who act[s] in accordance with [St. Edwards' operating] principles" by completing a RAVE

nomination card (Ibid, p. 87). The nomination is sent to the recipient and the managers of the recipient's respective department. No other award is given, but "supervisors and team leaders are encouraged to supplement the RAVE creatively within units" (Ibid, p. 87).

Carol Jimbo (2002) shares that while the Indiana State Library has honored two support staff members for outstanding service annually since 1987 in "a formal ceremony and reception," the Public Relations team "wanted to recognize individuals who do an outstanding job on a daily basis" (p. 14). The team designed an inclusive plan that would involve "support staff, student assistants, faculty, and administration" in recognition of efforts that are "supported by the mission, vision, and value statement of the library" (Ibid, p. 14). Various articles support the idea that organizational objectives should be the basis for recognition (Glasscock & Gram, 1995; Jimbo, 2002; McAdams, 2000; McMullen, 2010; Van Dyke & Garlick, 2008). Tom McMullen (2010), in particular, writes, "Recent Hay Group research with Fortune magazine on reward program effectiveness indicates that Fortune's Most Admired Companies (MAC) do a better job of ensuring that their reward programs are clearly aligned with their organization's goals, strategy and culture" (Abstract).

Although the criteria sound very formal, at the Indiana State University Library anyone who works in the library can nominate someone in writing (Jimbo, 2002, p. 14). Recognition can result from serious or unusual, less formal situations. For example, an employee can be recognized for taking on another person's job "during a family illness or an emergency" (Ibid, p. 14). Some can be awarded for having a positive attitude. In another example, Jimbo writes that a stacks supervisor was recognized for capturing a tarantula that was found making a web in the stacks! Awards are presented throughout the year "at the beginning of the next scheduled Library Steering Group (LSG) meeting" (Ibid, 14). Winners are given a framed certificate, and their

picture is placed "on a Web link so everyone in the library can view" it (Ibid, p. 14). Jimbo recommends that "first-time winners are presented with a desk clock that bears the inscription Information Services Excellence Award" and that "information about the recognition is placed in the library's newsletter" (p. 15).

Topper (2004a) indicates that in order to choose appropriate awards, managers should ask employees for ideas (p. 96). Burkey-Wade (2007) writes:

Managers must know and understand the reasons behind employees' behaviors because when you do not take the time to find out their interests, you may offer motivation that does not motivate your staff...A manager can start by listening to their employees' interests when they are discussing their job and their lives outside of work. This will help you to offer rewards most likely to resonate with each individual. (p. 140)

Related to content theories' emphasis on needs, Mel Van Dyke and Rick Garlick (2008) provide six reward profiles that illustrate the different preferences people have for recognition and rewards. "Awards seekers want incentives that have both monetary and trophy value. They are highly motivated by gift cards, travel awards, and status awards..." (p. 17). New work opportunities are not seen as rewards. "Nesters" do not like awards "that take them away from home...Nesters are most likely to enjoy days off, flexible scheduling, and a reward of a meal with their families" (p. 17). "Bottom liners" only care about cash prizes and "point programs" (p. 17-18). "Freedom yearners...are best rewarded by giving them flexibility—flexible hours, freedom to choose how to best achieve their goals, and the ability to choose interesting and challenging projects" (p. 18). "Praise cravers value praise—whether given verbally, written, formal or informally given by peers" (p. 18). Other types of rewards are not as appealing, and the authors suggest this is because praise cravers desire achievement "from a job well done" (p. 18).

Finally, "upward movers" are described as "[loving] their jobs and want[ing] to move up" (p. 18). The "upward movers" are keen on status awards or mentoring or working with others outside their department (p. 18).

The rewards and recognition task force of the Penn State Libraries conducted a survey and found that the top ten items that employees would want for rewards include a salary increase, cash bonus, letter of commendation for their file, a free lunch or dinner which was tied with a gift certificate, a free university class, review of job grade and pay level, tickets to a cultural event, either free parking or a designated space with was tied with a thank you card, being called into the manager's office to hear praise or appreciation, or a hand-written note by the dean which tied with an award (Musser, 2001, p. 88-89). Although some of the ideas are monetary, many of the ideas are more creative and even downright simple, such as writing a thoughtful thank-you note. As Topper (2004a) reports, "Out of 67 potential rewards for doing a good job, employees ranked personal congratulations from the manager as number one, and a written note from the boss came in second, according to a survey reported on the Foundation for Enterprise development website" (p. 96).

Topper provides several other ideas for recognizing employees (2004a & 2004b). Departmental awards can be created based on a special emphasis (cost cutting or customer service), "a 'thanks for your help' box" can be made in which staff "drop in the names of fellow employees who go beyond the call of duty" for a monthly drawing, and simple treats can be offered once a project is finished (Ibid, p. 96). Another tip is to celebrate each employee's hiring date anniversary with a card. In a part two of Topper's article, other librarians offered ideas, including a parking space, gift certificate for a free meal, an employee of the year award with 500 dollars and a plaque in the library, a "Kudos box—a box of goodies and inexpensive gifts

like pens, notepads, etc. [and]...an online thank-you system with a form that can be completed by both staff and library users" (Topper, 2004b, p. 94). One Interlibrary Loan department has a Mr. Wonderful doll trophy that employees take turns giving to each other. Another idea is to have a staff appreciation day during National Library Week in which the public is invited (Ibid, p. 94).

