Keeping employees motivated and engaged is the key to high levels of productivity. As the end of the year draws closer, what can employers do to keep those productivity levels up?

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END-OF-YEAR REWARDS

As the year wraps up and employers count their gains and losses, the question often arises about how to reward employees for the gains. Rewards not only make workers feel appreciated; they encourage them and inspire them to work harder. Rewarding is also important in the recruitment process, helping to demonstrate to new employees that the business cares for them and their hard work. This, in turn, helps attract the best workers and ensures that firms retain them. Below are six suggestions as to how businesses can reward their employees.

1. Give an end-of-year bonus

Bonuses are a great incentive to include in an employee's end-of-year package and although cash is often the main form of bonuses, it is not the only way in which employers can give rewards. Physical gifts are less likely to be taxed and experiences such as paid/partly paid holidays or fun days out can also be considered.

2. Organize a team event

An end-of-year team event is a good way to gather everyone together to celebrate the company's achievements in a relaxed and fun environment. It's also a great opportunity to socialize, whether at a small office lunch or a large corporate party with fountains of champagne. Your employees will appreciate some downtime. You can even do something a bit different from the usual corporate parties. Giant inflatable water obstacle courses are always fun, or even an arena filled with bouncy castles. What a better way to unwind than by becoming a big kid for the day?

3. Offer peer-to-peer prizes

The end of the year is also a fantastic time to get your employees to award each other a peer-to-peer prize. Everybody likes to feel appreciated and to show appreciation to others. A congeniality prize that encourages employees to vote for one of their peers is a fun way of getting employees to interact with each other. It may also be a nice touch to announce the winner at an event like an end-of-year party.

4. Allow employees to relax in body and mind

Most people enjoy a good massage and this can be combined with a group yoga class to get everyone totally relaxed, right before the festive break. Employers can bring masseurs/masseuses in to physically relieve stress and provide something a bit different. With the stress of family and end-of-year deadlines looming, letting your employees take a half-hour break with an expert might be the perfect mental boost they need to start the New Year.

5. Let everyone dress down

A smart suit may look sharp but does the way you dress really affect the way you work? Facebook Founder Mark Zuckerberg's signature look, compromising a casual hoodie and canvas sneakers, changed the perception of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, while making him more relatable to the generation of social media users who would eventually flood his online network. The holiday season is a great time to let people dress down. The shops are littered with ghastly seasonal jumpers (!) so give your workers a free pass to get into the festive mood and have a more casual look during the last month of the year.

6. Introduce flexible working

Modern-day work still mandates a standard Monday to Friday, 9-5 working week but research shows that longer hours don't actually increase productivity. An increasing number of companies are testing new and innovative ways of making their staff more productive by changing the standard working days and hours and they're seeing interesting results. The end of the year tends to be a very busy time for most people. To allow people to keep their affairs in order and spend more time with their families, employers should consider more flexible working hours or even consider working from home where possible.

Rewards big or small are appreciated by most people and companies should look at how to offer them to their employees. Let workers know they're in for a treat at the end of the year and they'll be sure to pull their weight until then. **G**

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