

Gratitude and Improving Morale

The number one complaint from employees is not money but feeling their work is not valued. Praise and acknowledgement for good work is sometimes ignored. I have heard some managers say, "...they get paid for their work that is enough." On the other side of the coin many workers do not compliment their supervisors for their work. We are an information society; most of the people that work in our office pass information from one person to another. The worker and the tools for working are the same. Years ago people who wanted to get back at the management would sabotage the work force by throwing a wrench in the machinery. Today the process is disrupted by workers forgetting to pass on information. "I forgot to tell you," and not being friendly, these become the new wrench. Many office managers forget the importance of compliments and praise to workers who do everyday things in a way that prevent problems and improve the organization. The worker is not recognized for their ordinary work that becomes extraordinary for the organization. Tools need to be taken care of and today the worker is the tool. Oil for the tool is praise. This week try celebrating your little success with one another and clients. Here are a few ways that costs nothing to help build morale in the office:

1. Have a news board in the eating area that allows workers to thank one another with a written message.
2. Write at least one memo a day praising a worker.
3. Write a memo or send a card to the supervisors thanking them for their energy.
4. Have an employee of the week instead of the month, more people can get rewarded.
5. When talking to someone remember to give a genuine compliment.
6. Tell a worker that has been putting in a lot of extra energy to have some extra time for lunch.
7. Have a compliment day. "What am I doing right"

What kinds of things do you do in your office to celebrate others work?

I am including responses that I received on building morale. It seems some of our fellow workers are getting lots of support including roses on their desks. There are many great ideas that follow. Maybe you could use them a discussion point at a meeting. Next week I want to discuss evaluations that are given to us by our supervisors and what your thoughts are on them.

Paul

Responses to Morale building:

When looking for a place to really have a good time, it is "LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION". In the working world, to have a "good time" at your job, it is "COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION"! ML WA

Brought in a big barrel of ice cream and cones on a hot summer day. Unplanned and much enjoyed. Want to do it again this summer! DG CA

Perfect timing for this topic. Just this morning all our staff came in to find on their desks a rose in a hand decorated vase (from our director). An e-mail was sent from her saying she just wanted to acknowledge how busy we all are and thanking us for our support. Periodically she brings around silly little gifts that raise a smile: one time it was soft squeezey balls with happy faces on them, another time self inking Valentine's stamps. Whenever she goes away on vacation, she'll bring us each back a gift from her travels: sometimes the same thing for everyone, but often picked specifically for the individual. Either way, to me it's not the gift itself, but the thoughtfulness behind it that means the most. These sorts of gestures really do make a difference! Bridget CA

I think it is true for most Human Services Agencies that it is hard to recruit and retain employees these days. Social Services programs are hard to administer and with the salaries and benefits so different all over the country and the mobility of families, longevity in one agency is rare. I think it is so very important to build cohesiveness, loyalty, and job satisfaction for staff by recognizing the good work that they do and the important contribution that their efforts make in their community. Many lives, young and old, depend on the work that is done in all social service agencies. It is also important to assist staff in recognizing their strengths and challenging them to learn new things. This not only makes them more valuable to the agency, but gives them an opportunity to advance in their field. Just as we ask clients what their goals are, it is important to work with staff to develop meaningful and challenging goals for staff. Managers should not be afraid to see their staff blossom and move on to more challenging areas of the agency. This will give someone else an opportunity to move into the newly vacant position. A win-win for everyone! Lynn CA

Very good subject (moral) and probably popular one too. We had some very serious moral issues here a year ago. Moral was the worst I have ever been exposed to in my career. Supervisors and workers were not getting along well at all. Here are a few things that happened and that changed things from black to almost white. :) We had a supervisor that contributed to the problems, and a couple of co-workers that were just too competitive (the type that will run over anybody's toes.) Not throwing any blame.....but in all honesty we haven't had that same supervisor/co-worker in over a year. We had a professional consultant come into our office and teach us some team/moral building skills. We started a five minute stand up meeting, once a week. In this five minutes supervisors and all staff were present. We were there to hear only positive things, uplifting, funny, jokes, anything that had to do with laughter, praising and fun. At the end of the five minute stand up meeting, we all meet in a huddle, touch each other with one of our hands extended in the middle of the circle and cheer.....as loud as possible...we rock! (We are always looking for new ideas with cheers, so if you have any...please share) Also during our weekly meeting that we have on Fridays, once we are done with weekly issues, anyone of us that has a successful story to share where a client called and thanked the worker, etc. is shared. Supervisors share if they got a call regarding one of the employees being praised by a participant. One other thing that we do....we have a vent

