

Whatever they say, it's not money they want



EACH year, about one person in five (average, 18 per cent) changes jobs, costing £8,000-£12,000 in recruitment and loss of productivity per employee. Incentive schemes that give recognition for a job well done and show that hard work is appreciated can play a part in reducing staff turnover by boosting morale.

In a survey, the Incentives Research Foundation found that incentive programmes motivate people to increase their performance by 27 per cent. And our report last year showed that 75 per cent of respondents believed that incentives were good for staff morale.

Effective incentive schemes must be relevant, measurable, open, fair and available to all; otherwise they can lead to de-motivation and even resentment. Many fail through poor communication by management, unrealistic targets and/or a lack of clarity around the process.

Continual re-assessment of the effectiveness of the scheme is crucial, as is communicating any necessary changes promptly, clearly and concisely.

Although most people claim that they prefer money, evidence shows that non-cash rewards – such as gifts, merchandise and experiences – have a greater impact (and needn't cost the earth).

The reason: when offered cash, our brains calculate its relative value and make a value assessment on whether it is worth the extra

effort. This rational assessment does not involve the emotions – and it is emotion that drives behaviour. When offered more tangible rewards, our brains visualise them and the associated pleasure they will bring.

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Timing is critical at this time of the year



RECENT research we commissioned shows that the proportion of staff feeling engaged has dropped by half since 2005, a worryingly low decline.

Motivation schemes that offer staff incentives have proved highly successful in slowing turnover, improving engagement and raising performance. They provide a focus for activity, either short or long term, and generate attention, interest and momentum, which may be lacking day-to-day.

And this feeling flows through to customers. Those who have had an exceptional experience with a call centre are 72 per cent more likely to do more business with the same company than those whose experience was merely satisfactory.

Some tips:

- Research what reward will motivate all members of staff. Rewards with little value will have no effect.
- Involve everyone – don't just concentrate on rewarding top achievers

● Consider an incentive programme that really creates hype and excitement...frequent instant prizes have an immediate impact.

● Offer team rewards as well as those for individuals. If the team reward is powerful, it is a good way to push the strong performers to help the new or poorer-performing members of staff to also succeed.

● Look at peer-run programmes where colleagues can give others recognition for "outstanding work" by nominating them for rewards.

● Use vouchers or travel rewards. Cash can be lost in salaries and the value of the reward is therefore lost for the recipient.

● Finally, the efforts and achievement of all should be publicly recognised at company meetings with personal presentations by a senior manager.

This time of year is crucial for many call centres because it will determine whether yearly targets are achieved and whether customer contracts are renewed. It's therefore a time to drive sales and build goodwill.

The timing of any motivation programme during Christmas and New Year is vital. Think about how many days of productivity are lost during the first few days of January due to the New Year blues. Think about splitting the reward process with part before Christmas and a surprise part waiting for employees when they return in the New Year.

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