



SkillSharpener Web Extra

Low-cost recognition programs

Studies regularly show that recognition is one of the top motivational tools available to managers. As the examples below illustrate, there is a lot of room for creative, low-cost recognition in the service department. Many of these programs have similar components, such as employing customer feedback and encouraging peer-to-peer awards. But they are all tailored to the unique needs and objectives of the specific organization.

These recognition ideas are excerpted from the publication, *Motivating Customer Service Employees*. To learn more about this practical resource for team management visit CustomerServiceGroup.com and click on "Rewards & Recognition."

- **Letters of thanks.** A simple thank you can help to motivate your staff to perform better, provide important feedback, and show appreciation for individual efforts. For a thank you letter to be effective it should state exactly what the CSR has done to be recognized and how his or her actions helped you, the company, the team or coworkers.
- **Pride Jars.** One manager wanted to encourage reps to recognize each other so she made everyone in her office who deals with customers — either externally or internally — a Pride Jar. Supervisors and coworkers were asked to drop a note of recognition in the jar when they saw a particular rep handling a customer in a positive manner. The program concluded at a wrap up party at which reps read the notes they had received.
- **Memory Maker.** The "Memory Maker" program, was designed to encourage CSRs to provide memorable service. A colorful flyer posted in the department read in part: "Do you provide your customers with memorable service? Well, if you do, and your coach hears you, you won't forget it either. "The first time your coach hears you providing memorable service to your customers, you will receive a

"Memory Maker" flyer and a pack of M&Ms. "The next time you are overheard providing memorable service, you will receive a sticker. Once you've earned five stickers you get to take your pick from the prize grab bag and to have your name placed on the Customer Satisfaction Log on the [local office] Web page."

- **Stories of Success.** This bank's recognition program keeps reps motivated and productive by rewarding them for demonstrating desired behaviors. Members of the management team give out "Stories of Success" coupons each time they see or hear a frontline rep performing one of the following: Demonstrating teamwork, offering to help someone, taking ownership of a problem, making a suggestion for cost savings, having perfect attendance for the month, teaching someone something, going beyond the call of duty, providing excellent customer service, making a suggestion for higher productivity, finding a potential problem and fixing it. Coupons are worth one to five points with each point representing one dollar. Agents collect the coupons and trade them in for company merchandise or for a cash payment.
- **Fan Mail.** Any rep who receives a positive comment on a customer survey gets his or her name entered into a drawing for prizes like concert tickets or T-shirts. In addition, the service quality manager recognizes reps who receive positive survey comments with a note of praise, a copy of which is sent



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to senior management. Reps can also be entered in the Fan Mail program by their peers or managers when they handle a call especially well or go the extra mile to help a customer.

- **Raise the banner.** Supervisors and CSRs are given mini-banners to hand out to other reps when they do something above and beyond the call of duty. Reps display their banners in their work stations, and a record of each award is kept in the employee's file to be considered during performance appraisals.
- **Praise Coupon.** Each rep gives out at least one "Praise Coupon" a week to recognize the contribution of other reps as well as colleagues outside the department.
- **Mail call.** When this company receives a comment praising a rep's quick response or service, a hard copy is sent to the company president, who adds a note, which is then posted on the department's high-visibility bulletin board.
- **Movie themes.** For outstanding achievement by a customer service rep, one manager awards a "Ferris Bueller Day" in honor of the movie of that name. The prize is a day off with pay, the only requirement being that the rep use the day to have fun and make a brief report of what she did that day at the next weekly meeting of the department.
- **You Make the Difference.** Team members who make a significant contribution to the organization and positively impact the business are recognized. Management presents this award on a monthly basis, after judging nominations from team leaders and supervisors. Award recipients

are invited to a director's meeting to receive the award and public recognition from their director. Award recipients receive a monetary prize and are entered into a drawing for a chance to win a cruise.

- **Fire Truck.** The rep who extinguished the most "fires" on the telephone during the prior month gets to display a model fire truck on his desk. It's a highly visible and fun reward that has reps competing to earn the honor each month.
- **Email blast.** One manager broadcasts customer compliments via email so that all agents can see them. And when a rep receives an appreciation gift such as chocolates or flowers, the manager takes a picture of the gift and sends the picture around by email, too.
- **Wall of Fame.** Many companies have a wall of fame to recognize reps who provide outstanding service, but one service department took an interesting approach. As employees are honored, their photographs are placed in interlocking picture frames and attached to the wall. The interlocking pieces symbolize how each individual is connected with the rest of the department.
- **Personal touch.** One manager finds that small gifts throughout the year mean a lot to her customer service staff. For instance, during a busy spell, reps may come to work and find flowers on their desks. And while the periodic spirit-boosters work well, each year the company focuses on recognizing reps during **Customer Service Week** in a manner that will create a year-long impression. ■



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