

February 14, 2025: A Love Letter to Your Employees: How to Show Recognition and Increase Engagement

The term “member” applies to those who attended the Roundtable and contributed by speaking or in the chat. Individual names and library names are not used to keep information anonymous.

Quick Recap

Personal preferences and strategies for boosting employee morale, including recognition, appreciation, and celebration of employees' achievements were discussed. The conversation ended with a discussion on the role of committees and friends' groups in staff appreciation and the sharing of ideas for staff engagement.

Favorite's List

To start the Roundtable, an HRAF leader led a discussion about personal preferences. Members were asked to write down their favorite color, flower, animal, hot beverage, cold beverage, snack, and “favorite item” they get excited about with the instructions to be specific. Members shared their answers and there were a wide range of preferences but also commonalities such as cats being a favorite animal and stickers and notebooks being “favorite items” but also lots of unique responses.

They went on to state that these are questions they have staff and new employees answer. The goal is to celebrate each employee's birthday and work anniversary. This person's library has set aside a small amount of the budget for employee morale (asked the director for this). They have a budget of \$500/yr and is under “Administration Contingency” line item.

“It begins with the staff.” If you have happy staff, it'll spread like wildfire and patrons will notice.

All employees are also given copies of the favorites' lists. Staff are encouraged to use these sheets if they want to show appreciation or support of fellow coworkers. An example was given by the speaker of a time they were having a really tough time and an anonymous colleague left a dark chocolate bar (favorite) on their desk. Employees can also use the lists if they want to gift something to a person for their birthday or anniversary.

Ways to celebrate employees' birthdays and/or anniversaries:

- For birthday and anniversary – a card signed by everyone at the library
- Purchase their favorite drink or snack as that's typically inexpensive
- Purchase a gift card that's relevant to the employee's interest
 - If you have business credit cards, you may be able to redeem rewards points for gift cards.
- Try to decorate their desk (if applicable)
 - Photos of employee at library (group photos, etc.)
 - Printouts that are laminated
 - Balloons
- Decorate the library- typically for BIG events such as a major anniversary milestone
- Post a fun video on library social media – if they're a patron favorite patrons may join in on wishing the person a happy birthday/anniversary
- Get the whole staff to surprise the birthday person by singing Happy Birthday, “flash mob” style
- Paid day off for birthday – doesn't have to be taken on birthday but close to that date

Other ways to show appreciation and boost morale – shared in the chat and verbally from various members:

- Handwritten thank you notes, especially for smaller things such as covering another staffer's shift or cleaning the break room after a party
- On a nice day, go up to staff (as able) and encourage them to take a short walk w/out clocking out
- Personalized name tags
 - Ex. A picture of something they love –with books! A staff member loves chickens so the picture was a chicken sitting on a stack of books
- Emphasize and strongly encourage staff to take mental health days
- Have an open-door policy as well as check-in on staff
- Recognize outstanding moments with your words.
 - Ex. Handled a difficult patron well, put in extra effort at an event
 - Can include a small token of appreciation as well but isn't necessary
 - Suggested to send a staff-wide email recognizing a person's specific efforts
- Summer Skip Day – each staff are allowed a day off (paid) after the hard work of summer reading (has to be taken *after* summer reading but *before* Labor Day)
- Stickers!
- Provide an easy snack in the break room
 - Ex. One person's staff love buffalo chicken dip so they'll occasionally have the dip in a crockpot in the breakroom for staff to snack on throughout the day
- For tasks that many/all staff have to do by a deadline, make it a fun competition. The first person to complete the task receives a 1st place ribbon.
- Nominate stellar employees for an ILA award or encourage them to apply for an ILA scholarship or grant. Or check if there are other community awards you can nominate them for.
- Have a staff appreciation party/week
- Spirit week or themed days
- Have a collaborative puzzle in the breakroom. Puzzles can be framed and used as wall art afterwards.
- Wellness room – if you have space – yoga mats, fidget spinners, coloring books, prayer mats, treadmill
- One member shared that they give out rubber ducks to staff who go above and beyond their duties.
- Have a raffle
 - Ex. Hat week, everyone wears a hat and submit a photo of you wearing it. Each photo goes into a raffle for a gift card. Afterwards, a collage is made of all the photos.

Sunshine Committee or Staff Appreciation Committees

One member's library has a Sunshine Committee composed of 5-6 people with a budget of \$1,000. This can be helpful to have if you're at a larger library. It's their job to come up with fun ideas to show appreciation. Some things they do includes providing snacks, little holiday-themed gifts, hosting a Halloween costume contest w/ ribbons for winners, coming up with ideas and activities like dressing in pink or red or something with hearts on Valentine's Day. Friends' groups can also be helpful in staff appreciation.

If you're not able to do a lot, consider doing something at least for National Library Worker Day.