box. In this box goes any vents that anyone has to share.....we write or type the event in a piece of paper and it gets read at the end of the weekly meetings. Since this is a vent...no reply nor remark is made about it. We just hear it and go on to the next vent to be read. I must say, Paul, the moral in this office has changed tremendously.....we are all working sooo well together, we all get along, go out after hours, do things together and include a lot of humor in the workplace. Our supervisors praise us a lot more, we hear it weekly if not daily. The new supervisors we have make statements like, they have never had such a wonderful group to work with as ours. They are really happy with us, and we are too. The moral boosting skills we were taught,are still being utilized to this day. If at any time we tend to want to use the vent box for others means that what the real intent is for, one of us immediately throws in a vent as a reminder, and things go right back to where they should be. Happy and content in CA. :) Lydia Z. Hernandez Job Training Specialist

I take my staff to early Mexican dinner about every three months. Its cheap, fun, and a good treat away from the office. We celebrate everyone's birthday with a pizza and take the phones off the hook (don't tell my boss). I send thank you notes to their houses occasionally when they have done something I really appreciated. They can have flex hours if they need them for three day weekends or family stuff. I tell jokes all the time and they bring one to me each week (mandatory). We rock and my reward is to see them continue to thrive and grow. My secretary is going to be 80 in December and I put her up against any secretary you've got. She continues to take classes (which I pay for out of my pocket) for special computer stuff., which in turn makes me look really good when she cranks out newsletters that are awesome, informative, and power point presentations that I present. Ginger CA

Our supervisor compliments her staff each and every holiday for making her job much easier by being such a efficient and supportive staff. And she should because we are. However, she lets us do our work and usually is just there to help us when we ask us for it. I'm not sure her staff acknowledge her as well. She knows it because we give her very nice gifts at her Birthday and Christmas but we don't tell her too often. MI

Here are several things we have done in the office to promote morale and team spirit:

" Secret Pal exchange, everyone that participates is given the name of their secret pal. Little gifts are given or notes of appreciation..of course ground rules are set as to how much to spend...each pal was given a mini form to complete with the following info: name, birth date, favorite candy, hobby, interests. We have done this for approximately 6 weeks to 2 months two years in a row and staff just love it. Even the few that don't participate get caught up in the enthusiasm and joy.

" Candy grams...this was also done as a fund raiser. The candy grams sold for \$1.00 each and you had five different versions:

All of these were folded like a note, had graphics as well as a sentiment inside and a tootsie roll sucker with a curly ribbon was attached. It was the best fund raiser and a wonderful way to acknowledge someone.

One of my supervisors has made up small cards....with a statement. Thank you for..... and the person giving the card puts in the reason why. This has gone over great!

I am having a luncheon on 7/11 to recognize my staff for not only achieving but exceeding their goal of 4,000 placements. My supervisory team and I will be hosting the lunch at my home CA

A major way to assist morale here would be to have schedules from staff of the other offices under my managers control. It can be very annoying to find out other offices are more in touch than you are. Adrienne ME

Believe it or not, not a lot of compliments happen here. We receive some praise, but not nearly enough and I guess that goes both ways. We could definitely do better. Have a good week Bev IL

We have the "employee of the month" award and they get a special parking place, a plaque of recognition and a gift certificate. All workers and supervisors were issued forms to fill out and submit when they "catch someone doing something right". The form states who the recognized worker is, what they did, and congratulates them. It tells them how proud we are of them and that the form will become part of their performance record. For myself, I send thank you notes to individuals or whole departments with kind words of appreciation for their hard work. I take opportunities to tell supervisors when I see one of their workers providing really good service to clients or co-workers. I take opportunities to thank my supervisor, who really is fair and thinks nothing of jumping in and assisting us when we need it. Some other supervisors think it is "beneath" them to do case work, so we feel lucky. GA

One suggestion from our office is that we have a Teambuilding Committee that works on office morale. The main function of this committee is to plan a staff retreat held quarterly. The retreats are one day in length and are held at a location with one hour of the office. We are very fortunate in having several "nature" type settings that have been excellent.