A survey of various interlibrary loan managers was conducted by Burkey-Wade (2007) to find out what types of rewards their departments offered. Of the 133 responses from managers, 103 were from academic libraries, 20 were from public libraries, and 10 were from special libraries. "Question 5 in the survey was, "What have you done in your interlibrary loan to keep employees motivated (i.e., rewards, flextime, time off, etc.)? Please explain" (Burkey-Wade, 2007, p. 143). Although some of the responses to this question were related to flexible scheduling or systems for vacations or taking time off, there are some notable ideas for tangible rewards that can promote motivation. Food-related parties can be thrown to "[celebrate] birthdays, births, and other milestones" (Ibid, p. 143), gift cards for small amounts can be given, a rotating trophy can be passed along (Topper's article mentions a Mr. Wonderful doll [2004b, p. 94]), or even buying or making "gifts of flowers, inexpensive gifts, goody bags, and cards" (Burkey-Wade, 2007, p. 143). Burkey-Wade also provides ideas from *1001 Ways to Reward Employees* (1994) by Bob Nelson, the most unique of which include "bring[ing] a bag of candy and tell[ing] employees to hand-out the candy pieces to other employees who have done a good job or helped them out with their own job" and "reward[ing] a good employee by working their Saturday or evening shift for them" (2007, p. 145). There are a myriad of ideas that managers can use to reward employees that do not cost very much money.

There are those, however, such as John Lubans, a senior administrator at the Duke University Library, who caution against the use of recognition programs, "instead [encouraging]

spontaneous recognition of achievement" (Musser, 2001, p. 86). This assessment is aimed at more formal programs that tend to create more losers than winners (Lubans, 1999, para. 3). Glasscock and Gram (1995) make a similar argument against using "rewards" that create competition or are based on lottery systems (p. 100). Lubans (1999) informs readers that while programs may have been well-intentioned, they tend to create negative feelings amongst staff who feel that the said winner does not deserve an award, largely because they may not know what the individual does at his or her job or may know something about the winner's character flaws (Scene 2 section, para. 1). Penn State's research also indicates that "[a] rewards program, whether formal or informal, must not be considered a substitute for fair and equitable compensation" (Musser, 2001, p. 89). This is an important factor to consider. Recognition programs should never be used as a substitute for deserved pay increases or promotions. Employees will see these recognition attempts as a cover-up for not increasing salary that only serve to make the manager or administration seem "benevolent." While resentment may be a result of awarding employees in traditional reward programs, recognition programs that strive to recognize most employees are a good choice.

Lubans article demonstrates that managers need to be considerate and careful when planning a recognition program. He advises that if a recognition program is put in place, "[i]t is probably best to avoid a formal, full-blown RP—one that is sure to sag under its predictability and incremental fatigue" (1999, Last Words section, para. 1). An article by Vincent Alonzo (2010), "How to Run a Recognition Program," advises that when setting out to design a recognition program, it is important to first identify the "actions that have the greatest impact and then develop programs that recognize those areas" (p. 16). Many of the university library examples and the StorageTek example show that teams were developed to research different

types of reward and recognition programs as well as the types of activities and behaviors that should be recognized in their institutions' programs. Glasscock and Gram (1995) also advise that a mission statement be written for the program (p. 92).

One idea not previously discussed that is particularly insightful is that all employees should be trained "in the importance of giving and receiving feedback in the workplace" (Glasscock & Gram, 1995, p. 96). This idea can be combined with Alonzo's (2010) proposal that written communication about the new program, including the "management's philosophy regarding employee recognition" and the program's "objectives, length, and measurement system," are sent to all employees (p. 16). He writes, "Also consider holding an event to kick off the program" (2010, p. 16).

Lubans (1999) also writes that communication is the key to success. Administrators need to communicate "[t]he purpose of the award," the "nomination process and who has access" to it, and why a team or person is getting the award (Lubans, 1999, If You Must section). Alonzo (2010) also stipulates that managers need to "[d]escribe exactly what the recipients did to earn the reward" (p. 16).

Lubans suggests "frequent turnover of the recognition committee," nixing awards when they become dull, and assessing the program "from time to time" by having "conversations with committee members and staff" (1999, If You Must section). Van Dyke and Garlick (1995) also advise that "dedicated recognition advocates should meet frequently to share ideas, capture best practices, and make changes..." to keep programs from becoming dated (p. 17). Alonzo (2010) also recommends that programs be evaluated on a yearly basis (p. 16).

In short, for a program to be effective it must be inclusive, adhere to the library's values

with some room for special circumstances (think Indiana State's tarantula situation), and institute an atmosphere of appreciation rather than competition. The objective is to promote gratitude—not prizes. Less formal recognition programs seem a better fit to employ a culture of appreciation. As library employees are those on the front lines, they are the heart of the operation and must be appreciated for the work they do day-to-day.

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