

Inexpensive ways to say Thank You!

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By Lisa Simmons

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As managers we all know from "Supervision 101" that it's important to reinforce our staff -- to let them know when their doing a good job. But unfortunately, all too often in the rush & race of getting everything done we quickly fall into the philosophy of "no new is good news". If I'm not telling them what they did wrong, then they know that they're doing OK. I would like to encourage everyone who reads this message to make an early resolution & spend the month of December saying "Thank You". It doesn't need to be time consuming & it doesn't need to be expensive -- let us show you how & THANKS for making an effort!

1. If you really want to do it right -- then do it write! -- Take a few minutes each day & jot a personal note to 1 or 2 staff members about why you value their work & what contributions you feel they have made to the team effort. Before the months over, you should have a personal note for each staff person that they will treasure far more than an expensive but impersonal gift.
2. Let everyone join in -- Create a "warm fuzzy" box for each staff member & position them where the entire team can get to them. Then encourage each staff member to write on a slip of paper just a 1 or 2 sentences about what they admire in each of their co-workers. At the Christmas party make sure that everyone gets their own warm fuzzy box to keep as a memento of all they bring into the lives of those around them.
3. Take a sweet approach -- Buy a couple large bags of candy (lifesavers & chocolate kisses or something that symbolizes the holiday spirit for you). As you walk around & observe your team members in action, catch them doing what they do best. What the always reliable staff person shows up on time, thank them for being so dependable & give them a piece of candy. It's may sound simple, but you'll be amazed at the smiles you reap in response!
4. Create a Christmas Angel -- Purchase an inexpensive holiday pin or button. Something that will make your team members smile. Take the first step & "AWARD" it to someone you catch in a random act of kindness. Tell them to wear the pin in good health & then pass it on when they catch another "Christmas angel" at work. Not only will this encourage everyone to actively engage in the "holiday spirit" it will create a sense of "team" & closeness within your staff.

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5. Create a Wall of Fame" – This one takes a little more planning, but you may be able to "cheat" by going through photos taken earlier in the year if your team does that on a semi-regular basis. In recognition of the outstanding job your team does all year round, create a photo collage on the main bulletin board where lots of people can see it & comment on it. Make sure the photos catch your people in action — doing what they do best!
6. If you joke about getting buried in paperwork—then bury some gold – Take a few of those ever present post-it notes, jot down notes of thanks & acknowledgment & then hide the notes in amidst the piles of paperwork. One warning– Be sure you make sure they are hidden high enough in the stacks that they will be found before Christmas!
7. Lend them your ear – Bring in some donuts or some homemade holiday goodies & give your staff your undivided attention for 1 hour. Don't allow any interruptions if at all possible & let your people know that not only are they important to you, but that you care enough about what they have to say to put everyone else on hold during this hectic season & focus just on them!
8. Invite the brass – If you have a responsive upper management then encourage 1 or more of your top managers to drop by informally (read for no other purpose) & express their thanks & appreciation to your staff.
9. Stand in their shoes – Nothing means more to many staff than knowing that you understand exactly what they face each day. If you have a relatively small number of staff then consider letting each staff person select a day to leave early (even an extra hour can be valuable at this hectic time of year) while you fill in for them. Not only will you give them an unexpected bonus hour to take care of other priorities but also you will convince them in the most honest way possible that you are willing to do anything you ask them to do.
10. Go public – If you don't mind spending a little bit of money, consider taking out an advertisement in the local paper. Include a group photo of your team & comments from yourself, families, anyone who appreciates your staff, & all they do. They may be self-conscious about this type of public recognition, but few will be able to help themselves from clipping it out of the paper & tucking it away in their memory boxes.

Granted all of these ideas take some time & effort on your part. But consider where you would be without the people that show up & do the job day in & day out. Don't they deserve a little holiday cheerleading from their coach!

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Lisa is the director of the Ideal Lives Project, providing practical support for special needs families & professionals. Visit her on-line at <http://www.ideallives.com> or subscribe to her free newsletter at <mailto:ideallives-subscribe@topica.com>

Inexpensive Wedding Gifts For Anyone

Inexpensive ways to say Thank You!

By Sarah Williams

A wedding gift does not have to be expensive to be well received and appreciated by the couple. While the extravagance of some weddings may compel their guests to purchase pricey gifts, it is not necessary to do so. Many people are invited to a number of weddings each year and it's not feasible to purchase an expensive gift for every wedding you attend. While you may want to splurge on an extravagant gift for a close friend or relative, you are not required to invest a great deal of money in a gift for a casual acquaintance. Even if you are very close with the couple you may be able to create a very inexpensive gift for their wedding. The following are just a few ideas for inexpensive wedding gifts that are sure to delight the couple without breaking your budget.

One inexpensive gift idea is to fill a mixing bowl with a variety of kitchen utensils. This is both an inexpensive and an extremely useful gift. Many couples are starting their life together and will need a few basic utensils and kitchen gadgets to get them started. This gift is thoughtful and useful without being detrimental to your budget.

Another inexpensive gift idea is to create a basket containing elements for a romantic dinner. You could put this basket together by yourself and include items such as dry pasta and sauce as well as a bottle of wine and two wine glasses. You might also want to include a non-perishable desert such as biscotti to complete your meal. You could even include a recipe card with one of your own personally tested recipes. This inexpensive gift idea will be greatly valued by the couple because it essentially giving them the gift of a romantic night alone.

Picture frames can also be an inexpensive wedding gift idea. The couple will likely have a wide variety of photos that they will want to display in their home and providing them with a few simple frames is an inexpensive way to give them a truly useful gift. While many picture frames can be expensive, you could find simple wooden frames in a craft store and paint or decorate to suit the couple's taste. You could also shop at closeout stores for these items and may find quite a few bargains available. Picture frames are an inexpensive and useful wedding gift idea that is likely to be cherished by the couple.

The couple's registry could also be another source of inexpensive wedding gift ideas. Many couples will register for an assortment of items that span a large price spectrum. You may find that the couple has included many inexpensive items in their registry that may fall within your budget constraints. Choosing an inexpensive item from the couple's registry ensures that you are giving them a gift that they will truly like and appreciate because they picked out the item themselves.

If you are a close friend or relative of the couple you may be able to make a very inexpensive wedding gift that will also be unique and greatly cherished by the couple. If you have many pictures of the couple, you might consider arranging these pictures in a unique way in a photo album to give to the couple as a gift. You could also use the photos to create a scrapbook or even a video presentation set to music that features the couple. These gifts will be greatly appreciated by the couple and can be created for a relatively small cost.

Candles are another inexpensive wedding gift. Newlyweds often incorporate candles in their decorating and also use candles to create ambiance during dinner or on other occasions. Just after they are married is the time when couples are most likely to enjoy candlelight dinners frequently and for no

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specific occasion so a wedding gift of candles is bound to be used often. Candles come in a great variety of colors, sizes and scents so it should be easy to find an assortment of candles that will be appreciated by the couple.

A wedding gift does not have to be expensive to be useful and appreciated by the couple. Many wedding guests spend a great deal of money on fancy china or glassware that is only used on special occasions while inexpensive gifts such as candles and kitchen utensils are used by the couple on a daily basis.

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