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HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM

Why Service Award Programs Work

Here's something to think about. Imagine you have been with a company for 10 years. You've worked hard, put in extra hours, taken pay cuts during the hard times, and were partly responsible for its growth in the good times. Overall, you were an extremely loyal employee. Now imagine after all of these years of service and dedication, you have not received anything but an occasional pat on the back. How would you feel about your company? How would it affect your attitude and your performance?

Let's face it, we are all creatures of our environment, sensitive and responsive to external reward and punishment. Negative reinforcement, because it focuses on our failures, does not motivate. Positive reinforcement does. Just by believing we're doing well, we'll try harder, be more persistent, feel more loyal and become more dedicated.

Service award programs are management's way of providing positive reinforcement directing attention to the rewards of dedication, loyalty, employee involvement and enhancement of an employee's value through public recognition.

The more reinforcement management provides, the better results they'll achieve. People need symbols of that reinforcement. A pat on the back doesn't always do. Service award programs provide just such symbols of pride in achievement. More than money, which can create envy or political infighting, an actual, physical award offers individuals the opportunity to gain the wholehearted recognition and approval of their peers.

How To Determine If You Need A Service Award Program

Chances are, if you've sent for this booklet, you already suspect that your company might benefit from a service award program.

You have an underlying feeling that management/employee relations or employee commitment and dedication to company goals can be improved. But you can't quite put your finger on the problem or how to solve it.

To find out how accurate that feeling is take this short quiz:

1. Does your company have a systematic way of letting people know that their contributions are valued?
2. Does your company publicly single out those people who do something right, rather than those who do something wrong?
3. Has your company established one or, at most, two fundamental attributes (e.g. pride of workmanship, dedication to customer needs) to be best at -and continually reinforce these goals?
4. Does management believe your company's assets are primarily its machines, products or money, rather than its people?
5. Do you encourage performance competition among workers in a way that is non-threatening?
6. Do you offer rewards that are strictly monetary (salaries, bonuses) and fail to provide symbolic awards as well?
7. Is management as totally committed to its people and their well-being as they wish their employees to be towards the company and its goals?
8. Is top management visibly involved in the recognition of employee achievement at all levels?
9. Does management recognize and reward only the few very top performers, and ignore the remaining 80 or 90 percent?
10. Has management tried various incentive programs in the past, and given them up because they "just don't seem to work"?

Scoring: Check your answers and assign the number of points shown for each answer. Then add up your total points.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Yes 2 - No 0 | 6. Yes 0 - No 4 |
| 2. Yes 4 - No 0 | 7. Yes 4 - No 0 |
| 3. Yes 2 - No 0 | 8. Yes 3 - No 0 |
| 4. Yes 0 - No 5 | 9. Yes 0 - No 2 |
| 5. Yes 3 - No 0 | 10. Yes 2 - No 1 |

26-30:

Your management understands the needs of its people and is actively pursuing a policy to full fill those needs. Reading this booklet may point out one or two areas for improvement, but basically your workers know you care.

18-25:

You've tried to institute some system of rewards, but management's lack of commitment has caused inconsistency and only sporadic positive reinforcement for workers. A renewed commitment based on the principles described in this booklet will increase effectiveness.

9-17:

Management's attitude toward any reward system is one of looking for a "quick fix" for a problem or focusing only on a few very highly motivated individuals. This basic misunderstanding of how and why to institute an award program must be corrected at the management level, and the system revised to reflect this change.

0-8:

Workers are not being recognized as they should. They are considered expendable. Workers can sense this and act accordingly. You've asked for this booklet because you're ready to change things for the better. Let's get started.

Establishing Goals

Service Award programs are long range programs designed to affect the overall attitudes of people within a company -thereby enhancing their commitment to excellence in every aspect of their on-the-job performance.

What then are the identifiable benefits to be achieved?

- ?? *Recognition* of individual contributions.
- ?? *Goodwill* towards the company, its management, its product and fellow workers.
- ?? *Pride* in self, in individual performance, in company performance and in division performance.
- ?? *Peer approval*, respect among fellow employees.
- ?? *Involvement* with the company, a sense of belonging to a "family" with shared goals and values. *Opportunity to stand out.*

According to a recent survey in *Human Resource Executive Magazine*,* respondents felt that a properly structured non-sales performance recognition program was likely to: create awareness (92%), build morale (90%), motivate employees (88%), encourage teamwork (78%) and improve quality of work (78%). The survey also revealed the average budget for such a program is approximately \$50,000 dollars (based on figures from companies whose size ranges are between 6,000-24,999).

