

By Cynthia Matossian, MD



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A kudo for one benefits many

Rewarding solo efforts creates strong office culture.

Traditionally, an employer's approach to morale maintenance has been primarily focused on financial incentives. However, we have found success using a variety of small measures: team boosting with myriad motivators. We incorporate staff recognition strategies into our workflow and the results speak for themselves. We have created a work environment in which employee longevity and infighting are minimal. You too can cultivate this harmonious atmosphere. Follow these steps to office nirvana.

PATIENT SURVEYS

I've written before about the value of our patient surveys, but they really are critical to building morale among staff.

In case you missed our previous discussion on this subject, we ask every patient after each encounter to complete a brief online survey if the patient has shared an e-mail address with us. If the patient mentions a specific employee's name in a complimentary fashion, that name is read aloud in front of the entire staff at our monthly meetings. That public recognition in front of one's peers is a profound, confidence-boosting moment.

What's more, we provide these staff members with a small token of our appreciation. This usually involves a \$10 gift card to a nearby convenience store, lunch spot or department store.

EXTRA EFFORT

Staff members recognized for going above and beyond "the call of duty" receive a letter thanking them for their efforts. They can share these letters with their family members.

This might seem like a time consuming step for the physician or the practice administrator, but remember the employee put in extra effort for you. Empowerment by positive feedback for deeds well done sets the tone for the office culture. In lieu of a letter or a gift card, some practices reward their

employee of the month with a preferred parking spot.

OFFICE FUN

Not everything has to be all business; some of the smallest perks are the most treasured. For example, we have a birthday tradition: every birthday boy or girl gets to choose a birthday dish which is prepared by a local chef (a long-time former employee who now has a catering business). Some choose an entrée, others opt for dessert, but all share their treat with the whole office.

Once a quarter, we have a team-building event outside the office. Our staff votes on activities in which they want to participate. Attendance is voluntary since they are scheduled outside of work hours.

OFFICE CULTURE

These small gestures on the part of our management team create a strong positive office culture. This helps in the recruitment and retention of staff. The tone of an office is set at the top and trickles down to affect every person. The \$10 gift cards and staff recognition are never going to break the bank, yet they go a long way in fostering a cheerful staff who treat patients and each other with kindness and respect. **OM**