I am like most people just thankful to have the job, our Supervisor is very wonderful when it comes to praise she does that all the time tells us how lucky she is to have us. Occasionally we all have a night out together. The morale in our office is really wonderful because we all work together and try to help each other out. One of the things that builds the morale is that our supervisor is kid oriented so when of our kids stops by she is glad to see them and does not get upset with us. Which we do not abuse. The kids are not here all the time. a suggestion for a morale builder would be that you workers can be kind of on a personal level, when I say this, I mean share funny things, cute little stories, have potlucks once in awhile for lunch. These things help with morale also, well you have a good week, will catch you later. Norma OH

In our office we sometimes give a certificate to an employee who has gone above and beyond and recognize them at an all staff meeting. We also do a pot luck lunch once per month where everyone brings a dish to pass and we all have lunch together. Of course emailing your thanks to people for a good job takes little time and effort, but makes them feel good. You shouldn't get more negative memo's than positive. Thanks for your suggestions below. Tammy NY

For me, the personal connection with my work "family" is really important to my morale and others too it seems. Celebrating all the goings and comings of people, birthdays, etc. (even if I'm just aware thru e-mail and not involved) helps me feel connected. Vikki WA

We don't really do anything. At our annual dinner dance , they give out awards. The bad thing about that is that the people that should get the awards don't. It's all about who they like. There is really no staff morale at my agency. LA

In our office we are planning to have our July all staff meeting as a meeting of CELEBRATION for the staff. We are buying small inexpensive gifts for each person, including our janitors, to show our appreciation for each staff member. The gifts are simple things like post it pads with sayings, special pens, unusual wrist rest for computers, special gloves for the janitors, etc.

We will also use a small monetary award that was given to Management, for a Management Team Project of Superior Accomplishment for process improvement, that was presented by our Division. That money will be used to treat the whole staff to a dessert party. We are also making up personalized laminated bookmarks for each staff member with their names on it, and a short compliment about that person. The management team is looking forward to this meeting, and we believe it will be a great morale booster. O V CA

At one of my jobs the leads and managers are real good about letting people know what a good job someone is doing by E-mail to the individual and to the management who in turn sends an e-mail out to let everyone and especially the one being praised what a great job they are doing.

I just had my evaluation yesterday and it was very pleasant as during that time it was another time in which they told me that the leads were saying very positive things about me. I enjoyed the evaluation as I've had some where all the evaluation is is a time to tell you what your faults are and are not normally positive. Melody AK

Sometimes it's more than just noticing what someone is currently doing at work. Recently one of my supervisors was taken to the hospital and admitted for a serious ear infection. She has been there for 5 days now. Something as simple as a visit from a boss makes things better. She was concerned that her absence would be detrimental to her duties. She was more at ease and her staff's morale was bolstered by knowing that she had the concern and support of her boss. Even the nurses and the woman in the next bed were happily surprised to find out that her boss had come to spend time with her.

Although this is an action by me, its based on an overall way I have of nteracting with my staff. Morale is a sense of belonging and wanting to show up on work days for a purpose. My objective is to set the stage for that to occur.

Its about the way you relate to people. When you do offer a compliment, it is perceived as true, honest and significant, just as if you were delivering a reprimand (but happier). Some of the things I do;

- Call when there is no problem, so employees don't only know you when they are doing something wrong.
- Take an interest in their future goals as well as their achievements
- Listen when they are having problems. Often they are not looking for answers, just someone to talk to in the decision process.
- **BUT ABOVE ALL, REMEMBER TO CONGRATULATE THEM WHEN THEY DO THINGS RIGHT! RN CA**

Out here in AZ we are experiencing lots of fires and having to deal with people who were forced to evacuate their homes. It sure puts things in perspective and you really appreciate everything you have. Our office has a morale committee which puts on pot lucks, celebrations and recognition for fellow employees. We have a Halloween contest, Christmas trivia, etc. Next week we will be having a 4th of July celebration. People just seem to appreciate each other and everyone is willing to help where and when needed.
Carol AZ