

30 Free Employee Recognition Ideas

Every idea here costs nothing to give. Print it, tick them off, keep it nearby.



COSTS NOTHING BUT YOUR ATTENTION

- ☐ 1 Name the behavior, not the person
- ☐ 2 Recognize the near miss, not just the win
- ☐ 3 Thank the enabler, not just the finisher
- ☐ 4 Recognize the quiet contributor first
- ☐ 5 Ask them to teach it to the team
- ☐ 6 Thank someone for something months old
- ☐ 7 Recognize the decision, not the result
- ☐ 8 Say what their absence would have cost

COSTS NOTHING BUT A FEW MINUTES

- ☐ 9 Write a handwritten note
- ☐ 10 Send a voice note instead of a text
- ☐ 11 Open the weekly meeting with a win
- ☐ 12 Reply-all to a client compliment, by name
- ☐ 13 Forward the client's exact words, unedited
- ☐ 14 Write a LinkedIn recommendation
- ☐ 15 Copy the praise into their review file
- ☐ 16 Tell their manager, not just them

MAKES RECOGNITION PUBLIC, FOR FREE

- ☐ 17 Add a standing wins slot to team meetings
- ☐ 18 Open a shared thank-you channel
- ☐ 19 Read peer recognitions aloud at all-hands
- ☐ 20 Use a physical wall or whiteboard
- ☐ 21 Rotate who gives the recognition
- ☐ 22 Recognize teams, not just individuals
- ☐ 23 Name the company value out loud
- ☐ 24 Let each recipient nominate the next

COSTS NOTHING, SCALES TO THOUSANDS

- ☐ 25 Give everyone badges they can award
- ☐ 26 Remove approvals from peer recognition
- ☐ 27 Put recognition in tools people already use
- ☐ 28 Automate service milestones
- ☐ 29 Make giving visible, not just receiving
- ☐ 30 Prompt managers on who was missed

Before you add an extra day off to this list

Some popular “free” ideas are not free. A day off costs output and coverage. Lunch with the CEO costs executive time. A recognition committee costs recurring hours. They can still be worth doing, but plan them rather than promise them.