* *Human Resource Executive*, September, 1992- (Percentage exceeds 100% due to multiple responses)

Compound the benefits to be derived when employees are motivated, enthusiastic, productive and contributing his or her experience and knowledge to the job, and the return-on-investment is expanded mightily. In order to get these benefits, management must be determined to reward its employees in a multitude of ways.

There is no reason why you can't design systems to continually reinforce these facts, systems that reinforce degrees of positive attitudes. If you get people to respond, even in small ways, they will come to believe in what they're doing.

The prime factor in motivation is simply the self-perception among employees that they are in fact, doing well. Whether they are or not by any absolute standard is not the issue. Mere belief that they are succeeding will lead to more persistence, higher motivation and greater accomplishment.

Determining Recognition Levels

Service Award programs focus not on one-time achievements but rather, on cumulative levels of performance. They direct attention to those steady, good work attitudes and habits that bring about a happy productive workplace.

The first, and most common area of Service Award recognition is Length of Service. The usual practice in length-of-service programs is to set award levels at truly milestone achievements: five, ten, fifteen, twenty and twenty-five years of employment.

So whether you are an established company or a new one, you'll find motivating your newest employees could prove beneficial. Waiting five years for the first service award seems like a very long time to the employee. Employees wish to be considered an important part of the company long before that.

The solution is quite simple. See that there are awards for every milestone — especially *the first anniversary*. This way you'll be letting your employees know, early on, that management recognizes them, is pleased they've become part of the organization, and wants and expects them to be around for a long, long time!

This first-year service award need not necessarily be expensive. It could be your company logo or emblem recreated inexpensively, so that it can be used as a lapel pin, tie tack or charm.

Companies that give one-year award spend around \$20. But its value to the recipient is far greater than if you were to give a \$20 cash bonus.

Employees revere and proudly wear such items, the advantages of which are obvious. To maintain the loyalty and respect of your employees, should be a building block of increasingly more prestigious awards, and just as important: award ceremonies. As the level of longevity increases, the value and symbolism of the award should also increase. The traditional "gold watch" at twenty-five years is more than corporate mythology. Its popularity as a tradition stems from the depth of meaning attached to its symbolism — a visible, reminder of the company's appreciation of the loyalty and dedication of the employee.

Selecting Awards

Awards should be arranged in a hierarchy of value and prestige, and they should bear some relationship from one award level to the next.

The kinds of awards you select should be those which your employees wouldn't use their disposable income to buy for themselves. That is one of the most important reasons that a lot of care and consideration has to be put into the selection of merchandise. The most highly perceived non-sales performance award is a watch. Other very popular choices are clocks, travel, corporate jewelry and writing instruments.

It's smart to keep continuity in your program. That's when you benefit from quantity pricing which can really stretch your budget. When selecting award suppliers employers look for: product availability, administrative support, product warranty, communication services, supplier reputation, and repair services.

Communicate Your Program

The manufacturers or distributors that you select for your service awards can usually supply you with catalog sheets of the merchandise you select at a very nominal cost. Or, at your request, they will supply you with color transparencies. Whether you choose to use a variety of catalog sheets or other collateral for your own "Service Award Booklet" each employee should have a copy.

It is vital that there be continuity throughout the years. The program is in effect so that each award becomes established in people's minds as the award for the corresponding achievement. People will strive harder when they know precisely what they are striving for— and when that award holds the same meaning for all members of their peer group.

Whatever the award, it must be identifiably your company's symbol of recognition for that particular achievement or it will lack sufficient meaning to motivate your employees.

If you've never run a service award program, a trained Hero's Salute professional will be a wealth of information to help you set your priorities. From establishing your budget to selecting the merchandise best-suited to your program, you can count on Hero's Salute. Hero's has a full staff of trained experts that you'll find courteous, friendly and helpful.

When you have the need for other types of programs, you'll find the Hero's Salute staff experienced in these areas as well:

- ?? Sales Incentives
- ?? Dealer Incentives
- ?? Recognition Awards
- ?? Productivity Awards
- ?? Business Gifts
- ?? Safety Awards

To discuss creating (or reviving) your own Service Award Program, call Hero's Salute. You have nothing to lose...it's free.

Let Hero's Salute Help You Plan Your Service Award Program

Our trained specialists are ready to help you. They will sit down and help you plan all your programs and tell you about special ways to customize your gifts. Our consultation service is free and there is no obligation to buy.