

MOTIVATING WORKERS



Given the current war for talent – a war that is set to intensify in its ferocity in the foreseeable future – incentives and recognition feature highly in employers' retention strategies. Here, Jovel Ong looks at what some companies are doing to keep employees committed to their workplace.

Vacations, perks and prizes. Companies are going big with these enticements – and at times getting creative – to motivate and retain employees.

Take Peter Tan & Associates, an insurance agency representing Prudential Assurance. To motivate its employees, the agency awards them shares in up-and-coming Singapore businesses through a scheme named 'Project Homeland'.

Agency manager Peter Tan said that Project Homeland not only motivates employees to stay with the agency and put in their best performance, but also gives them an opportunity to earn attractive returns on the investments. Peter Tan & Associates also treats deserving employees to fully sponsored holiday trips.

At hypermart Carrefour, carrots such as luxury hotel and yacht club stays, as well as limousine services are dangled to enhance the customer service level.

Eng Leong Medallie, a supplier of medals, trophies and corporate gifts, recognises employees by presenting them branded lifestyle gifts such as Mont Blanc pens and Soo Kee jewellery engraved with their names.

SHOW AND TELL

Employees stepping up to the stage to receive shiny trophies or plaques while their colleagues applaud...formal award ceremonies and prize presentations are mainstay recognition practices. These events are usually held during the annual dinner-and-dance, a time of celebration for the company that provides an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the achievements of employees in certain areas.

But not everyone gets a kick out of such glitzy affairs. Cecilia Chia, Director of HR and Regional Director HR of The



Ms Cecilia Chia

Fullerton Hotel said that really powerful recognition has to do with the feeling and energy behind it, not the cost.

Some inexpensive ways that the hotel has found impactful in motivating employees include sending them greeting cards and letters of appreciation signed by the General Manager, and surprising them with video clips created by their colleagues.

It also helps that every leader gets into the act when it comes to staff recognition. "At The Fullerton Hotel, all leaders know about every employee's achievement," Ms Chia said, "be it an award won, a memorable experience offered to a guest, a positive guest comment card or thank-you letter, going beyond the call of duty, rendering assistance to fellow colleagues or simply doing something extraordinary."

EXTRA VALUE

Incentives such as expensive presents, overseas trips or wads of cash may not be good enough to guarantee employee satisfaction. Workers value an environment in which they feel appreciated and can assimilate, said Ms Eunice Lee, Director of HR & Development at McDonald's Singapore.

One route that McDonald's has taken to create such an environment was to get employees involved in its 'I-Stories' employer branding initiative. The exercise had involved developing stories about working at McDonald's based on selected staff accounts. They were published on the company's career site and publicised at McDonald's recruitment drives.

The featured employees all register a strong sense of being valued by their employer, and the feel-good factor has also spilled over to the rest of the workforce – in its latest employee satisfaction survey, 94% of employees said they are happy working at the place that serves Happy Meals.

At McDonald's, making employees feel valued also means providing training and development opportunities. The McDonald's University Accredited Programme (UAP) offers staff intensive training in Hospitality Operations that culminates in accreditation from Australia's University of Ballarat. The accreditation is internationally recognised and gives candidates advanced standing for degree and master's programmes in universities across the British Commonwealth. All course fees for the UAP are borne by McDonald's and subsidised by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency.



Ms Annie Yap

WE ARE FAMILY

At staffing and HR solutions firm The GMP Group, recognition programmes are designed to reinforce a strong sense of family that is the company's culture, said Annie Yap, The GMP Group's Managing Director. The company philosophy is to treat people as one would like to be treated, based on the conclusion that if you treat the employees well, they will take care of business.


The GMP Group shows appreciation to employees through overseas trips, family days, monthly luncheons and movie previews, just to name some examples. In addition, staff are given the flexibility to work from home and time-off to tend to family matters. "If staff know that their needs are taken care of, they can concentrate on their work. This will indirectly translate to better work performance," said Ms Yap.



Ms Eunice Lee

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

All of the people we spoke to agreed that the most effective way to motivate employees to achieve the desired goals of the organisation include creating an environment with strong, respectful and supportive relationships between the organisation's managers/supervisors and employees and a focus on genuine expressions of appreciation for specific employee achievements, service milestones and a day-to-day acknowledgement of performance excellence.

In a nutshell, a positive employee reward and recognition strategy can be summed up by the following: nothing is better than a sincere "Thank you for a job well done!" 

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"There are some people who have the skills but still lose. Why? Because they don't have the mental toughness."**

By Labour Chief Lim Boon Heng, who highlighted the sports psychology course taught in the Sports School. Sep 11, 2006, Straits Times

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